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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2026

CPC to hold key meeting in October

Leadership pledges policy support for economic growth in second half of year

By **CAO DESHENG**
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The fifth plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee will be held in Beijing in October, with a focus on studying major issues on consistently advancing the Party's full and rigorous self-governance.

The announcement came on Thursday after a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, which was presided over by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee.

A statement issued after the meeting said that with the profound changes in the international landscape, national conditions and the Party's development, there are new circumstances and issues in advancing the Party's self-governance.

In exercising full and rigorous Party governance, efforts should be focused on enhancing the Party's long-term governance capability, maintaining its advanced nature and integrity, and preserving the close bond between the Party and the people, in order to ensure that the Party always remains the strong leadership core in developing socialism with Chinese characteristics, the statement said.

The meeting also analyzed and studied the current economic situation and made arrangements for economic work in the second half of this year.

During the meeting, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, the Party's top decision-making body, pledged to step up macro policy support, and underlined the need to implement a more proactive fiscal policy and a moderately loose monetary policy, fully leverage the effectiveness of existing policies and roll out practical and effective incremental measures in a timely manner.

It is essential to strengthen countercyclical adjustments, intensify efforts to expand domestic demand and optimize supply, enhance development momentum and stimulate social vitality in order to achieve sustained, innovative and improved economic growth, the meeting said.

The meeting emphasized the need to accelerate the pace of fiscal spending and the use of bond funds, effectively utilize monetary policy tools and adjust them in a timely manner, and optimize fiscal-monetary coordination to boost domestic demand.

It is important to expand mutually beneficial international economic and trade cooperation, vigorously develop service trade, and promote balanced trade development, the meeting said, urging efforts to actively attract and utilize foreign capital.

The meeting emphasized the importance of stabilizing the real estate market. It also underlined the need to take solid steps to build the "six networks" — water, new-type power grids, computing power, next-generation communication, urban underground pipe and logistics.

The meeting also called for efforts to accelerate the development of a modern industrial system and strengthen long-term and steady support for basic research.

While calling for deeply implementing the "AI Plus" initiative, fostering new forms of the smart economy and improving the governance system for artificial intelligence, the meeting underscored the need to seek breakthroughs in cutting-edge technologies and the development of future industries.

Efforts should be made to build emerging pillar industries, while continuously driving the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries, the meeting said.

The meeting emphasized the need to create a level playing field for market entities, comprehensively address "rat race" competition, further deepen the reform of State-owned assets and enterprises, and optimize the development environment for the private economy.

Prior to Thursday's Political Bureau meeting, the CPC Central Committee held a symposium on July 24 with non-CPC personages to solicit opinions and suggestions on the current economic situation and economic work for the second half of the year.

While presiding over the symposium, Xi said that in the first half of the year, China's economy made steady progress despite headwinds, demonstrating strong resilience and vitality.

In the second half of the year, efforts should focus on enhancing the effectiveness of macroeconomic policies, Xi said.

Key priorities include tapping into the potential for expanding domestic demand, promoting the deep integration of technological and industrial innovation, and deepening reform and expanding high-standard opening-up, he said.

Robotic greeting



Journalists and social media influencers from member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations interact on Wednesday with a robotic dog in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. More than 20 journalists and social media influencers from ASEAN countries visited Shenzhen as this year marks the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the China-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. MAO SIQIAN / XINHUA

Prize catch



Participants scramble to grab a live fish on Wednesday during the traditional Naoyu Festival in a village in Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. The festival, which originated in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and was listed as a city-level intangible cultural heritage in 2016, draws visitors from across Guangxi, as well as Guizhou and Hunan provinces, to wish for a bountiful harvest. LAN KUN/FOR CHINA DAILY

China, US hold video talks on economic, trade issues to uphold leaders' consensus

By **ZHANG CHENGXU**
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Vice-Premier He Lifeng held a video call with United States Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer on Thursday, with both sides pledging to strengthen communication and promote stable economic and trade ties.

He, the Chinese lead for China-US economic and trade affairs, held candid, in-depth and constructive discussions with the US side on implementing the important common understandings reached by the two heads of state at their meeting in May in Beijing. They also exchanged views on maintaining stable bilateral economic and trade relations, expanding practical cooperation and properly addressing each other's concerns.

During the talks, the Chinese side expressed serious concerns over the recent US restrictive economic and trade measures against China.

Both sides agreed to make further good use of the China-US economic and trade consultation mechanism under the strategic guidance of the two heads of state, enhance communication, build mutual trust, clear up misunderstandings, expand practical cooperation, and promote the steady and sound development of bilateral economic and trade relations.

A smooth trade relationship between the US and China is vital and a reduction in US tariffs on imports of Chinese goods would help multiple industries in both countries, said Gary C. Hufbauer, a nonresident Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, who has written extensively on international trade and investment.

Hufbauer told China Daily: "Many US manufacturing industries would benefit from better access to Chinese intermediate goods. My calculation is that an extra $100 billion of two-way trade will boost US GDP by about $20 billion and Chinese GDP by about $50 billion. These are significant gains, if US tariffs are cut."

Also on Thursday, the Ministry of Commerce said that China has been actively implementing the consensus reached at the inaugural meeting of the China-EU trade and investment consultation mechanism, and stepping up preparations for its second meeting this autumn.

He Yadong, a spokesman for the ministry, said China is ready to work with the European Union to explore practical and feasible solutions to each other's economic and trade concerns.

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CHINESE BEAUTY BRANDS ENJOY A SURGE IN POPULARITY

Advanced production and traditional elements give domestic cosmetics a growing edge globally

By **HE QI** in Shanghai
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From Xiaohongshu to TikTok, and from bloggers to everyday users, a growing number of foreign faces are sharing their stories of discovering C-beauty, also known as *guohuo meizhuang*, or made-in-China beauty.

In one such video by beauty influencer Mikayla Nogueira, she holds up makeup products from Flower Knows, a Chinese brand targeting younger consumers, and exclaims: "This has to be one of the craziest makeup brands I've ever seen!"

After applying the products to her face, she's completely won over. "I'm obsessed with the brand, I want more."

On the lifestyle platform Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, a French woman named Sarah lays out her haul from Shanghai in a video before returning home: lotions, perfumes, eye shadow palettes, lip glosses and face masks, all from Chinese beauty brands.



Foreign buyers select Chinese beauty products at the Yiwu International Expo Center in Zhejiang province on June 13. YANG MEIQING / FOR CHINA DAILY

"I always knew Chinese products were good, but buying them in person made me realize just how incredible the quality is," she said in Mandarin. "They're such a treasure to discover — so good that I want to fly back to China immediately to restock."

For many, the appeal of Chinese beauty brands lies in their thoughtful and authentic integration of traditional Chinese elements.

Thais Teixeira Mendes, a 28-year-old Brazilian master's student at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, has attended almost every beauty expo in Shanghai, testing products from major and niche domestic brands.

See ***Products,*** *page 3*

WORLD WATCH
By Jayanath Colombage

Beijing helps safeguard maritime commerce

Long before the Strait of Hormuz became a critical and highly vulnerable choke point for global energy trade, the maritime world witnessed the threat posed by non-state actors engaged in piracy off the Gulf of Aden in the Arabian Sea starting around 2008.

The Gulf of Aden became a focus of attention due to the activities of a small group of Somali pirates. A large number of merchant vessels that were engaged in legitimate maritime trade were attacked, many were hijacked, and billions of dollars were lost through ransom payments, increased insurance premiums and the rerouting of vessels around the Cape of Good Hope.

No single navy in the Indian Ocean region could handle this maritime security threat on its own. In view of the grave threat to freedom of maritime commerce, the United Nations Security Council adopted several resolutions authorizing international naval cooperation against piracy. Numerous naval forces — including those of the United States, the European Union, NATO, India, Japan, Russia, the Republic of Korea and China — deployed warships to safeguard freedom of navigation in the region.

Toward the end of 2008, China dispatched its first escort task force comprising two guided-missile destroyers and one replenishment ship to the pirate-infested Gulf of Aden to protect Chinese commercial ships and those of other countries. This marked the first operational deployment of Chinese naval forces beyond the first island chain in modern history and initiated one of the longest continuous overseas naval missions undertaken by any navy.

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INDEPTH

Urbanites head north for budget homes, rural tranquility

By ZHAO RUINAN
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Golden rice fields line the banks of the Huma River in the Greater Hinggan Mountains in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province. XIAO DIANCHANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



An aerial photo captures the snowy winter landscapes of Bishui town in Heilongjiang. LYU ZUOWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

By the time Lyu Zuowei reached Bishui town in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province he had driven more than 3,000 kilometers over four days.

The final 100 km of the journey that started in Wuhan, Hubei province, followed a country road into the Greater Hinggan Mountains.

At the entrance to Bishui, Huzhong district, he stopped the car and lowered the window. "I had never breathed air so fresh," said 32-year-old Lyu. "It felt as if it went through my body and cleaned me out."

The stillness was just as striking. The former forestry town is ringed by mountains, with the Huma River nearby. Its broad, orderly streets had been laid out when thousands of forestry workers and their families lived there, but many of its homes are now empty.

Lyu said it was so quiet he could almost hear a pin drop.

He had come in August 2024 to inspect a courtyard he had already bought online for 16,500 yuan ($2,440) without seeing it in person. Advertised on social media, it included an old brick house, a wooden shed, and a narrow vegetable plot.

Lyu had recently left a publicity job with a State-owned construction company in Wuhan and was searching for a place to stay in the Greater Hinggan Mountains. He had read about the area in textbooks when he was a child, and had always wanted to go there.

He first thought of the place as a northern retreat. Somewhere to visit when the summer was too hot and stay before driving back to Wuhan.

But that first visit lingered in his mind.

In October of that year, when a detached courtyard house with a garage became available, he paid 40,000 yuan for it. The land covered more than 800 square meters. He later bought a third, row-style courtyard dwelling for another 40,000 yuan, bringing his total spending on the three properties to 96,500 yuan.

From July 2025, Lyu began spending longer periods in Bishui. On summer days, he sometimes rose before 4 am. He practiced tai chi and dance, wrote calligraphy, chopped firewood, cooked, tended the yard, and edited photographs and videos for his social media account.

Lyu, who studied dance at university and has always wanted to make it his career, said he felt like he was "actually living".

"A house with a yard here is cheap and the environment is so good. I plan to live and stay here for a while," he said. "I see this as a stage of my life — a time to adjust myself and think again about work and what kind of life I want."

He recently moved to Beijing looking for work, and a young woman is staying in one of his courtyard homes. She teaches Chinese online to students overseas and hopes to spend some time living in the region.

Although he is currently in Beijing, Lyu still feels that big-city life is not for him. In the longer term, he hopes to return to the Greater Hinggan Mountains and transform the courtyard homes he bought into a retreat combining cultural tourism, wellness and arts-based healing.

Breaking free

Lyu is part of a small but increasingly visible trend. In recent months, a growing number of social media posts have appeared about buying old homes in the Greater Hinggan Mountains.

Young people have shared stories about moving from major cities to Bishui and Yitulihe in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, as well as their plans to renovate budget homes, tend vegetable plots and spend a season away from urban life.

In Yitulihe, outside buyers have been looking at low-priced apartments and courtyard homes for several years.

The dwellings in Bishui that caught Lyu's eye were built to accommodate a different economy. Many date to the 1980s and 1990s, when logging supported settlements scattered across the mountains. As forestry production changed and workers retired or moved away, rows of houses were left unused.

Pan Shiyu, who has lived in Bishui since arriving from Guangdong province in 2009, began helping meet the growing demand for such properties about five years ago. Sometimes she buys a home and sells it on, while other times she acts as an agent for sellers and buyers.

Her first purchase followed a meeting with an elderly couple preparing to join their children in Shanghai.

"They stood in front of the old house and were upset. They did not want to abandon it, but they could not stay," Pan recalled. She bought the roughly 50-square-meter home for 5,000 yuan and later began acquiring other vacant properties, arranging ownership documents and matching them with buyers.

Pan said she has helped put more than 300 homes back into use. At first, most buyers were approaching retirement. Over the past two years, more people in their 20s and 30s have made inquiries, she said.

"Some young people stay for a few months, some stay longer," she said. "When they have rested and recharged, they set off again."

The changing demographic is noticeable in Bixing community, Bishui.

Zhao Qingguang, head of the community residents' committee, has worked there for more than 20 years.

He estimated that "nonlocal households" have risen from just over 10 to more than 30 today. The number could reach 50 or 60, if buyers who have not yet arrived were included, he said.

The community has about 500 to 600 households. During busy times, it has 700 to 800 residents, Zhao estimated. In winter, the population drops to about 300. Only a handful of nonlocals remain throughout the cold months.

The houses are inexpensive, but many lack indoor bathrooms and modern heating. To deal with the cold, residents burn firewood or install electric systems themselves.

"Heating is a real problem in winter," he said. "The winter here is long."

However, many homebuyers renovate their courtyards and return in summer. Others discover that the distance, cold, or the daily work involved in maintaining the property and their desire for a comfortable existence are too much for them, and they put their homes back on the market.

Desire for land

It's not the first time that urbanites' retreat to greener pastures and search for bargain homes has made headlines.

In 2019, Hegang, a former Heilongjiang coal city, went viral after apartments sold for tens of thousands of yuan. A 2024 media survey found at least 24 cities in 10 provincial-level regions in similar situations. More than half were in Northeast China.

Fuxin and Linghai in Liaoning province also attracted buyers to cheaper old apartments. Some settled permanently, while others kept jobs elsewhere and returned only occasionally.

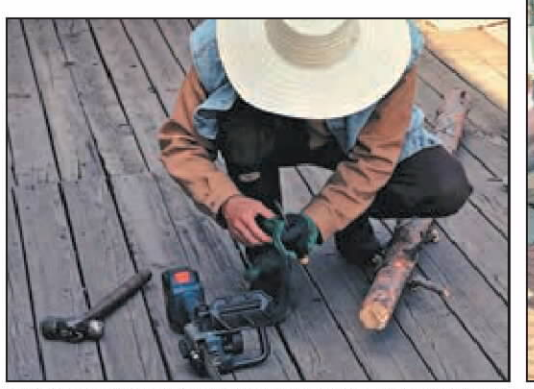
But the forest-town version of the migration to quieter locations offers something many bargain apartments do not: land. Bishui homes often include a courtyard, shed or vegetable plot. The low price buys shelter and the chance to plant vegetables, split firewood and organize life around manual work.

For Lyu, the yard is not purely decorative. He had tried to grow vegetables, adding another task to his routine of chopping wood, cooking and looking after the property.

Sun Jiashan, a researcher at the Academy of Chinese Culture, said improved transportation links, internet access and changing ideas about work have made it possible for more people to move around the country.

Remote work enables "geographical arbitrage", that is, earning income tied to a large city while living more cheaply elsewhere, he said.







Left top: Lyu Zuowei weeds his vegetable garden in Bishui on June 17. **Left above:** Lyu works on his hand-made wooden clothes rack on June 10. **Right above:** Pan Shiyu displays mushrooms she has dried in the yard in Bishui. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A bird's-eye view of Lyu's house in Bishui. PHOTOS BY LYU ZUOWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Lyu's axe used for chopping firewood.



Lyu practices calligraphy in his spare time.

"Some can take a gap period in the Greater Hinggan Mountains and then return to a big city," Sun said. "People no longer have to work in an office building or a cubicle."

Retirees use the seasons as their compass.

Fan Xiuchun, 55, from Zhejiang province, paid a little more than 30,000 yuan for a house in 2023. She usually arrives in April, as the snow begins to melt, and stays until mid-September. Known as "China's coldest town", Huzhong averages 16 to 20 C in summer, while winter temperatures often fall below -40 C.

"The environment is excellent here. My sleep is better here. I spend the whole summer and then go back," Fan said.

She lived and worked in Chongqing for decades, and later spent a lot of time in Yunnan province.

She has a car in Bishui and treats the town as just one stop in a life divided among several places. Such an arrangement, she said, requires retirement income, savings or remote work.

"If you still have to struggle to make a living, this place is not very suitable," she said. "There are not many job opportunities even for local people, let alone for outsiders."

Last year Fan bought three more town houses in Huzhong district. She plans to take her family and friends there every summer to enjoy the cool weather.

In for the long haul

Wang Jiayan is among the few outsiders who have made the move permanent. The 42-year-old from the Ningxia Hui autonomous region has lived in the area continuously for six years.

He bought his first house, without visiting it, for 15,000 yuan after seeing an advertisement on a short-video platform in 2020.

Wang supports himself with his savings. Once the house was bought, he said, daily living has cost very little.

He has kept his home close to its original state, preferring a wood-burning stove and doing manual chores to a modern renovation. In summer, he rises at 3 or 4 am and tends his vegetable garden. He is usually in bed before 9 pm.

Wang's existence, however, is not solitary. "They treat me like a son," he said of the older residents nearby.

The care and concern is mutual. He has a car and drives his neighbors to hospital when they need help. When he fell ill, they came to check on him — one household brought steamed buns, another dumplings.

"People are social animals," Wang said. "Helping one another makes us happy."

He has no plans to return to city life. "I will live here for good," he said. "I like this place very much."

Unlike most outsiders, Wang looks forward to the coldest months. He enjoys chopping wood and stoking the stove when the streets grow quiet.

"Winter is when it is quietest," he said. "Burning firewood is where the warmth of everyday life comes from."

By contrast, Fan plans to leave Bishui by mid-September and return south.

Most of the summer residents will also be gone, but Wang will remain. From his courtyard, he has watched the newcomers grow younger. Many tell him that work and competition in the cities have exhausted them.

Bishui's low costs allow some to spend a summer, or even a year or two, outside their old routines — living differently, slowing down and thinking about what should come next. But family responsibilities and the need to earn an income eventually draw many away.

"Most young people cannot stay here for long," Wang said. "Some come only in summer. Others stay for a year or two to regain their balance, but many eventually return to the cities."

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TOP NEWS

Talks: EU trade promoted

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The two sides held the inaugural meeting of the China-EU trade and investment consultation mechanism last month, during which they agreed that China and the EU are each other's stable and balanced key trading partners. They also tentatively agreed to hold the mechanism's second meeting this autumn.

Commerce Minister Wang Wentao and European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, Interinstitutional Relations, and Transparency Maros Sefcovic have remained in close contact through exchanges of letters and other channels, guiding their respective teams in advancing the work in an orderly manner, He Yadong said.

Working teams from the two sides have since held more than 20 rounds of consultations, with in-depth and professional exchanges conducted under four workstreams on their respective economic and trade concerns, he added.

"China is ready to maintain frequent communication with the EU, uphold mutual respect, and work in the same direction," He said.

The aim is to promote more bilateral trade balance and expansion to maintain a stable and key trading partnership, He added.

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Perilous journey



Migrants, including children, board an overcrowded inflatable boat off the coast of Gravelines, northern France, on Wednesday in an attempt to cross the English Channel and reach the United Kingdom. French authorities said on Thursday that four people have died in two separate attempts to cross the channel on small boats. FRANCOIS LO PRESTI / AFP

Draft law unveiled to combat cyberbullying

By **CAO YIN**
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A newly released draft law on combating cyberbullying has been praised by experts as a people-centered initiative that would establish a collaborative governance framework, uniting all sectors of society to effectively curb and prevent online abuse.

The 60-article draft was published on Wednesday by the Cyberspace Administration of China, the nation's top internet regulator, for public consultation, which will last until Aug 28. If enacted, it would become China's first dedicated law specifically targeting online bullying, providing robust legal safeguards for building a comprehensive governance system, experts said.

The draft defines cyberbullying as concentrated or sustained online acts that infringe on lawful rights — including reputation, honor, privacy, portrait rights and personal information — through insults, rumors, hate speech, divisive content, threats, discriminatory remarks, unlawful disclosure of personal data and persistent online intimidation or harassment.

Liu Yanhong, vice-president of China University of Political Science and Law, said cyberbullying not only infringes upon the lawful rights and interests of individuals and organizations, but also disrupts online order, breeds toxicity in cyberspace and gives rise to widespread social risks.

"It has severely eroded public trust in online safety and become a deeply entrenched ill of the digital world," Liu said, emphasizing that the draft law directly addresses public concerns and embodies a people-first approach to cyberspace governance.

Wang Zhiqin, deputy head of the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, said the legislation will close institutional gaps in tackling online abuse and steer cyberspace governance toward a more systematic, law-based and sustainable path.

As the internet becomes deeply woven into every aspect of work and daily life, the online ecosystem is being reshaped. Yet it has also become a breeding ground for rampant cyberbullying, including doxing (publicly identifying or publishing private information about someone, especially for the purpose of punishment or revenge), smear campaigns and traffic-driven manipulation. Such misconduct harms internet users and poses a threat to national security and public interests.

Several high-profile cases have drawn widespread attention to the issue in recent years. In April, a diving enthusiast in Guangdong province was given 10 days of administrative detention and fined for repeatedly cyberbullying Olympic champion Quan Hongchan.

In 2023, the death of Zheng Linghua, who had been subjected to online abuse for dyeing her hair pink, sparked public outrage. She became a target after posting on social media a photo of herself proudly showing her postgraduate admission letter to her grandfather in his hospital bed. Trolls attacked her for her pink hair and made disparaging remarks, while others reposted the photo and fabricated rumors that it depicted an elderly man married to a young woman. The case prompted many people, including national lawmakers and political advisers, to call for legislation to remedy cyber abuse.

According to the draft, internet service providers would be required to offer users tools to block strangers and have the authority to restrict or close accounts that are found to be spreading bullying content. Cyberspace regulators, together with departments responsible for education, public security, telecommunications, civil affairs, culture and tourism, health and broadcasting, would be tasked with building a governance framework that adopts a tiered approach to handling cyberbullying.

The draft also prohibits any organization or individual from providing technical support — such as internet access, server hosting, data storage or communications transmission — if they know that cyberbullying activities are being conducted.

In addition to establishing a coordinated governance mechanism, the draft would require platforms to provide users with quick on-screen buttons to record suspected bullying content, with enhanced protection for children, the elderly and people with disabilities. It also urges judicial authorities to inform victims and their families of their right to apply for legal assistance and clarifies that psychological counseling and legal support from social organizations are available.

Cyberbullying poses a common governance challenge worldwide, with countries including the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia having introduced laws to tackle online abuse. Wang said China's draft follows this global trend by establishing a multistakeholder collaborative governance framework.

"This approach with Chinese experience will enrich global digital governance rules and advance the vision of building a community with a shared future in cyberspace," she added.

New US curbs slammed as act of bullying

Targeting advanced manufacturing a ruse to blunt China's industrial edge, experts say

By **ZHANG CHENXU** and **ZHONG NAN**

Inside
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The latest restrictions imposed by the United States on new models of foreign-produced power inverters and advanced robotic devices are less of a response to genuine security concerns and more of a politically driven attempt to blunt China's growing industrial edge, officials and experts said on Thursday.

The US is once again "overstretching the scope of national security" to impose restrictions that risk further fragmenting global industrial and supply chains, while shifting the economic costs onto US businesses and consumers without addressing the structural weaknesses in the country's own industrial competitiveness, they added.

"Despite repeated representations from China and the restraint it has exercised, the US Federal Communications Commission has continued to introduce and escalate restrictive measures, seriously harming China's legitimate trade interests and undermining the stability of China-US economic and trade relations," a spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce said in a statement.

The remarks came after the FCC added foreign-produced power inverters and advanced robotic devices to its "Covered List" on Tuesday, effectively barring relevant new models from obtaining FCC equipment authorization and entering the US market.

The FCC said in a statement that the products were deemed to pose "an unacceptable risk to the national security of the US or the safety and security of US persons".

The ministry spokesperson said that the move harms others without benefiting the US, and it constitutes "a typical act of market distortion and unilateral bullying". Under the guise of nondiscrimination, the move actually discriminates against and suppresses Chinese companies and products, the spokesperson added.

Dai Mingfeng, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the move underscores the widening scope of US security-based trade curbs, which have expanded from traditional telecommunications equipment to new energy and advanced manufacturing. He added that it is aimed at restricting market access for Chinese products and erecting new barriers for industrial competition.

Beijing has urged Washington to immediately revoke the move and stop its wrongful practices. "If the US insists on going its own way, China will take resolute countermeasures to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests," the spokesperson said.

Shipping sanctions

In a separate move on Wednesday, the US sanctioned 10 Chinese shipping companies based on the Chinese mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, along with eight tankers, alleging that they had transported Iranian oil despite US restrictions.

The move freezes the companies' assets in the US and prohibits US companies and individuals from doing business with them.

Chen Jianwei, a researcher at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said the measures were imposed under US domestic law, rather than a United Nations framework, raising long-standing concerns over the extraterritorial application of unilateral sanctions and their impact on normal international commerce. He added that China is capable of safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of its shipping companies.

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Hanging in balance



A resident navigates wrecked railway tracks in a flooded area in Sheikhupura, Pakistan, on Wednesday, after the Ravi River overflowed due to heavy monsoon rains. Downpours and flooding have killed at least 109 people and damaged hundreds of homes across the country since June. ARIF ALI / AFP

Security: Humanitarian operation receives recognition

From page 1

The People's Liberation Army Navy also provided humanitarian assistance and medical support and conducted search-and-rescue operations in the region. Thanks to the efforts of the PLA Navy and other navies, incidents of piracy gradually declined and maritime trade resumed.

These anti-piracy operations helped transform the Chinese Navy into a blue-water navy capable of projecting power far from home and playing a crucial role in protecting and helping govern the Indian Ocean as part of the global commons. Through this uninterrupted, long-term deployment, China has demonstrated a high level of operational sustainability and logistics management. Chinese Navy vessels have reportedly safely escorted more than 7,000 merchant ships from many countries. In addition to conducting anti-piracy operations, the Chinese Navy successfully evacuated citizens of several countries who were trapped by the worsening security situation in Yemen in 2015. This humanitarian operation received widespread international recognition and illustrated China's expanding role as a provider of maritime public goods.

Maritime security and safety are increasingly becoming a grave concern for maritime trade, and collaborative mechanisms are needed to ensure them. China's contribution to protecting international maritime trade, maintaining global supply chains, facilitating energy transportation and supporting humanitarian shipping has clearly demonstrated that China is acting beyond its own national and commercial interests. It has supported international maritime governance and demonstrated its ability to work closely with multinational maritime forces as well as individual countries outside China's territorial waters. During these escort missions, China engaged in protecting transit corridors, information exchange, deconfliction mechanisms, communication protocols and joint search-and-rescue coordination. Such practical cooperation has reduced operational risks while strengthening international maritime governance. These long-term, sustained operations far from China's shores have also provided the PLA Navy with experience in long-distance navigation, fleet replenishment, maintenance at sea, extended crew endurance, overseas logistics, operational readiness and capabilities for expeditionary maritime operations. The operations have also helped the PLA Navy develop command skills and expertise in the rules of engagement, international communication, crisis management, boarding operations and maritime law enforcement.

A significant development was the establishment of China's support facility in Djibouti in 2017. This is China's first overseas logistics base, operating alongside bases run by Japan, the United States, France and Italy. The base has facilitated the replenishment of PLA Navy ships deployed for extended periods and provided repair and maintenance services, medical facilities and rest areas for crews. The base has substantially reduced the logistical constraints associated with sustained deployments for the PLA Navy.

From the Chinese perspective, the Gulf of Aden is a vital part of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative. Furthermore, China is a net importer of oil and depends heavily on energy shipments passing through the region. Hence, the escort missions have broader implications for China. Protecting ships engaged in maritime trade also enhances China's global trade connectivity and investment security. It is a win-win situation for China and the wider world. China is also leading by example in line with its Global Security Initiative, which advocates common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security.

The escort missions demonstrate China's evolution from a regional maritime power into a country assuming greater responsibility for maintaining international maritime stability. Furthermore, China has proved to the world its commitment to contributing to a community with a shared future for humanity, particularly in areas where international cooperation is essential.

The author is the 18th Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, a retired four-star admiral of the Sri Lanka Navy, the former secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka and ambassador to Indonesia and ASEAN. He is also a guest professor at Sichuan University, distinguished fellow of the Pathfinder Foundation, and nonresident senior fellow of the Hong Kong Research Center for Asian Studies. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Products: Traditional ingredients boost appeal

From page 1

"I could see, touch, smell and try various products," she said. "Many ingredients have been used traditionally for hundreds of years and are embedded in Chinese culture."

Chinese herbals such as ginseng, Chinese angelica and green tea are now widely used in domestic beauty products. It reflects the ancient philosophy of gentle and natural skin care, according to officials from domestic beauty brand Chando.

Behind this consumer enthusiasm lies the accelerating global expansion of Chinese beauty brands.

The Shanghai-based Chando Group has focused on tech-driven skin care, and now operates in 15 countries and regions. Zhang Yinggui, general manager of the group's overseas sales department, attributed the rising global recognition to its breakthroughs in independent research, a differentiated Eastern philosophy and cultural values.

Beyond brand growth, the Oriental Beauty Valley in Shanghai is also elevating its manufacturing capabilities to a new level. Flexible magnetic levitation production systems enable a single production line to switch seamlessly between eyeliner and cushion compact production, while artificial intelligence-powered unmanned workshops are paving the way for fully realized "lights-out factories".

This forward-looking advanced manufacturing approach allows Fengxian to meet the surging demand from fast-growing domestic brands and take on high-end, small-batch orders from leading European and United States beauty giants.

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COMMENT

Editorials

US' unilateral sanctions about leveraging engineered volatility for hegemonic profit

When international rules constrain the actions of the United States, they are usually dismissed or bypassed. But when they can be invoked against other countries, they suddenly become indispensable. Extraterritorial sanctions, secondary sanctions and restrictions on third-country companies have become routine instruments of US foreign policy.

The irony is that these tactics may ultimately weaken the very system they seek to preserve. By encouraging countries to diversify payment systems, reduce reliance on the dollar and strengthen alternative economic partnerships, unilateral sanctions are accelerating the emergence of a more multipolar global economy. The US may succeed in delaying that transition, but every new round of sanctions makes it harder to claim that principle, rather than profit, guides its policy.

The latest demonstration of that came on Wednesday, when the US State Department announced sanctions on a group of Chinese mainland and Hong Kong shipping companies for allegedly transporting Iranian crude oil to China and the United Arab Emirates.

Let us dispense with the fiction that this is primarily about nonproliferation or Israeli security. The Donald Trump administration has been unusually candid about its real priorities. Asked on Monday where the $13 billion in Venezuelan oil revenue seized by Washington had gone, US President Donald Trump first replied, "It goes toward running the country." Pressed further, he admitted, "It can go to the military. Congress has to approve it."

The Financial Times reported last week that six months after Venezuela's political upheaval and two devastating earthquakes, the money remains unaccounted for, reportedly held in an offshore Qatari account. Trump was even more revealing aboard Air Force One: "Venezuela, we paid for that war many times over. And that'll happen with Iran also. We paid for the war many times over."

The implication was unmistakable. Wars are expected to finance themselves. Oil revenues cover the costs of military operations and generate additional returns. Iran's nuclear program and its alleged threat to Israel become moral justifications for what is fundamentally a contest over energy, finance and geopolitical leverage. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described Tuesday's White House meeting with Trump as a "full partnership" to ensure Iran never acquires nuclear weapons "and other goals as well". Those "other goals" deserve at least as much scrutiny as the nuclear issue itself.

The Chinese companies targeted by the latest US sanctions are portrayed as part of Iran's so-called "shadow fleet". Yet the longest shadow is cast by Washington's own extraterritorial sanctions. Such unilateral measures are unlawful as they lack authorization from the United Nations Security Council.

In early May, China prohibited domestic organizations and individuals from recognizing or complying with the US' Iran-related sanctions imposed on five Chinese petrochemical companies. The Ministry of Commerce rightly pointed out that Washington was unlawfully restricting normal commercial activities between Chinese enterprises and third countries, violating international law and the basic norms governing international relations. The measures were adopted under China's rules on counteracting unjustified extraterritorial application of foreign legislation and other measures.

China possesses sufficient legal and economic tools to protect the legitimate interests of its companies. If Washington continues to weaponize finance and energy for geopolitical advantage, Beijing has every reason to respond with further legal and economic countermeasures.

The broader objective extends well beyond Iran. Energy security and financial power remain inseparable pillars of US hegemony. By maintaining dominance over the international energy system, Washington protects the petrodollar, limits alternatives to dollar-based settlements and constrains efforts by emerging economies to build more independent financial arrangements.

Every escalation reinforces the strategic importance of US influence over global energy flows and the dollar-denominated oil trade. Oil prices surged after renewed military tensions involving Iran, while concerns over the Strait of Hormuz once again rattled global markets. This has become a recurring pattern. Washington tightens sanctions to squeeze supplies, eases pressure when markets require stability, then restores restrictions as negotiations falter. The cycle preserves US influence over energy markets while reinforcing the central role of the dollar in global oil transactions. Geopolitical volatility has become an instrument of financial leverage for the US.

'Excess capacity' allegations false panacea

Nearly five decades after the launch of reform and opening-up, China has secured its place in the global market and supply chains. The country has not only embraced the opportunities of globalization, but also emerged stronger from the challenges of international competition, becoming an important contributor to the global economy.

But competition, one of the defining features of globalization, has faced higher barriers from some countries that were once among the most ardent champions of the process which connects economies around the world. Some economies, for specific purposes such as geopolitics and trade protection, have concocted various new standards to define so-called "excess capacity", simply, mechanically or generally, in an attempt to contain China's development and set obstacles to normal international economic and trade cooperation. These so-called "conceptual" standards are neither consistent with the laws of development, nor can they be detached from the realities of countries or how the global economy has evolved, as pointed out by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce in a document released earlier this week.

It's neither well-founded nor fair to attribute China's exports to "excess capacity".

Responding to some Western countries equating China's trade surplus in goods with "excess capacity", the position paper provides a wealth of examples to prove that this argument is untenable. It says the country's export growth stems not only from the improvement of its economies of scale and innovation capabilities, but also from the demand driven by other countries pursuing their green transition and industrial development, as shown by the popularity of Chinese products such as new energy vehicles and solar panels.

Over the past decade, for instance, the average cost of electricity from wind and solar power worldwide has fallen by more than 60 percent and 80 percent respectively, in large part thanks to Chinese manufacturing capacity — a dividend that has made a great contribution to the global energy transition.

Artificial intelligence models developed by Chinese companies are also rapidly gaining ground in overseas markets because they deliver strong performance on a cheaper basis, thanks to both the country's unwavering pursuit of innovation and its solid energy infrastructure.

Some Western countries blame China's development for their own problems such as slowing economic growth and lagging industrial transformation. Yet the data show China is providing more market, development and innovation dividends to the world through the utilization of its market advantages, industrial development and sci-tech progress. Instead of "China Shock 2.0", the reality is "China Opportunity 2.0".

Take for example the rise of China's electric vehicle industry. Not only are international companies collaborating with Chinese enterprises to develop their own products, but Chinese EV makers are also cooperating with their counterparts in Europe and other parts of the world by investing in local factories, reviving production lines, improving the supply chain and creating jobs.

Attempts to stifle competition under the pretext of "excess capacity" won't stop weaker industries lagging further behind.

Experience gained over the past decades of globalization demonstrates that openness unlocks shared opportunities, and an international trade and investment system that runs smoothly is in line with the interests of all countries.

A robust manufacturing foundation and rapid technological advances constitute key benefits China has reaped from globalization and passed on. Its contribution to the world economy should be fairly recognized, not stigmatized.

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Hao Yanpeng



Opinion Line

Software pioneer helps build defense shields with dedication

The past two years have marked an obvious acceleration in the technological upgrading and equipment modernization of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, which has a growing array of world-class, domestically built weapon systems, many of which were publicly displayed during the magnificent military parade last September and subsequent interservice combat exercises.

Among the systems made public are the DF-17 hypersonic missile, which maneuvers at extreme speeds to penetrate missile defense layers; the J-35, China's first carrier-borne stealth fighter, which has been deployed aboard the CNS *Fujian* — the country's third aircraft carrier and its first with a domestically developed electromagnetic launch and recovery system; and the JL-1 air-launched long-range ballistic missile that has equipped the PLA Air Force with a reliable, powerful capability to execute a nuclear counterstrike.

Last year's parade also featured a dedicated unmanned combat formation, including loyal wingman drones that form a core part of the PLA's next-generation air combat plan, and ground-fighting robots that promise round-the-clock mobility and reduced human casualties. While some next-generation programs, such as the widely speculated sixth-generation fighter jet models, remain unannounced, their expected development underscores sustained investment in frontier defense technologies.

Such hardware advances cannot be separated from the people inventing them. At the core of China's tech-empowerment strategy is a years-long push to nurture high-caliber research talent, embodied by Senior Colonel Wang Ji, a National University of Defense Technology scientist who has just been given a top national honorary title.

Specializing in high-confidence software verification — a technology critical to the operational reliability of military hardware and space systems — Wang has dedicated his career to building an independent domestic platform in this once-overlooked domain.

High-confidence software serves as an invisible safety backbone for sophisticated military equipment. Using mathematical verification methods, it identifies hidden logical vulnerabilities deep within core operating code that standard testing is unable to detect — flaws that could derail missions in stealth fighters, missile systems or aircraft carrier command networks.

Breaking through numerous technical obstacles, Wang and his team developed a full-stack, self-reliant verification framework now deployed across dozens of major defense and space programs. His work has become a cornerstone of quality assurance for China's new-generation weaponry, directly supporting the rapid operational rollout of new platforms.

Equally vital is his role in talent cultivation: he has built a vibrant youth-led research team, with many early-career scholars leading key project tasks, creating a sustainable pipeline of expertise for future innovation in defense technology.

Wang's story is representative of a broader trend. As China deepens its technology-driven military transformation, improved incentive mechanisms and research platforms are drawing more top professionals to defense technology research, ensuring military modernization advances in lockstep with economic growth.

— ZHAO LEI, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Plan calls for full-caliber climate response

Editor's note: *China aims to reduce carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP by 17 percent from 2025 levels by 2030, according to the national climate change response plan for the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period. In a Q&A posted on the Ministry of Ecology and Environment website, the person in charge of the climate change response department elaborated on the policy, while Chai Qimin, director of the strategic planning department at the National Center for Climate Change Strategy and International Cooperation, outlined the significance of the plan in an interview with China Central Television. Below are excerpts of the interviews. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

China has introduced a climate change response plan to make further progress in addressing climate change and achieving carbon peaking and carbon neutrality goals. The plan also sets out goals to establish a comprehensive carbon footprint management system and bring improvements to the climate adaptation framework.

The plan comes at a time when global temperatures have likely reached their highest levels since modern record-keeping began. Rising temperatures have accelerated the melting of glaciers, contributed to the rise in sea levels and caused widespread degradation of coastal coral reefs. These changes threaten the ecological balance, undermine biodiversity and increasingly disrupt livelihoods, economic activities and sustainable development, resulting in economic losses worldwide.

Against this backdrop, it is necessary to build stronger foundational capacities, including the development of sponge cities and the implementation of comprehensive emergency preparedness and response systems to better protect communities from the growing risks of extreme weather and other climate-related events.

The plan sets out key goals for 2026 to 2030, including accelerating the green and low-carbon transition of the economy and society, enhancing the carbon sequestration capacity of ecosystems and advancing coordinated efforts to reduce pollution and carbon emissions.

It has also stressed strengthening methane emissions control, enhancing nitrous oxide emissions management and advancing the control of fluorinated greenhouse gas emissions.

Other goals include accelerating the development of the national carbon emissions trading market, actively fostering a high-quality national voluntary greenhouse gas emissions reduction trading market, enhancing the vitality and efficiency of carbon markets and expanding the international influence of China's carbon market.

Also on the agenda are improvements in carbon footprint labeling, certification and governance mechanisms, broadening the application of product carbon footprints and promoting international alignment of carbon footprint standards and rules.

China will play a major role in advancing multilateral climate governance, fulfilling its transparency obligations in a robust manner, deepening bilateral and multilateral international exchanges and cooperation, and continuing to strengthen South-South cooperation on climate change.

Recognizing that addressing climate change requires coordinated action across sectors and government agencies, the plan adopts a systematic approach to ensure effective implementation. It identifies three priorities for strengthening governance and policy execution.

The first is to deepen interdepartmental coordination. The Ministry of Ecology and Environment will strengthen policy coordination and operational cooperation with relevant government departments while guiding local governments and key industries in advancing climate initiatives in a coordinated manner. Enhanced information sharing and joint coordination mechanisms will help ensure that all stakeholders work toward common objectives.

The second priority is to strengthen public engagement and capacity building. Through broader public communication, education and professional training, the government aims to improve climate awareness and enhance society's ability to respond to climate change. These efforts are expected to encourage greener, lower-carbon lifestyles while expanding public participation in climate action.

The third priority is to strengthen monitoring and evaluation. Authorities will establish dynamic monitoring mechanisms, conduct midterm and final assessments, and ensure that the targets outlined in the plan are achieved on schedule.

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VIEWS

Fang Ke

A nuclear shortcut to greater insecurity

Japan is steadily treading the dangerous path toward nuclear armament. Citing shifts in the global security landscape and adjustments in Europe's nuclear posture, Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi recently argued that Japan should "discuss nuclear-related policies without taboos".

His remarks challenge the country's long-standing "Three Non-Nuclear Principles" and are intended to garner public support and clear the legal hurdles for Japan's nuclear armament.

Koizumi's remarks are neither accidental nor isolated. Rather, they reveal a systemic push by Japan's right-wing forces to accelerate remilitarization and challenge the postwar international order. Shortly after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi took office, several of her close aides expressed pro-nuclear sentiments.

Calls for nuclear-powered submarines and repeated attempts by the ruling coalition to scrap the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles" during revisions of Japan's security documents reveal that the die-hard nuclear ambitions of right-wing forces are resurfacing.

Japan may frame such moves as a response to its growing "security anxiety", but history and reality show that pursuing nuclear armament is counterproductive.

It would upset the strategic balance in Northeast Asia, intensify regional tensions, drag Japan back to militarism and plunge it deeper into a security dilemma.

After World War II, guided by pacifists' reflection on its history of aggression and constrained by restrictions of the postwar international order, Japan adopted an "exclusively defense-oriented" policy and embraced the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles" — not possessing, producing or introducing nuclear weapons. This commitment to peaceful development laid the foundation for decades of political stability and economic recovery for the country.

Instead of ensuring security, nuclear weapons would make Japan a prominent target while eliminating its strategic security buffer.

However, amid significant shifts in the international landscape, Japan's right-wing factions have increasingly exaggerated "external threats" to justify dismantling the constraints imposed by its pacifist Constitution and the postwar international order. This rise of neo-militarism, exemplified by Koizumi's overt calls for nuclear armament, reflects a dangerous drift away from pacifism.

By equating nuclear deterrence with "absolute security", Koizumi framed nuclear weapons as the ultimate weapon for coping with potential security risks and for elevating Japan's strategic standing. Koizumi's rhetoric is fundamentally flawed because it overlooks geopolitical realities, Japan's historical responsibilities, and the international constraints it should abide by.

The notion that nuclear weapons can ensure a country's security is also not correct. In fact, nuclear weapons will prove counterproductive for Tokyo by triggering a regional arms race.

Instead of bringing "absolute security" to Japan, they will endanger the security of all regional countries.

Northeast Asia is already one of the world's most strategically sensitive regions. Japan's nuclear aspirations will disrupt the strategic equilibrium maintained for decades, and force other countries to upgrade their necessary nuclear deterrence or conventional military capabilities. This would replace the strategic stability in Northeast Asia with escalating confrontation.

Geography also doesn't favor Japan. The country's long, narrow territory, limited strategic depth and densely concentrated population and industrial centers make it more vulnerable than its larger neighbors in a potential nuclear standoff. Instead of ensuring security, nuclear weapons would make Japan a prominent target while eliminating its strategic security buffer.

As a non-nuclear-weapon signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Japan's pursuit of nuclear arms blatantly violates the international non-proliferation regime and undermines global nuclear governance.

The country's history of aggression and "Peace Constitution" strip Japan of any legitimacy to acquire nuclear weapons. More importantly, Japan has yet to fully reckon with its wartime crimes. Nuclear weapons would only bolster its historical revisionism and military ambitions.

As a defeated aggressor in WWII and the only country in the world to have suffered atomic bombings, Japan knows all too well how devastating nuclear weapons are. That painful history should reinforce, not weaken, its commitment to nuclear restraint.

Koizumi's advocacy of nuclear weapons for "security" is essentially an attempt to break from the postwar order and reestablish Japan as a major military power.

Its nuclear ambitions can trap Japan in a dual "security dilemma". For decades, the country has relied on the United States-Japan alliance and Washington's nuclear umbrella and military presence for its security. Developing its own nuclear capability would run counter to Washington's strategic layout in East Asia and invite US suspicion.

It would gradually erode the security umbrella provided by the US-Japan alliance. On the other hand, intensified tensions with neighboring countries would leave Japan politically isolated and diplomatically disadvantaged.

The warning signs are already visible. Japan's rapid military buildup — including substantial increases in defense spending, development of offensive arms, hyping of nuclear weapons, and interference in regional disputes — has already put its neighbors on high alert.

This might-makes-right security strategy will drag Japan into a vicious cycle of arms and insecurity, potentially reviving the militaristic path it followed during WWII.

Lasting national security does not come from military expansion or nuclear armament but from a stable regional order, mutual trust among neighbors, strategic restraint, and sustainable development.

Koizumi's fallacy that "nuclear brings security", along with the re-militarization and nuclear agenda pushed by Japan's right-wing forces, is a short-sighted gamble that threatens the country's national security, regional peace, and the shared future of humanity.

Tokyo must recognize that peaceful development, security and stability depend on adhering to the "pacifist" Constitution, committing to non-nuclear principles, and integrating into regional cooperation.

Indulging in militarism and pursuing the so-called "absolute security" through nuclear arms would only lead to disaster.

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

Evan Freidin

China's open-weight AI a boon for the world

The 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance, hosted by Shanghai earlier this month, was themed "AI Partnership for a Brighter Future" and focused on the global development and governance of AI technology.

Global Lens

Currently, China and the United States are the only two nations with the resources to develop AI technology on a large scale. Therefore, their approaches to AI development significantly shape the global trajectory of AI evolution. While one country emphasizes AI as a tool accessible to all, the other has adopted a model where AI is controlled by the elite.

The success of the two approaches will depend not only on the capabilities of individual models but also on their global adoption. In recent months, the performance gap between Chinese and US frontier models has narrowed significantly. Moonshot's Kimi K3, for instance, recently achieved benchmark results rivaling those of Anthropic's Claude Opus 4.8 and OpenAI's GPT-5.5.

However, the more consequential divergence lies in governance philosophy. While US companies often retain proprietary control, China's leading labs and tech giants have embraced open-weight models. This means their model parameters are publicly accessible for modification and deployment, enabling global adaptation and innovation. Although this is not without the risks of misuse, it offers a viable alternative to AI monopolies.

The WAIC's emphasis on openness signals that this ethos is now central to Beijing's AI vision. As President Xi Jinping stated on July 17 in his address at the WAIC, "AI development should not be a solo performance by a single country, but a symphony of international cooperation. We should seize this rare, historic opportunity to encourage open source, openness, collaboration and sharing."



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

This message is like a beacon to the Global South, indicating that this powerful technology will not remain under the control of US tech giants. It allows developers from Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America to finetune Chinese models for their own languages and contexts while avoiding high costs. Countries that were previously limited to consuming technology can now actively participate in shaping its development.

Thanks to this ethos, since August 2025, Chinese AI has surpassed Western AI in terms of cumulative downloads in the open-source community, highlighting its widespread adoption across the globe. Many startups and companies, including those from the US, are increasingly using Chinese large language models to build their own AI programs.

For the world to enter the AI age equitably, there must be equal access to this technology. Otherwise, it could become another tool of hegemony and domination.

We have already observed that in Australia, where US companies are embedding themselves into the process of legislating AI and data center standards. The Australian government is resisting these influences, hoping to put in place measures to support Australian artists and the energy grid, but the threat to Australian digital sovereignty persists.

Recent moves by the US government to possibly ban US companies from using Chinese open-source models highlight its apprehensions concerning Chinese AI — not just its performance, but how ubiquitous it can potentially become.

Similarly, measures are being considered to ensure that US AI stays in the hands of US users.

In June, the US government went so far as to briefly ban Claude's highest-performing model, Fable 5, from use by anyone who is not a citizen of the US.

However, this pursuit of absolute control over AI may lead to its isolation from global AI development, ultimately weakening its position in the long run.

China's embrace of open-weight models in AI is a boon to the world. It will ensure that AI is accessible to all, and does not remain in the hands of corporate tech giants.

Without this ethos, AI is likely to become another divide between developing and developed nations — another form of fragmentation that breeds inefficiency and mistrust.

If AI is to become a force for good, then it must be developed through multilateral cooperation, allowing all stakeholders to guide the technology and the changes it will bring.

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Chen Weihua

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Preserve the authenticity and charm of old towns

Over the past year, I must have visited some 50 old towns during my travels across China. Some are deservedly famous, including Lijiang and Dali in Yunnan province and the Xijiang One Thousand Household Miao Village in Guizhou province.

But perhaps the most impressive are those little-known places tucked away from the tourist trail. Among them is the Tianmen Bouyei Ancient Village, a 600-year-old traditional village of ethnic Bouyei people nestled deep in the mountains of Guizhou province, about a three-hour drive from Liupanshui.

Its traditional wooden stilted houses stand as they have for centuries, and have not been given cosmetic facelifts to please tourists. In fact, there are hardly any tourists there because the village is so difficult to reach.

By sheer coincidence, we arrived there during the Bouyei people's June Sixth Festival, which is celebrated on the sixth day of the sixth month of the lunar calendar. The entire village gathered for a festive meal, sharing food and laughter like an extended family. It was a living tradition, not a staged performance for visitors.

Another memorable stop was the Suoga Miao Village, about a two-hour drive from Liupanshui. It too has preserved much of its traditional way of life. With many old wooden houses, it is known for the distinctive headdresses of women — massive wooden horns wrapped with white wool and their own hair, symbolizing reverence for nature and their ancestors.

One woman patiently demonstrated how she creates the elaborate longhorn headdress for her teenaged granddaughter, passing on a tradition from one generation to another.

There is no doubt that tourism helps showcase China's rich cultural heritage to more people and boosts the local economy. But excessive commercialization can change the authentic character of a place, as it has in many old towns and villages across the country.

There should be a balance between developing tourism and preserving local culture, traditions and lifestyles that give old towns their identity.

The Xijiang One Thousand Household Miao Village is one such example. As the largest ethnic Miao settlement in China, it has more than a thousand traditional wooden stilt houses built along steep mountain slopes. It presents a breathtaking view, especially at night when the whole village lights up like a constellation of warm yellow lights.

Today, most homes there have been converted into family-run hotels, restaurants and shops catering to the swarm of tourists flocking to this National AAAAA attraction.

Tourism has helped lift local people out of poverty and created prosperity, but to me the touristy village is less appealing than the authenticity of the Tianmen and Suoga villages.

I am reminded of an article I wrote about 25 years ago in the Shanghai Star, a tabloid run by China Daily, after visiting two scenic canal towns near Shanghai.

Zhouzhuang had already become a commercial tourism success, while Wuzhen was relatively unknown and far less crowded. I wrote then that I hoped Wuzhen would retain its tranquility.

Of course, history had other plans. Wuzhen today is even more famous than Zhouzhuang.

It is regarded as a model of balancing commercial success with the preservation of its historical character.

However, most old towns in China have become too commercialized. It's disheartening to see nearly every house in Xijiang One Thousand Household Miao Village turned into a business.

It reminds one of Zhouzhuang in the 1990s, when shop after shop was selling the town's well-known pig's knuckle delicacy.

Even more dismaying is the craze to build "old towns" purely for commercial purposes over the past two decades. Many such newly built "old towns" are eyesores. They look more like theme parks than old towns because there are hardly any "old" houses there. Strictly speaking, they should not be allowed to be labeled as "old towns".

Despite enormous investment, few of these heritage projects have been successful in attracting tourists. Many have become ghost towns.

There should be a balance between developing tourism and preserving local culture, traditions and lifestyles that give old towns their identity.

For example, zoning is necessary so that local people can live there just like their parents and grandparents did, while commercial activities should be confined to designated areas.

Old towns are very charming, but that charm is also very fragile. It could quickly be lost if authenticity is replaced by excessive tourism development.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

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

TIAN QING AND WANG XINGXING

Why robots dance

China's robot dancers are not only a new expression of Chinese culture, but also the precursors of embodied intelligence for real-world applications

"Dancing robots" has repeatedly trended on social media after a series of high-profile public performances, including the *yangge* dance and Chinese martial arts shows at the Spring Festival Gala. Alongside admiration and applause from the public, there has also been persistent skepticism that this is simply "showing off" or even "useless".



Tian Qing



Wang Xingxing

Why should robots dance?

From a technological perspective, most artificial intelligence today is essentially a "brain in a vat" — skilled at processing symbols, but without a body. Humanoid robots represent the next frontier of AI: embodied intelligence, which allows AI to truly "inhabit" a body and move from the digital world into the physical one.

A robot can be thought of as having its own versions of a human brain, cerebellum and body — the "brain" decides what movement comes next and at what rhythm; the "cerebellum" controls how much force each joint exerts and where the center of gravity shifts; and the "body" consists of motors, sensors and limbs.

For a robot to complete a three-minute dance, its "cerebellum" must make hundreds of real-time decisions every second — continuously shifting its center of gravity, synchronizing more than a dozen joints and staying in time with the music. A delay of just 0.05 seconds in any one of these processes can cause the robot to lose its balance, fail the movement and fall.

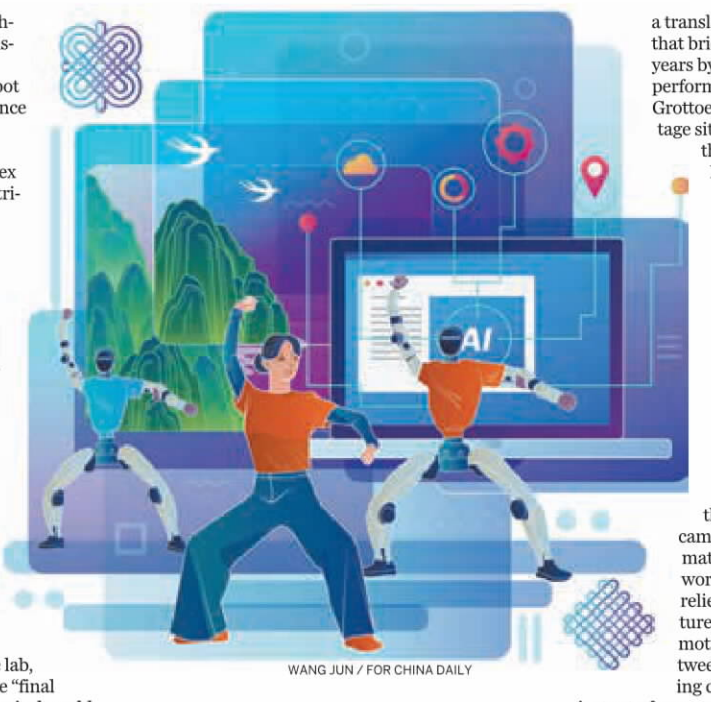
An even deeper challenge lies in the transition from simulation to reality. Even a model trained to perfection in the lab can still lose its balance in the real world, because real-world environments are always more complex than any simulation.

Mastering the skill of dance means AI can both "conceive of" a movement and "execute" it. As robots' ability to learn from training data advances, their movement precision improves accordingly. The more complex the dance movements, the higher the demands on balance and multi-joint coordination — and the stronger the robot's ability to withstand unexpected disturbances in real environments. A robot that can perform dance movements reliably has the potential to take on more complex tasks, such as industrial inspection, emergency rescue and household services.

In other words, a robot dancing at a heritage site today could be conducting rescue work at a disaster site tomorrow. Dancing isn't a performance stunt — it's a rigorous, real-world test.

From the perspective of application scenarios, when a robot operates in a lab, it is answering "questions it has already studied". When it operates outside the lab, it is stepping into the "final exam" of the real physical world.

In the AI field, there is a specific term: "out-of-distribution", referring to the real-world situations that robots have never encountered in the training set. Completing a performance smoothly and safely in a real-world setting is the most direct test of an embodied intelligence system's robustness, or its ability to resist interference. Data collected in real environments is itself valuable training material — it records how a robot responds to unpredictable variables such as lighting, ground conditions and sound, offering samples that are difficult to replicate in a lab and feeding into further algorithm iteration. Through the continual accumulation of this kind of data, robots can gradually progress from completing a single performance to genuinely entering homes, hospitals and communities — serving people's daily lives and empowering countless industries.



WANG JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

And from a cultural perspective, dancing turns robots into narrators of human civilization.

Choreographing a robot dance of random movements is technically possible, but doing so yields relatively uniform data, and squanders the rich potential of cultural elements to empower new technology.

A team of developers recently completed a translation of cultural elements that bridges a span of about 1,500 years by staging flash mob robot performances at the Yungang Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage site. They used AI to convert the dynamic postures of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534) guardian statues at the grottoes into data, and then had a fleet of robots physically render that data — so that this piece of cultural heritage could truly come "alive" before people's eyes.

The process began with dance archaeology, analyzing the physical tension, center of gravity and muscle orientation of 10 sets of the statues at the site one by one. Next came AI-based 3D pose estimation, in which a neural network translated the 2D stone reliefs into 3D skeletal structures. This was followed by motion completion, or in-betweening: since a stone carving captures only a single instant of a movement, AI was used to fill in the preceding and following frames of continuous motion — in keeping with the principles of human biomechanics — so that these static guardian figures could "move". Next came motion retargeting: since the skeletal proportions of humans and robots differ, each movement had to be precisely mapped before it could be applied to a specific robot body. Finally came physical feasibility verification, in which the movements were tested through simulation before being transferred to the hardware itself.

This work also raises a deeper question worth exploring over the long term: Most AI models today are trained on data from specific cultural backgrounds. Data from English-speaking countries teaches AI to understand and interpret the world through the logic of the English language, leaving such models ill-equipped to grasp the body language of Northern Wei Dynasty guardian statues from China. Using data on Eastern cultural rhythm and posture to train embodied intelligence is a way of building a "cultural body" for Chinese AI — and more than that, it adds Eastern cultural elements to the broader landscape of artificial intelligence, helping align AI with values shared by all of humanity, and promoting exchange and mutual learning among different civilizations.

The significance of embodied intelligence extends beyond any single country or civilization. It represents a technological leap that belongs to all of humanity — one that takes AI out of the virtual "brain in a vat" and into the physical world, while giving the cultural elements of different civilizations an entirely new medium of expression that global audiences can understand.

Film and new media technologies once drove the cross-regional spread of culture and art. Today, AI and robotics go a step further, bringing ancient civilizations "alive" in the real world as tangible, interactive presences. China's robot dancers are not only a new expression of Chinese culture, but also a new starting point for exchange and mutual learning among civilizations.

Just as Chinese robots can now perform the poses of Yungang's guardian figures, in the future they may perform Greece's Hera dance or India's Bharatanatyam. Such performances would enrich the cultural diversity within the AI world, so that each civilization's beauty can shine in its own way and, together, create a shared beauty — making robots a new vessel for the diversity of world civilizations and the uniqueness of national cultures.

Tian Qing is a member of the Beijing Dancers Association, a cross-media artist, and the director of the robot dance show at "Macau 2049" and "The Awakening of the Yungang Guardians". Wang Xingxing is the founder of Unitree Robotics. The authors contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

MA HANZHI

Modernizing together

China, Africa and other Global South countries can rely on multilateral cooperation platforms such as WAICO to jointly enhance AI governance

Among the 29 founding member countries that signed the agreement on the establishment of the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization — the first intergovernmental international organization dedicated exclusively to AI — on July 16, Africa stands out with 10 seats, accounting for about one-third of the total. This reflects the fruitful outcome of China-Africa cooperation in the field of AI in recent years.



China has been steadily improving Africa's foundational conditions for AI development by assisting in the construction of fiber-optic networks, cross-border connectivity and new-generation mobile communication networks and other digital infrastructure. In August 2021, then-assistant foreign minister Deng Li introduced China's proposals for the China-Africa Partnership Plan on Digital Innovation at the China-Africa Internet Development and Cooperation Forum, which made digital infrastructure a key area of cooperation. At the 2024 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged to "build with Africa a digital technology cooperation center and initiate 20 digital demonstration projects so as to embrace together the latest round of technological revolution and industrial transformation".

Today, China-Africa digital infrastructure cooperation is accelerating. On Nov 7, 2025, the eastern segment of China Mobile's 2Africa submarine cable was officially activated in Kenya's capital Nairobi. With a total length of about 45,000 kilometers, the 2Africa cable runs along the African coastline and connects over 30 countries and regions across Africa, Asia and Europe, providing high-quality, low-latency and reliable international communications services to an estimated 3 billion people along its route. Once fully operational, it will reduce data transmission costs across Africa and boost regional online connectivity.

In August 2025, the second phase of the Zimbabwe Center for High Performance Computing, built with Chinese assistance, was handed over to Zimbabwe. The computing platform provided by China's Huawei delivers powerful support for local cutting-edge scientific research and high-level talent development. According to allAfrica, a website that aggregates and produces news primarily on the African continent, Chinese-backed projects have accelerated access to digital infrastructure that might otherwise have taken years to develop. In the AI space, this translates into opportunities to adopt technologies that enhance public service delivery, improve financial inclusion, and drive efficiency in sectors such as agriculture and transport.

China adheres to a philosophy of openness and sharing, working hand-in-hand with Africa to reap the dividends of AI development. In building an open-source ecosystem, Chinese open-source large models such as DeepSeek, with their high cost-effectiveness and localization advantages, are winning wide favor among African developers, in contrast to the often hefty licensing fees charged by mainstream Western models. According to Microsoft's Global AI Adoption in 2025, DeepSeek usage in Africa is estimated to be two to four times higher than in other regions. As AI applications gain traction across the continent, more developers are choosing Chinese open source models as the foundational platform for local-language AI. In terms of application scenarios, Chinese AI technologies are now penetrating multiple sectors in Africa, presenting a diverse and flourishing landscape.

China's intelligent meteorological early-warning solution MAZU has been deployed in Ethiopia and several other countries, advancing the use of AI in numerical forecasting, extreme weather identification and risk management. In Mozambique, plant protection drones based on China's BeiDou navigation technology are widely used for farmland mapping, rice seeding and pesticide spraying, greatly improving harvest efficiency. In South Africa, Huawei has deployed intelligent systems for local railways, reducing accidents, and improving inspection and maintenance efficiency.

On talent cultivation, in July 2024, China and 26 African countries jointly issued the Action Plan for China-Africa Digital Cooperation and Development, explicitly committing to train 1,000 digital technology professionals for Africa over the following three years. On July 17, it was announced that in the next five years, China will provide developing countries with 5,000 opportunities in AI training and seminar programs, continuously contributing to global AI capacity-building.

As practical China-Africa AI cooperation deepens, consensus on improving global governance is also growing. In October 2023, China took the lead in issuing the Global AI Governance Initiative, establishing the principle of developing AI for good. Guided by the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, this initiative has garnered broad international support and response by building cooperative consensus for global AI development.

At the Opening Ceremony of the 2026 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in July, President Xi called for enhancing "alignment and coordination on AI development strategies, governance rules and technical standards, so as to form a consensus-based global governance framework at an early date to make this frontier technology better benefit humanity". These propositions resonate with the shared concerns of the Global South and embody the common aspiration of developing countries to seek development and participate in rule-making amid the new technological revolution. Documents such as the Africa Declaration on Artificial Intelligence show that Africa's AI governance philosophy centers on safeguarding sovereignty, upholding shared values, putting people first, balancing development and security — principles that are highly consistent with China's emphasis on sovereign equality and its governance tenets of people-centered approach and developing AI for good. Crucially, both sides firmly oppose the monopolization of AI governance by a few countries or blocs, and are committed to building a fairer and more inclusive global governance system. This is the underlying reason why African countries actively joined the WAICO. South Africa, Algeria, Ethiopia, and Kenya — countries with more rapid AI development — along with other African signatories, demonstrate Africa's positive stance toward WAICO and its strong endorsement of its principles.



YANG MEINI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Africa still faces multiple challenges in participating in global AI governance, including weak infrastructure, talent and data gaps, insufficient institutional voice and risks of technological dependence. Nevertheless, China, Africa and other Global South countries can rely on multilateral cooperation platforms such as WAICO to deepen innovative collaboration, promote inclusive development, strengthen coordinated governance, and jointly enhance the capacity and level of all parties in global AI governance. AI can be developed in a sound, safe and fair direction, and AI can effectively serve the modernization efforts of all countries.

The author is an assistant research fellow at the Department of Developing Countries Studies at the China Institute of International Studies. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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TALES & TRAILS

Editor's note:
China Daily reporters leverage local expertise to devise diverse itineraries that showcase a blend of historical landmarks and natural wonders in highly recommended cities and sites, offering practical guidance to experience the country.

BORN *by* RIVER *and* SEA

A coastal city in northern China has developed into a thriving hub where history, culture and modernity converge, **Deng Zhangyu** and **Yan Dongjie** report in Tianjin.



Nestled along the Haihe River and facing the Bohai Sea, Tianjin is a vibrant coastal city in northern China that hosts a unique blend of history, culture and modernity.

Born from the river and thriving by the sea, the city has long been a gateway between China and the world.

In ancient times, the Haihe River, which runs through the city center, made Tianjin a vital trade and transportation hub.

In 1860, following China's defeat by the invading Anglo-French forces, the city was forced to open its doors as one of China's early treaty ports under the terms of unequal treaties, which allowed foreign countries to establish concessions.

Agonizing for the country's collective memory, this turning point in history also inadvertently launched Tianjin's connection with the rest of the world in a modern context, and its legacies remain ubiquitous in the city: Western-style buildings, tree-lined avenues and entire neighborhoods that feel like a journey through European capitals.

For a different perspective, take a nighttime cruise along the Haihe River, where traditional Chinese structures and Western-style buildings light up, creating a skyline unlike any other.

But Tianjin hasn't forgotten its roots. Today, Ancient Culture Street is a treasure trove of traditional Chinese architecture, where cobblestone alleys lead to shops selling intangible cultural heritage products, such as Yangliuqing New Year paintings and Niren Zhang clay figurines. Each is a living expression of the city's one-of-a-kind story.

Visitors can watch artisans at work or even try their hand at these time-honored traditional crafts.

Travel just a bit further to Binhai New Area to discover Tianjin's coastal charm. Stretches of sandy beaches offer sunset walks and sunrise boat rides. The TEDA Aircraft Carrier Theme Park and the National Maritime Museum of China provide family-friendly fun with a marine twist.

A visit to Tianjin would not be complete without tasting its food. Seafood lovers will enjoy local specialties such as *badacha* (eight great simmered delicacies) and mantis shrimp potstickers. But the city's most iconic bite is the *jianbing guozi*, a crispy, savory Chinese pancake that can be found on nearly every street corner. It's more than breakfast; it's a taste of everyday life in Tianjin.

From its historical streets to its modern coastline, Tianjin offers a memorable journey, whether exploring centuries-old architecture, watching the sunrise over the sea, or savoring street food. This city invites everyone to discover a side of China that's both familiar and fascinatingly new.

Contact the writers at dengzhangyu@chinadaily.com.cn

See more, *pages 8-10*

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

The giant wheel of the Tianjin Eye towers above the Haihe River, capturing the city's bustling energy and romantic charm in its view. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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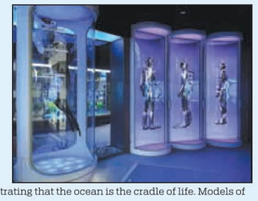

From left: A restaurant bustles with diners at night in the Dongjiang Bay scenic area, located in Tianjin's Binhai New Area. The Age of Dinosaurs hall is a highlight of the National Maritime Museum of China in Tianjin, with precious fossils on display vividly illustrating that the ocean is the cradle of life. Models of minke whales are on display at the Today's Ocean hall of the museum. The Future Ocean gallery at the museum features immersive digital displays, showcasing how humans might live in the deep sea in the future. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

BLUE HORIZONS IN BINHAI

From maritime history and an aircraft carrier to sunrise fishing, a new area offers an easy coastal escape from Beijing, **Deng Zhangyu** reports in Tianjin.

Dreaming of a seaside escape? Hop on a high-speed train from Beijing and, in just an hour, you'll arrive at Tianjin's Binhai New Area, home to one of the capital's nearest stretches of coastline.

If Tianjin's city center is a canal-laced old town, Binhai New Area, about a 30-minute drive away, is a vibrant port shaped by the Bohai Sea, where maritime culture and modern attractions come together.

To understand the story of this coastline, I began at the National Maritime Museum of China. Perched beside the Bohai Sea, the museum is one of Binhai's biggest draws. Admission is free, but visitors should reserve tickets online well in advance, as same-day tickets are rarely available.

The gleaming white building immediately catches the eye. Its sweeping curves resemble a school of fish gliding through the waves or a sail billowing in the wind.

Two observation decks extend over the water, offering uninterrupted views of the Bohai Sea.

Standing there with the sea breeze on my face and the horizon stretching endlessly ahead, I easily lost track of time before my friend Chang Xiaojing, who works at the museum, brought my attention back to the exhibits.

Since opening in May 2019, the museum has welcomed more than 3 million visitors each year, Chang says.

During the summer holidays, tickets are especially hard to secure, with families and young travelers flocking from across the country.

The museum houses 13 permanent exhibition halls spanning three floors, covering themes like Ancient Ocean, Today's Ocean, Future Ocean, and Chinese Maritime Civilization. It is also hosting a special exhibition on China's underwater archaeological discoveries.

The museum's star attraction is impossible to miss — a 9.4-meter whale shark specimen suspended dramatically above visitors.

Nearby are a preserved pregnant hammerhead shark, a life-size model of a giant squid measuring more than 10 meters, and a display of plankton, crabs, shrimp and shellfish.

It isn't just marine life. The Age of Dinosaurs hall is also breathtaking, displaying precious fossils that vividly prove the ocean is the cradle of life.

My favorite was the Future Ocean gallery, where immersive digital displays imagine underwater communities, transport systems, farms and deep-sea cities. Moving from prehistoric oceans to futuristic blue worlds, the exhibition feels like a journey across millions of years of maritime history.

Before leaving, I stopped at the museum's popular seaside cafe. Floor-to-ceiling windows frame panoramic views of the Bohai Sea.

Coffee in hand, I watched the waves roll in and understood why many visitors linger long after their museum tour ends.



1.



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1. The National Maritime Museum of China is a new cultural landmark perched beside the Bohai Sea in Tianjin's Binhai New Area. **2.** The Dongjiang Bay scenic area is a popular venue for water sports performances. **3.** The stunt car show is a crowd favorite at the TEDA Aircraft Carrier Theme Park. **4.** A former aircraft carrier is transformed into a tourist attraction. **5.** Visitors enjoy horseback riding at the Dongjiang Bay scenic area.



The beach at the Dongjiang Bay scenic area offers plenty of fun for families traveling together.

Prime attraction

After a leisurely morning, I took a 30-minute taxi ride to my next stop: TEDA Aircraft Carrier Theme Park. For 220 yuan ($32.50), I stepped aboard a real aircraft carrier for the first time.

Commissioned in 1975 in the former Soviet Union, the ship was decommissioned in the 1990s and was later brought to Tianjin and transformed into a tourist attraction.

Inside, visitors can explore more than a dozen areas, from the expansive flight deck and combat command center to the crew's living quarters and missile and torpedo bays.

Wandering through its maze-like corridors, I was surprised to come across a fried chicken outlet, a cafe and a trendy souvenir shop. The contrast between the carrier's steel-gray military interior and its modern leisure spaces was as unexpected as it was entertaining.

Stepping onto the open flight deck felt like walking onto a movie set. Instead of fighter jets preparing for takeoff, children ran across the deck, tourists posed for photos and one visitor quietly practiced tai chi against the backdrop of the Bohai Sea.

The park's stunt car show is another crowd favorite, delivering high-speed chases, precision drifting and daring driving displays worthy of an action film.

Thrill-seekers can even pay 300 yuan for a 30-second drifting experience with a professional driver.

One foreign visitor emerged grinning, saying it felt like starring in his own *Fast & Furious* scene.

After spending about three hours aboard the carrier, I headed to my final stop of the day — Dongjiang Bay scenic area. The shift from the imposing military setting to soft sand and gentle waves was instantly calming.

Stretching for 2 kilometers, the beach is one of the best places in Binhai New Area to watch the sunset.

Visitors can also try jet skiing, speedboating and sailing before settling in for the evening spectacle.



Swings set in the middle of the water provide an ideal spot for photographs.

As the sun dipped toward the horizon, the Bohai Sea glowed in shades of gold and orange. I found a beach chair, sat back and watched the last light shimmer across the water, ending a day that had taken me from maritime history to military hardware and, finally, to the simple pleasures of the seaside.

Sea of surprises

The next day began long before dawn with another highlight of the trip — a fishing excursion with local fishermen to watch the sunrise over the Bohai Sea.

Several fishing docks in Binhai offer charter trips, with boats accommodating about 10 people for around 1,500 yuan.

Just after 4 am, my friends and I arrived at the dock while the sky was still dark. Captain Li Ning had checked the weather and tides. After putting on our life jackets, we set off into the Bohai as the boat's engine broke the morning silence.

The morning sea was quiet and gentle, with only the sound of wind and waves. As we sailed, the horizon slowly changed from inky blue to a faint orange glow. Suddenly, a red sun broke free from the sea, slowly rising, spreading golden light across thousands of waves.

This is the romance that only early-morning sailors can experience.

When we reached the designated fishing ground, the crew expertly operated the equipment, lowering a huge trawl net into the sea. After 40 minutes of waiting, it was time to haul it in — the most exciting moment. As the winch slowly turned, the heavy net emerged, and lively mantis shrimp, fresh fish, and small crabs tumbled onto the deck.

Captain Li laughed, comparing fishing to opening a blind box — you never know what the sea will offer. Some days bring an abundant catch, others less so, but that unpredictability is part of its enduring appeal.

As we sorted the morning's catch, a cool sea breeze accompanied us back to shore, bringing an unhurried end to the voyage.

My two-day journey through Binhai New Area proved that a memorable seaside escape doesn't require a long journey.

Just beyond Beijing lies a coastline where maritime history, unexpected adventures and quiet moments by the sea come together, offering a refreshing change of pace within easy reach of the capital.

Yan Dongjie contributed to this story.

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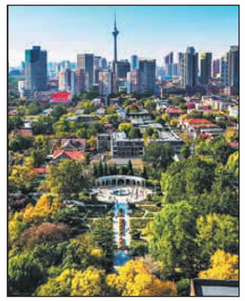
Online Scan for a Wow! China experience.

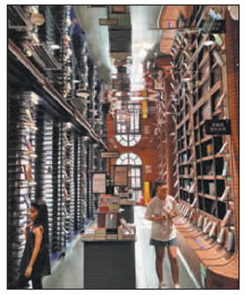


The Dongjiang Bay scenic area is a top attraction for a summer getaway.

Old villas and bold designs define historic cityscape

By DENG ZHANGYU in Tianjin







From top: Wudadao is home to a large number of Western-style mansions. Zhongshuge bookstore is popular among readers and tourists alike. Visitors enjoy a sunset cruise along the Haihe River. PHOTOS BY DENG ZHANGYU / CHINA DAILY; PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

When it comes to cities made for slow, leisurely strolls, Tianjin always makes the list.

All you need is a comfortable pair of shoes. Follow the streets at your own pace, and around every corner, you'll find century-old mansions.

"Ten yuan ($1.5), 10 yuan to Italy!" As soon as I arrived in downtown Tianjin, I couldn't believe my ears when I heard a pedal-cart driver shouting that.

Yep, 10 yuan would take me to the Italian Style Area, the former Italian concession.

As one of China's early treaty ports, Tianjin was forced to open up in 1860, allowing foreign nations to establish concessions.

China's victory in World War I and World War II helped to gradually reclaim the concessions. By 1945, all foreign concessions in Tianjin had returned to full Chinese administration.

Italian Style Area is a well-preserved architectural complex designed entirely by Italian architects. There are 137 Italian-style villas. The heart of the neighborhood is Marco Polo Square, laid out in concentric circles.

Every building around the square is unique and no two look exactly the same. Scattered piazzas, delicate corner gardens, and clever arcade designs — every detail hides 100 years of architectural ingenuity.

On top of its century-old history, the Italian Style Area now perfectly blends old and new.

Hidden in the streets is the wildly popular bookstore Zhongshuge. Its ultra-modern design features layered staircases and mirrored ceilings, creating a high-end, light-filled space that young people love for photos.

Even Starbucks here stands out, with a theme of intangible cultural heritage that breaks the usual store design, blending Tianjin's local folk traditions into the decor. Details of Yangliuqing New Year paintings and Niren Zhang clay figurines can be spotted.

In the early 20th century, Tianjin was home to many prominent Chinese political, cultural, and military figures: Liang Qichao (1873-1929), a reformist thinker; playwright Cao Yu (1910-96); artist Li Shutong (1880-1942); and warlord Yuan Shikai (1859-1916). Their former residences are scattered among the streets. Each villa is a witness to modern Chinese history.

Leaving the Italian area, I strolled along old streets and arrived at the highlight of Tianjin's city walk: Wudadao.

This was once the British concession, and it's the best-preserved, largest collection of Western-style mansions in the city.

The area consists of five main roads, with a large number of Western-style buildings tucked into the crisscrossing lanes.

These elegant old villas, with their green bricks, red tiles and ivy-covered walls, may look peaceful, but every brick and tile holds a story.

When walking along Wudadao, you don't need to rush to see landmarks. Just follow your heart. Sunlight filters through the plane trees, casting dappled shadows across the streets. Vintage villas, quiet lanes and sculptures at every turn — one step, one view; one house, one story.

When I got tired, I stopped at a cafe for a drink, or just sat on a street-facing bench.

As night fell and the lights came on, Tianjin's romance truly began.

After a day of wandering, I took a Haihe River cruise strongly recommended by locals to experience the city's nightscape at its finest.

The river runs through the city center, connecting all its beauty and romance. Cruise docks are scattered along the river. A night ticket costs 168 yuan. The best times are the 7:30 pm and 8 pm departures. In summer, when days are longer, these two cruises let visitors catch sunset, twilight, and night views all in one ride.

As the boat glided gently along the river, the evening breeze softly brushed my face. The sky changed from golden sunset to deep blue night. The lights along the riverbanks came on, revealing the city's full skyline.

Near the water are rows of European-style red-roofed villas. Behind them, modern skyscrapers put on a dynamic light show, colors shifting and changing in perfect sync. Old meets new in a stunning visual feast.



The boat moved forward, and ahead, the iconic Ferris wheel — also called the Tianjin Eye — stood quietly on a bridge, glowing with dreamy lights, the most dazzling landmark in the night.

The evening breeze, flowing water, city lights, old villas, and the Ferris wheel, all reflecting off the river, showed Tianjin's gentle beauty and grand scale.

If you go

Transportation: From Beijing South Railway Station, dozens of high-speed trains depart daily for both Tianjin and Binhai New Area. The journey to downtown Tianjin takes about 30 minutes, while reaching Binhai New Area takes approximately one hour. Ticket prices are generally under 60 yuan (around $8.87). Tianjin is also served by its own airport, Tianjin Binhai International Airport. Within the city, you can conveniently use the metro or taxis, with most attractions being less than a 30-minute ride away.

Accommodation: Tianjin offers a wide range of accommodation options, from five-star luxury hotels to budget-friendly chains, with prices ranging from 200 to 1,000 yuan.



A light show featuring the iconic Ferris wheel attracts a large crowd at the Italian Style Area in Tianjin.

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TALES & TRAILS



The sea's freshest bounty takes center stage on the dining tables of Tianjin residents. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Dive into the culinary soul of a coastal community, where seafood dishes and street snacks create a tapestry of flavors, **Deng Zhangyu** reports in Tianjin.

Locking in the taste of the ocean

Tianjin has a long coastline, and its food is a beautiful blend of two worlds: half the flavor comes from the Bohai Sea, and the other half hides in the smoky, bustling breakfast stalls tucked away in the city's alleys. This is the relaxed, passionate soul of the people of Tianjin.

Just an hour's drive from downtown Tianjin will bring you to Binhai New Area, hugging Bohai Bay. With 153 kilometers of coastline, the sea's freshest bounty takes center stage on every local table, all year round.

Locals here have a unique cooking method passed down for over 1,000 years: *cha*. It's the fishermen's secret to locking in the pure taste of seafood and preserving it for leaner times.

The technique is simple but clever: boil water with sea salt, soy sauce, ginger, scallions, peppercorns, and other spices to make a spiced broth. Then drop in fresh seafood, let it simmer slowly over low heat, and leave it to cool completely before eating or saving for later.

Seafood prepared this way is collectively known as *badacha* (eight great simmered delicacies). It often includes fish, shrimp, cuttlefish, conch, clams, squid, and other specialties from the Bohai Sea. The result? Salty, umami-packed bites that preserve the ocean's original aroma.

This style of food was born from the hardworking lives of fishermen and salt workers in days gone by.

Back then, the coast was dotted with fishing villages and salt fields. Fishing and salt-drying were heavy labor, and sea salt helped replace salt lost through sweat and preserve seafood.

The sea was generous, but winter made it hard to find fresh fish and shellfish. Simmered seafood was easy to store, and was cheap and tasty with rice, so it became a household staple.

The older generation made it quite salty — a practical choice for those tough times. Today, to fit modern health habits, the saltiness has been reduced, making the fresh taste even more prominent.

In 2013, *badacha* was officially listed as a Tianjin municipal intangible cultural heritage. Now, almost every local restaurant features it as a signature dish.

At Xiaoman Seafood, a popular and trendy restaurant, founder Kang Yahui has been diving deep into this traditional dish. He says the secret to simmered seafood is all about heat control and timing.

"Each type of seafood has its ideal level of heat, spices and salt content," he explains.

Once cooled, the seafood hits diners' mouths with a rich, salty aroma, and layers of freshness burst out.

The restaurant is packed every weekend, and you have to be lucky to find a seat.

Besides the traditional *badacha*, food lovers have found another must-try dish: *pipixia guotie* (mantis shrimp potstickers).

Each thin sheet of dough is wrapped around three whole mantis shrimp. The bottom is fried until golden and crispy, while the top remains soft and tender.

One bite, and sweet, briny shrimp juices burst out. Many tourists come all the way just for this unique coastal treat.







Top: A dazzling variety of snacks at a restaurant in Tianjin. **Center:** Mantis shrimp potstickers. **Above:** Savory Chinese pancake. PHOTOS BY DENG ZHANGYU / CHINA DAILY; PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The vast mudflats of Tianjin's Binhai New Area produce plump, sweet mantis shrimp, and during low tide in summer, locals buy dozens to freeze for later. They toss fresh shrimp, shrimp paste, or fish sauce into everyday stir-fries. Seafood is woven into every meal — even breakfast.

Yang Kangping runs a seafood restaurant in Tanggu, Binhai New Area, that has been open for about 26 years.

By 7:30 am, the place is buzzing. Long tables are loaded with fried shrimp, fried yellow croaker, beltfish, sea bass, shrimp paste, fish paste, and various seasonal seafood side dishes.

Diners either wrap them in thin pancakes or enjoy them with jellied bean curd — a real energy-packed start to the day.

Born and raised in Tianjin, Yang says local residents have a rule: every meal must have a taste of the sea. Without seafood, the meal just feels incomplete.

On weekends, families gather around tables piled high with seafood at Yang's restaurant, turning breakfast into a lavish banquet.

The sea shapes Binhai's unique coastal food culture, but there's another kind of breakfast that unites all of Tianjin — a completely different street food vibe. *Jianbing guozi* (savory Chinese pancake) is a universally recognized symbol of the city.

The morning energy of Tianjin comes alive mostly through *jianbing guozi* stalls. The base is a thin pancake made from mung bean flour batter, then one or two eggs are cracked on top. It's spread with Tianjin's special sweet bean sauce and fermented tofu paste, and sprinkled with scallions.

In the middle, you can wrap either a thin, crispy, fried sheet of dough or a soft, fried dough stick. Rolled up hot, the aroma of grains, sauce and oil mingles — simple, yet unforgettable.

In Tianjin, stalls selling this are everywhere — on street corners, and in small community shops. The funny thing is, locals don't have a single "best *jianbing guozi* place". They'll all say: "The one downstairs from my apartment is the most authentic."

There's even a unique way to buy it: many residential buildings have a window on the first floor with a simple sign. Residents can buy *jianbing guozi* right from their neighbor's home kitchen, freshly made on the spot. And it's cheap. Less than 20 yuan (about $3) will fill you up.

Bohai seafood is rich and satisfying; *jianbing guozi* is simple and comforting. But Tianjin's charm doesn't stop there. People here are naturally laid-back, unhurried and easygoing. They don't like being rushed.

This relaxed vibe is reflected in every street snack you'll find, like the sweet, sticky *erduoyan zhagao* (deep-fried glutinous rice cakes) and the crispy, layered *mahua* (fried dough twists).

Just wander the streets and turn a corner, and you'll naturally discover your own favorite bite of Tianjin.

Yan Dongjie contributed to this story.

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Exploring a city's spirit: Iconic prints and figurines await

By **DENG ZHANGYU** in Tianjin

When people think of Tianjin, their minds often jump straight to the delicious street food or the stunning foreign-style buildings that line the streets. But the real souvenirs one can tuck into a bag and take home — the ones that carry the city's true spirit — are two of its most famous intangible cultural heritage items: Yangliuqing New Year woodblock prints and Niren Zhang clay figurines.

To explore both in one trip, head straight to Ancient Culture Street along the Haihe River. This charming street is lined with houses with green-tiled roofs and wooden signboards, and shops dedicated to traditional Tianjin-style handicrafts.







Above left, below left and below right: Clay figurines are popular souvenirs for visitors to Tianjin.
Above center: A visitor gets hands-on experience in creating a Yangliuqing New Year woodblock print.
Above right: Chubby children are often featured in the New Year paintings. PHOTOS BY DENG ZHANGYU / CHINA DAILY



The most iconic stop is Yangliuqing Arts Store, a shop that has been operating for decades. Inside, you will immediately spot classic images that have been beloved for centuries: the legendary demon hunter Zhong Kui with his bushy beard, the God of Wealth, chubby babies holding a giant carp, and elegant beauties from ancient stories.

During the Spring Festival holiday, families often hang a picture of Zhong Kui at their front door to chase away evil spirits and bring good fortune, and display a picture of a baby with a carp to represent wishes for abundance and prosperity.

Yangliuqing New Year paintings originated during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and flourished in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Every Spring Festival, families would buy them to decorate their homes, hoping for a bright and lucky new year.

The technique combines woodblock printing with hand-painting, resulting in warm, rich colors that have become a symbol of Tianjin's culture.

As the store manager Wang Yan explains, the shop sees long lines just before Chinese New Year, with locals coming to buy pictures for their homes. On regular days, however, young people are the main customers.

The store continuously launches trendy new products, including book-sized door-god magnets, fun blind boxes featuring characters from New Year paintings, and refrigerator magnets adorned with cute gods and playful wishes such as "May you have both good health and good luck".

Prices range from a few dozen yuan for these cute little items to thousands of yuan for hand-painted masterpieces.

If you want to get your hands dirty, the store has a workshop where you can try woodblock printing and coloring, creating your very own New Year picture.

On weekends, inheritors of this ancient craft come to demonstrate the whole production process and share the rich stories behind each image.

If Yangliuqing paintings freeze good luck on paper, then Niren Zhang figurines freeze the everyday lives of people in clay.

On the street, visitors can find several stores, but the most famous one is run by Zhang Yu, a descendant of Zhang Mingshan (1826-1906) who became famous by combining traditional Chinese clay figurine techniques with Western aesthetics.

The art was born during the Qing Dynasty. Legend has it that Zhang Mingshan would hide a lump of clay in his sleeve during casual conversations, and within moments he could produce a tiny figurine that perfectly captured the person he was talking to.

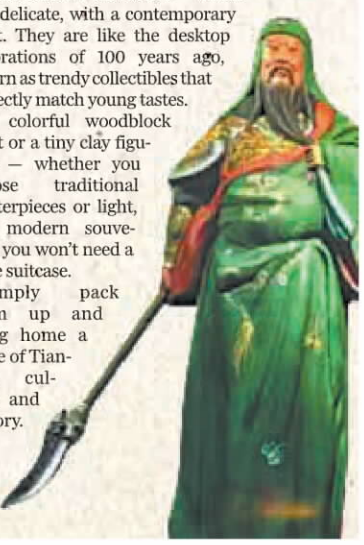
Today, artisans use local clay and follow a long process of pounding, shaping, firing, and painting. The sculptures range from tiny street vendors to grand opera scenes, and every detail is full of life and expression.

At Zhang Yu's gallery-like store, visitors can view a permanent display of more than 100 representative clay figurines — from antiques created by Zhang Mingshan to Zhang Yu's contemporary works — and can also attend workshop sessions to learn how to make the figurines themselves.

To draw young buyers, modern-day Niren Zhang has broken away from its "old-fashioned" image. Many stores now offer playful, youthful clay figures, such as cute cartoon characters — small and delicate, with a contemporary twist. They are like the desktop decorations of 100 years ago, reborn as trendy collectibles that perfectly match young tastes.

A colorful woodblock print or a tiny clay figurine — whether you choose traditional masterpieces or light, fun modern souvenirs, you won't need a huge suitcase.

Simply pack them up and bring home a piece of Tianjin's culture and history.



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WORLD

Rescuers battle rubble



Rescue officials work at the site of a house that was damaged in Tuesday's earthquake, in Yatsushiro, Kumamoto Prefecture, on Thursday. Up to 34 people were feared dead on Thursday after the major earthquake in Japan, with four more bodies pulled out from the tangled wreckage of a shopping mall devastated by a suspected gas explosion. JIJI PRESS / AFP

Briefly

PAKISTAN

Police officers killed in overnight raid

At least nine police personnel and 15 militants were killed after militants attacked a police post in Pakistan's northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, police said on Thursday. The attack targeted the Khazina Banda check post in Hangu district, where police repulsed the assault. Reinforcements sent to the area were ambushed en route, damaging an armored personnel carrier, police said. Police noted that 15 militants were killed in the ensuing operation, which was still underway.

ARGENTINA

Helicopter crash takes 7 lives

Seven people died when a firefighting helicopter in Argentina's western San Juan Province crashed on Wednesday, a local official said. The Bell 412 aircraft had been training before heading to a neighboring province to help put out dayslong fires when it crashed in a nature park. Fatalities included firefighters, police officers and civil protection personnel, he said. The causes were under investigation.

DR CONGO

Death toll in Ebola outbreak passes 1,500

The fastest-growing Ebola outbreak has killed more than 1,500 people in the Democratic Republic of Congo, official data released on Thursday showed, marking a 50 percent increase in around a week that shows the emergency continuing to outpace response efforts. As of Tuesday, 3,442 cases had been recorded, with 1,521 deaths, according to the latest government update. The outbreak, which was declared on May 15, has been linked to the Bundibugyo virus, for which there are no approved vaccines or treatments.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Mideast conflict widens amid tit-for-tat strikes

Continued attacks drag in more powers as mediators appeal for talks to resume

By **JAN YUMUL** in Hong Kong
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The United States Central Command said it launched strikes against Iran following Tehran's attempted attacks on US forces in the Middle East, heightening concerns about a widening conflict that has dragged more countries into the fray this week.

The US command said its forces completed a heavy wave of strikes against Iran at 10 pm on Wednesday "in response to yesterday's attempted missile attacks on US forces".

The security situation continues to claim lives in the region.

On Thursday, the Chinese embassy in Kuwait said a Nepali driver working for a Chinese company had been killed as Washington and Tehran engaged in tit-for-tat strikes. The Chinese embassy also confirmed that no Chinese citizens were killed or injured in the incident.

Kuwait's Ministry of Defense said an Iranian attack targeted a building belonging to a Chinese company in the north of the country, killing one worker and causing extensive material damage to the facility and property losses for the company.

Jordan's military said on Thursday that its air defenses shot down five Iranian missiles targeting its territory, adding that the attack caused no casualties.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps later confirmed launching an attack on Jordan's al-Azraq base, saying that three F-35 aircraft were completely destroyed.

In a statement, the IRGC said the US "used the occupied bases in your country (Jordan) to launch an airstrike with bunker-buster bombs on two residential houses, targeting two modest homes belonging to local residents on Qeshm Island".

In Iran, three members of a family — a two-year-old toddler along with his parents — were killed, while two other children from the same family were injured following a US strike in Qeshm, the IRNA news agency reported.

The latest violence came immediately after the US conducted a joint precision strike with Saudi Arabia targeting Iran-backed groups in Iraq.

The exchanges saw Iran draw condemnation from Gulf Arab countries while Washington and Riyadh's actions also drew rebukes from Iran and Iraq.

During a daily news conference of the United Nations Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Wednesday, Deputy Spokesman Farhan Haq told reporters that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had raised concerns that the conflict could widen if the parties do not return to the negotiating table.

US President Donald Trump told Fox News in an interview that the US would be "hitting Iran hard" and vowed to give Iran a beating.

This followed the Iranian Foreign Ministry condemning joint US-Saudi attacks in Iraq and days after Trump said the US was holding talks with Iran.

The IRGC warned on Thursday that countries "involved in assisting the aggressor will face harsh consequences if they do not correct their behavior".

In a statement that day, the IRGC announced that two oil tankers attempted to leave the "unsafe southern route" of the Strait of Hormuz on Tuesday night after being prompted by US aircraft.

Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman Tahir Andrabi told reporters in Islamabad that the country is trying to bring Iran and the US back to the table under the memorandum of understanding aimed at ending the conflict that Pakistan brokered last month.

"We are doing our utmost to bring all parties back to the Islamabad MoU," Andrabi said, adding that Pakistan was encouraging the countries to "fully adhere to their commitments to hold technical talks".

Cui Haipei in Dubai and agencies contributed to this story.



A child rests his head on the coffin of a Popular Mobilization Forces fighter draped in the Iraqi flag during a funeral on Thursday in Najaf, Iraq, for those who were killed in airstrikes. ANMAR KHALIL / AP

US tariffs pose threat to India's pharma sector

By **ARUNAVA DAS** in Kolkata, India, and **XU WEIWEI** in Hong Kong

The tariffs proposed by the United States on generic medicines, featuring a 200 percent duty by 2029, not only represent a medium-term risk to India's $9.7 billion pharmaceutical export market but also hurt US patients, analysts said.

They added that Indian pharmaceutical companies can take the challenge as an opportunity to diversify their export destinations and innovate.

US President Donald Trump announced a phased tariff schedule for imported generic drugs: zero duty until August 2028, followed by 100 percent for one year, and 200 percent thereafter. He said in a social media post that the US aimed to push generic drugmakers to move production onshore.

The US accounts for roughly one-third of India's pharmaceutical exports while Indian manufacturers supply nearly half of generic prescriptions dispensed in the US by volume, meaning tariffs will have a material midterm impact on India, said Lekha S. Chakraborty, a professor at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, or NIPFP, an autonomous research institute of India's Ministry of Finance.

"While the two-year transition period limits immediate disruption, the scale of the eventual duties underscores structural vulnerabilities with high concentration in a single high-value market, thin margins on many commodity generics, and continued reliance on complex global supply chains," Chakraborty told China Daily.

"In this sense, the announcement serves as a timely signal for the industry and policymakers to accelerate diversification of export destinations, deepen domestic APIs (active pharmaceutical ingredients) and formulation capabilities, and invest in higher-value innovative and complex generics."

Swaran Singh, a professor of international relations at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, said that since India's pharmaceutical sector operates on thin margins, the potential imposition of a 100-200 percent duty from August 2028 is bound to disrupt supply chains and cause shortages.

Pharmaceuticals rank among India's largest export earners, Singh said.

However, the question is whether Washington can easily replace India as its supplier of generic medicines given the scale of India's supplies, noted the expert.

"For onshoring production lines, this two-year runway (until tariffs take effect in August 2028) is too short for typical US plant-validation timelines," he said.

"The February 2026 US-India framework for an interim trade agreement had reportedly carved out 'negotiated outcomes' for generic medicines, though things remain unclear as we speak," Singh said.

"Finally, for India, this threat of tariffs could as well be a (US) negotiating strategy rather than a certain outcome."

Singh said that an increase in tariffs will result in higher drug prices and out-of-pocket expenses for US patients — from antibiotics to cancer treatments — if manufacturers cannot absorb costs or relocate quickly. The move would also risk the supply of low-cost generic medicines that fill over 90 percent of US prescriptions, he added.

'Wake-up call'

While a two-year transition allows for adjustment, the policy has been seen as a "wake-up call" for India to diversify export destinations, reduce API reliance on global chains, and shift toward high-value innovative generics, said Chakraborty.

Krishnendu Paul, founder of Qbox Sciences Private Limited, said that though the proposed tariffs may create short-term difficulties, they also create an opportunity for the Indian pharmaceutical industry to mature.

"India should reduce its dependence on one market, develop better medicines, strengthen manufacturing, and expand to new countries," Paul said, adding that pharmaceutical companies that adapt now will be stronger in the future.

Paul said this is the right time for India to strengthen innovation and to invest more in research, new medicines, biotechnology, and healthcare startups.

Trinanjan Sarangi, chief intensivist and consultant neuro-anesthesiologist at the Kolkata-based Kothari Medical Centre, said that, from the perspective of a clinician with 25 years of practice, this is a wake-up call for India.

India should diversify its pharmaceutical exports across emerging markets while continuing to serve established markets, Sarangi said.

Arunava Das is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

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In tortas we trust



Participants take part in the 21st Torta Fair where they set a Guinness World Record for the largest torta, measuring 100 meters long, in Mexico City on Wednesday. A torta is a typical Mexican dish consisting of a bread roll filled with ingredients such as cheese, meat, and lettuce. GERARDO VIEYRA / GETTY IMAGES

Israel's decades-old support risks losing Democrats

WASHINGTON — For generations, support for Israel united Washington. Now Israel's attacks on Gaza, the Iran conflict and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's close ties to US Republicans are eroding Democratic backing, threatening to turn one of the US' closest alliances into a partisan divide.

Support for Israel among Democratic voters has plummeted, candidates critical of Israel are winning Democratic primaries and even moderate lawmakers are increasingly willing to challenge decades of US support for Israel.

The shift is evident in Congress. This month, nearly half of House Democrats voted for a failed amendment to cut off aid to Israel, legislation that once likely would have been defeated by an overwhelming bipartisan majority. Israel receives $3.8 billion annually in US military aid and received billions more in emergency funds in recent years.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries and some of his lieutenants opposed the measure, calling it overly broad. But former speaker Nancy Pelosi and House Democratic Whip Katherine Clark were among those voting yes.

Democrats are increasingly divided over whether military aid should continue unchanged, be restricted to defensive weapons or be halted altogether.

US Senator Chris Coons of Delaware, the leading Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said he hopes Israeli elections in October will help restore bipartisan US support while opening a new chapter beyond Netanyahu's leadership.

"New governments get to change direction," Coons told Reuters, adding, "Netanyahu has kept Israel at war for years now, partly to avoid the political consequences of his choices."

Overall sentiment toward Israel is declining. A June Quinnipiac University poll found 48 percent of voters and 66 percent of Democrats believe the United States is too supportive of Israel, up from 16 percent and 20 percent when the question was first asked in 2017.

"Yes, there is a vigorous debate, but across broad segments of the parties, support for Israel remains firmly in the mainstream," said Danny Danon, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, in an interview.

The shift faces a major test in Tuesday's Democratic US Senate primary in Michigan where voters will weigh competing visions of US foreign policy, one of many races with Democrats openly questioning long-standing support.

Israeli policy has been a factor in other battleground congressional races, including New York, Florida and Colorado.

Meanwhile in Gaza, the strikes continue. Israeli strikes killed at least three people, including two children, in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, health officials said, as mediators held new talks with Hamas leaders to work toward full implementation of the US-brokered Gaza peace plan.

Medics said an Israeli airstrike on a tent encampment in Khan Younis killed a man and an eight-year-old girl. In the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, another Israeli airstrike hit a house killing an 18-month-old child and wounding at least eight people, medics said.

The Israeli military said both strikes targeted Hamas militants.

In Cairo, Hamas leaders were holding talks with mediators from Egypt, Qatar and Turkiye, over the implementation of the second phase of President Donald Trump's Gaza plan, as presented to them by his Board of Peace, that oversees its implementation.

The plan called for a surge in humanitarian aid, governance by a civilian Palestinian administration, the disarmament of Hamas, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the deployment of an international force to help maintain security.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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WORLD

Washington urged to preserve improved ties

By ZHAO HUANXIN
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China's top envoy to the United States has called on Washington to work with Beijing to preserve hard-won improvements in relations and implement the important consensus reached by President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump during their May summit in Beijing.

"The most important thing now is to take concrete actions to faithfully implement the common understandings reached between the two presidents, translate the new vision of a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability into real actions, and keep expanding the list for cooperation while shortening the list of problems," Xie Feng, Chinese ambassador to the US, said on Tuesday.

Speaking at a reception at the Chinese embassy in the US marking the 99th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army, Xie said the two countries have "every obligation to pursue dialogue and cooperation, and no single reason for conflict or confrontation".

He said that during their summit in Beijing, the leaders made clear that the two countries will work toward a relationship with cooperation as the mainstay, competition within proper limits, manageable differences, an expectable peace, and explore the right way to get along in the new era.

As the world's two largest economies, permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and nuclear-weapon states, the two countries share a special responsibility for maintaining world peace and stability and advancing global development and prosperity, he said.

"It needs to be noted that the stabilizing and improving momentum in China-US relations has not come easily, and should be doubly cherished," Xie said.

Xie's remarks echoed the call made by Foreign Minister Wang Yi during a meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on July 22 in Manila, the Philippines.

During the meeting, Wang noted that it is now the duty of both sides to "follow the course set by the two heads of state, eliminate disturbances and overcome obstacles", to ensure that the leaders' consensus is translated into whole-of-government consensus and action across all fields.

Last week, Vice-Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu traveled to Washington and held "in-depth exchange of views" with the US side on implementing the important consensus reached by the heads of state of China and the US, and advancing the building of a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability, according to a Foreign Ministry readout.

Despite the intensified exchanges, Washington has continuously overstretched the concept of national security to target Chinese businesses and institutions.

On Tuesday, citing national security, cybersecurity and supply-chain concerns, the Federal Communications Commission added foreign-produced advanced robotic devices to its "Covered List", preventing such devices from receiving the equipment authorization required to be imported into and marketed in the US.

On July 23, the Pentagon added several Chinese research institutions to its so-called "list of foreign institutions engaging in problematic activities".

He identified four Chinese "red lines" that should not be challenged: Taiwan, democracy and human rights, path and system, and development rights.

Xie said that "Taiwan independence" and peace across the Taiwan Strait are "as irreconcilable as fire and water". He called on the US to adhere to the one-China principle and the three Sino-US joint communiques, and exercise "extra caution" in handling the Taiwan question.

Highlighting potential areas for cooperation, Xie said that Chinese advances in the digital economy, artificial intelligence, electric vehicles and the low-altitude economy offer opportunities for global development.

He said artificial intelligence also poses governance, security and ethical challenges. China welcomes the US and other countries to participate in the China-initiated World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization.

Xie said history and present-day realities show that the world is large enough for China and the US to develop and thrive together. With countries facing numerous global challenges, Washington and Beijing should fulfill their shared responsibilities for the global good, he said.

He urged the US to work with China to advance international cooperation through constructive engagement and promote world peace through bilateral strategic stability, "so as to jointly explore a right way to get along in the new era based on mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, and make new contributions to human peace and development".

Rising demand drives TCM service expansion in Rwanda

By VICTOR RABALLA
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Traditional Chinese medicine is gaining a firm foothold in Rwanda's healthcare system with government support, increasing referrals from local physicians and rising patient demand accelerating its integration into mainstream medical care.

As more patients seek relief from chronic pain and musculoskeletal disorders that are often difficult to treat through conventional approaches, the Rwandan government has backed the expansion of acupuncture and other TCM therapies beyond the capital, Kigali.

The move has led to the opening of a second TCM center at Kibungo Level Two Teaching Hospital in eastern Rwanda last week, expanding access to specialized care.

The expansion follows the success of Rwanda's first TCM center, established at Masaka Hospital on the outskirts of Kigali in 2023.

Between Jan 1 and June 30 this year, the 26th Chinese medical team to Rwanda, which set up the new TCM center, provided more than 13,000 TCM consultations at its centers in Masaka and Kibungo.

The decision to establish a TCM center in Kibungo was driven by the Rwandan government's push to expand TCM services to rural provinces.

Located about 110 kilometers southeast of Kigali, Kibungo serves as a regional referral hub for a largely rural population, many of whom previously traveled several hours to Kigali for specialized treatment.

"The new center allows residents of the eastern province to access affordable treatment closer to home," Zhang Shengmao, leader of the Chinese medical team working at Masaka and Kibungo hospitals, said.

The new center reflects Rwanda's broader efforts to improve equitable access to healthcare while diversifying treatment options for noncommunicable diseases and chronic conditions, which are becoming increasingly common as the country's population grows and ages.

"Many local residents suffer from chronic pain, muscle soreness and bone and joint disorders," Zhang said, adding that most patients are farmers affected by years of physically demanding work.

He noted it as encouraging that many local general practitioners now actively refer patients with chronic pain to the TCM centers.

"Initially, many Rwandans knew little about TCM and were skeptical. After seeing the treatment results, public confidence has grown significantly," Zhang stated.

He said patients now travel from across Rwanda for acupuncture treatment, with more local hospitals expressing interest in opening their own TCM clinics.

To support the expansion of TCM services, the Chinese medical team is providing lectures and bedside training for local doctors and nurses in acupuncture techniques and clinical skills.

Chinese medical teams have been serving in Rwanda since 1982, contributing to clinical services, surgical care, disease prevention and capacity building.



Petal power

People pose for a photo at the Tapete de Flores floral installation at the Santafe shopping mall in Medellin, Colombia, on Wednesday, ahead of the city's annual Flower Festival. JUAN DAVID DUQUE / REUTERS

China's vision for reforming global governance lauded

Experts praise Beijing's call for building equitable intl order to address trust deficit

By WANG MINGJIE in London
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Experts have responded positively to China's vision of a United Nations-centered international system, where geopolitical tensions are eased, protectionism is countered and unilateralism is discouraged.

In a white paper titled "More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals and Actions", Beijing has suggested nations support the Global Governance Initiative, or GGI, as a way to improve the UN-centered international system.

Under the comprehensive vision for reforming global governance, China argues that strengthening multilateralism and building a more just and equitable international order are essential if the world is to address growing deficits in peace, development, security, and trust that are confronting many nations.

The proposal calls for a larger voice for developing countries, a broader international consensus, more effective responses to shared challenges, and stronger global cooperation.

China also reaffirmed in its proposal the continued central role of the UN in safeguarding the international order, based on international law.

Lawrence Loh, director of the Center for Governance and Sustainability at the National University of Singapore, described the white paper as "a most timely and critical statement for global governance now, even when the world is fragmenting and institutions of international cooperation are breaking down".

The current deficits in global harmony have to be resolved urgently, as the world is seriously threatened by unilateral actions that will break down years of effort in building a cohesive and inclusive international order benefiting all countries, he said.

Loh said the document demonstrates China's evolution from participating in the international system to playing a more active role in improving it.

"China has clearly transited from a rule-taker to a co-architect of credible global governance — it is emerging as an effective arbiter and convener of the new world order," he said, adding that China is also becoming "a natural defender of the United Nations, whose core purpose is to upkeep the international system and multilateralism".

The paper reaffirms support for the UN-centered international system while advocating reforms that would make global institutions more representative and responsive to the interests of developing countries.

Tom Harper, a China specialist at the United Kingdom's University of East London, said the document shows the kind of global order that China aspires to, noting that many of the ideas in the white paper have featured in Chinese foreign policy for more than a decade.

"It ... shows how China, in some ways, is a status quo power, since it is emphasizing established international institutions, which contradicts the traditional path of a revisionist power that seeks to subvert or destroy these institutions," he said.

Harper added that China's continued emphasis on multilateral institutions reflects its efforts to present itself as a stabilizing force at a time when many global challenges can no longer be addressed by individual countries.

He said the paper's references to a multipolar world are also significant, suggesting a response to what he described as Washington's increasing reluctance to shoulder global responsibilities. China, he said, is likely to pursue this vision by working within existing institutions while encouraging greater participation from Global South countries.

Business implications

Michael Schumann, chairman of the German Federal Association for Economic Development and Foreign Trade, said the initiative carries important implications for businesses.

"China's Global Governance Initiative sends a clear signal: fair rules, inclusive multilateralism, and technological cooperation must go hand in hand," he said. "High-tech sectors — from AI to green technologies — can only develop their full potential through open and rules-based market access, not fragmentation."

Schumann said China's commitment to equal standards and a people-centered approach provides "a constructive framework for deepening EU-China trade", and added that pragmatic economic cooperation based on mutual interests and transparency remains "the most effective path toward stable and productive relations".

Climate action also features prominently in the white paper, with Beijing calling for stronger international cooperation to tackle global environmental challenges.

Loh said the world has lost valuable time that should have been spent addressing climate change, because of policy reversals by some countries.

"The Chinese document places key priority on building a climate-resilient world to safeguard humanity's future," he said, adding that China is increasingly acting "as a promoter of global governance by design".

Jenny Clegg, author of the book *China's Global Strategy: Towards a Multipolar World*, said the Global Governance Initiative reflects China's emphasis on collective security and shared development.

"In seeking to safeguard the UN-centered system, the GGI emphasizes both the mutuality of security — that nations cannot gain security at the expense of others — and the importance of a people-centered approach," she said.

Clegg argued that reforming global governance requires addressing structural imbalances in the international economic system, so trade and investment better support development, rather than focusing solely on shareholder returns.

Zhang Zhouxiang in Brussels contributed to this story.

Wildfires hit UK amid heat wave and drought

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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The east of England has become the latest part of Europe to suffer from wildfires caused by extreme heat, as holiday homes and a caravan park were evacuated in coastal regions of the county of Suffolk.

Although not on a comparable scale to the devastating blazes that have caused major incidents in southwestern France or near the Spanish capital, Madrid, the fires in an area called Dunwich Heath, close to the Sizewell B nuclear reactor, are serious enough for local authorities to have declared a major incident.

The plant, which began operations in 1995, is Britain's largest nuclear power station, generating around 3 percent of the country's electricity. It has safety measures in place to protect against wildfires and is not currently considered at risk.

Local fire station manager Dan Davis called the blaze a "large-scale, wind-driven forestry fire", and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has urged people to steer clear of beaches in the region "due to the ongoing nature and seriousness of the fire".

"We understand that the warm weather makes a trip to the coast very appealing, but for everyone's safety we are asking people to stay away from the area at this time," said a spokesperson from Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service. "It is essential that the area and surrounding roads are kept clear to allow emergency services to carry out their work safely and effectively."

Water stress

Counties across England have experienced weeks of extreme heat and exceptionally low rainfall, creating ideal conditions for wildfires to break out.

Britain's Environment Agency said more than half of England is now officially suffering drought conditions, with some 78 percent of England's rivers below normal levels and reservoir storage falling to 75.3 percent of capacity. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency said much of its territory is also suffering from "significant scarcity" of water.

Areas of the Cairngorms National Park in Scotland have been burning for two weeks, causing environmental damage described as "apocalyptic", but it is hoped that lower temperatures and some much-needed rainfall will help bring the situation at least partly under control.

Hosepipe bans are already in place for 23 million customers in England, mainly in regions across the east and south, with the Environment Agency blaming the restrictions on recent high temperatures and record-low rainfall, and the consequences expected to last until October.

This summer marks 50 years since the UK's record-breaking heat wave of 1976, which remains a benchmark for extreme heat in the country. Water Minister Emma Hardy has warned people must be "prepared for this new normal" as droughts become "increasingly common".



Royal Parks workers water young trees in Greenwich Park, London, on Wednesday, as more than half of England faces drought conditions. RICHARD BAKER / GETTY IMAGES

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BUSINESS

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Coal-fired power falls below 50%

Landmark achievement backed by rapid expansion of renewable energy

By **ZHENG XIN**
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China's energy sector has crossed a historic threshold, with coal-fired power generation accounting for less than 50 percent of the nation's total electricity output for the first time, according to official data.

Coal power generation stood at 2.5 trillion kilowatt-hours in the first six months, bringing its share down to 49.7 percent, said Xing Yiteng, deputy director-general of the National Energy Administration's development planning department, during a news conference in Beijing on Thursday.

"Falling below 50 percent of total power generation for the first time is a landmark achievement in China's long-term push for renewable energy alternatives, signaling a new breakthrough in the country's green and low-carbon transition," Xing said.

The NEA said the nation's expansion of renewable energy continued at a rapid pace. As of end-June, the combined installed capacity of wind and solar power reached 1.95 billion kilowatts, up 16.8 percent year-on-year.

Renewable energy generation surpassed 40 percent of total January-June output, producing nearly 2 trillion kWh of clean electricity, up about 9 percent year-on-year, accounting for 41.2 percent of the country's total power generation, it said.

Xing said that despite navigating complex global headwinds, China's energy security and effective investments continue to see robust advances.

Investment in new energy storage surged 74.3 percent year-on-year in the first half, while funding for the hydrogen sector skyrocketed by over 160 percent.

On the other hand, investments in new power grid construction and charging infrastructure also rose 13.5 percent and 21.8 percent, respectively, providing solid macroeconomic support, Xing said.

The nation's renewable capacity is expanding at an unprecedented scale, with its total installed power generation capacity breaking the 4-billion-kW mark, achieving a scale that far outstrips the rest of the world's major economies.

Of this, renewable sources account for 2.45 billion kW, or 60.7 percent of the total. During the first six months, China added 117 million kW of renewable capacity, accounting for nearly 74 percent of all newly installed power capacity. Notably, total solar power capacity reached 1.27 billion kW, putting it virtually on par with the country's coal-fired capacity.

China's domestic momentum is also driving global decarbonization.

The International Renewable Energy Agency said that over the past 10 years, the average cost of electricity globally for wind and solar projects plummeted by over 60 percent and 80 percent, respectively. Experts widely attribute this massive cost reduction to China's continuous technological innovation, unrivaled manufacturing scale and highly efficient supply chains.

Lin Boqiang, director of the China Center for Energy Economics Research at Xiamen University, said that China's green and low-carbon transformation serves as both a vital cornerstone for its high-quality domestic development and a landmark contribution to global sustainability.

"Crossing the 50 percent threshold for coal generation is a watershed moment. It proves that our new energy system is rapidly maturing, moving from a supplementary role to the primary driving force of national power supply," Lin said.

"As grid flexibility improves and new energy storage scales up at a record pace, variable renewables will be able to take on an even larger share of the baseload," he added.



Technicians check solar panels in Chuzhou, Anhui province. SONG WEIXING / FOR CHINA DAILY

In rail time



China Railway No 4 Engineering Group workers rotate a 145.5-meter beam, weighing 10,000 metric tons, along the Super Bridge Traversing Existing Shanghai-Kunming High-speed Railway early on Thursday on the 96-kilometer Shaoyang-Yongzhou HSR in Hunan province. The new HSR, construction of which began in 2023, is part of the 2,300-km Hohhot-Nanning HSR and a key part of China's HSR network. SHI JIAMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Ministry to issue treasury bonds in HK

China's Ministry of Finance said that it will issue this year's fourth batch of renminbi-denominated treasury bonds in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on Aug 5. The scale of the bonds will be 15 billion yuan ($2.2 billion). Specific issuance arrangements will be announced via the Hong Kong Monetary Authority's Central Moneymarkets Unit, according to the ministry.

Profits of electronics sector up in H1

China's electronics sector posted a 96.9 percent year-on-year increase in profits in the first half, contributing 8.5 percentage points to the overall profit growth of major industrial firms, the National Bureau of Statistics said.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

China seen as global innovation engine

By **HE QI** in Shanghai
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Kering Chief Executive Officer Luca de Meo has upgraded China's strategic role in the group's long-term transformation, positioning the market not just as a core consumption hub but a pivotal driver of global innovation and operational change, as he addressed the recent 7th edition of Kering China Innovation Day in Shanghai.

"For Kering, China is not simply a market. It is a source of innovation for the entire group: from technology, to business, to client trends," de Meo said.

Under the luxury group's ReconKering mid-to-long term transformation framework, China takes on three layered strategic functions: a core consumption engine supporting top-line growth, a regional innovation hub powering Asia-Pacific operations and a testing ground for next-generation luxury models that can be scaled globally.

China's elevated status rests on its unmatched industrial and digital advantages, according to industry analysts. "China is the world's manufacturing base. So manufacturing innovation will become a huge advantage here," said Jeffrey Chang, an associate partner at consultancy McKinsey & Company. He noted that China's complete supply chain, massive user data pool and mature super-app ecosystem make it the world's fastest-growing and largest artificial intelligence deployment market.

De Meo echoed that assessment. "This is the manufacturing platform of the world," he said, citing mature industrial infrastructure, abundant data resources and a vibrant market environment as China's unique strengths. Domestic digital platforms such as Xiaohongshu also boast unrivaled penetration and sophistication, he added, and since AI fundamentally runs on data volume, markets with richer data and faster iteration naturally breed stronger technological progress.

This year's Innovation Day featured nine local AI startups across three tracks — creativity and brand communication; omnichannel retail and e-commerce; and client experience — to integrate local innovation into Kering's global business ecosystem.

So far, Kering's China Innovation Hub in Shanghai has launched more than 50 innovation pilots, spanning 3D virtual try-on, AR experiences, live commerce, generative AI content creation and other end-to-end use cases. Internal tools such as a mobile AI data dashboard have also been rolled out group-wide, drastically cutting repetitive work from manual data consolidation to presentation preparation.

Yet de Meo stressed that pilot volume alone does not equal real competitive value. "Pilots are never the destination. An innovation that stays a pilot is a curiosity. An innovation that scales is a competitive advantage."

To drive wider adoption, Kering is rolling out company-wide AI upskilling programs to lower the technology threshold, encouraging cross-functional teams to explore use cases tailored to their daily work.

On the broader debate over AI's role in luxury, de Meo struck a cautiously optimistic tone.

"A lot of people in the space of AI will sell you the idea that AI will become the destination of your mind," he said, noting that many technology providers overstate AI's capabilities to inflate their own valuation.

"At this stage, I still see it as a very powerful tool to support human beings. It's like putting a turbocharger in a traditional engine," he added. "I'm not sure you're going to do things better, but for sure you're going to do them faster, which is also important."

De Meo acknowledged widespread hesitation within the luxury sector toward AI adoption. "I don't know right now if AI usage can help us boost creativity," he said. "The luxury industry is a lot about heritage, craftsmanship and human touch."

Therefore, his solution lies in balancing both dimensions. "The best thing we could do is actually combine art and science," he said, merging creative intuition with data-driven rationality.

Guangdong bolstering server, computing strengths

By **ZHENG CAIXIONG**
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Guangdong province is building on its robust server industry strength and experience to advance the upgrade of computing infrastructure for higher efficiency, technological self-reliance and low-carbon growth, transforming the province from a major manufacturing center into a global intelligent computing hub.

Dongguan, a heavily industrialized city in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, recently launched a global investment promotion for construction of its computing power industry island.

Under the municipal top-level plan, Dongguan plans to invest 100 billion yuan ($14.75 billion) in developing and constructing the industry island over the next five years with separate development targets, said Zeng Jianpeng, executive vice-mayor of Dongguan.

Zeng made the remarks at a server industry supply-demand matching event held recently in Dongguan.

By 2030, the island — which covers a planned area of about 6 square kilometers — will grow into the core growth engine of Dongguan's 500-billion-yuan AI server industry cluster, he said.

Wang Lijuan, deputy director of the Guangdong department of industry and information technology, said Dongguan serves as Guangdong's core carrier for computing hardware.

"The department will fully support Dongguan in scaling up its AI server industry, enabling Guangdong to contribute to boosting the global competitiveness of China's AI server sector," Wang said.

In 2025, Guangdong produced about 2.95 million servers, accounting for 49.3 percent of China's total output, claiming nearly half of the national market, according to official statistics.

Guangdong boasted a total of 1,533 industrial enterprises above designated size engaged in computer manufacturing last year, accounting for 45.1 percent of China's total computer makers.

Home to leading firms such as Huawei and Foxconn Industrial Internet, the province has fostered a complete industrial chain spanning chips, components and finished computers.

Authorities said that as the "mother machine of computing power" in the era of the digital economy, the server industry has emerged as a key driver for Guangdong to transform from a major manufacturing province into a global intelligent computing hub.

Xu Xiaomin, secretary-general of Guangdong's electronics and information industry association, said that as generative AI applications are rolled out at an accelerated pace, Guangdong's server shipment share of inference servers is expected to surpass 50 percent for the first time in 2026, overtaking training servers to become the mainstream product in the market.

"This signals a full shift of the industry from model research and development to commercial application," said Xu.

The strength of Guangdong lies in its fully connected industrial chain and integrated production and marketing, he said, adding that as China's largest manufacturing hub for the electronic information sector, Guangdong has established a closed-loop ecosystem spanning upstream component supply, midstream complete machine manufacturing and local downstream computing power absorption.

Xu urged Guangdong to further boost the coordinated adaptation of hardware and software.

"Capitalizing on its geographic advantage of 'production sites as market destinations', Guangdong should open up application scenarios and drive the AI server industry to shift from scale expansion toward high-efficiency, self-reliant and controllable development."

Wei Cailiang, senior vice-president of Guangdong HEC Technology Holding Co Ltd, said his company has built a full-chain business covering green energy, advanced manufacturing, computing power operation and AI applications.

In April, Wei's company set up its computing power operation entity in Dongguan, and backed by computing power service orders worth 39-46 billion yuan, it achieves efficient R&D and mass production relying on Dongguan's one-hour industrial circle with 95 percent local supporting capacity.

Cooperation crucial for future of AI, expert says

By **REN QI**
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International cooperation is crucial for the development of artificial intelligence, said Evgeny Burnaev, a Russian AI expert and laureate of the Russian government's award in science and technology.

Burnaev, who also served as the director of the artificial intelligence center at the Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology in Russia, noted that cooperation was the core theme of this year's World Artificial Intelligence Conference, which was held in Shanghai recently.

He explained that AI is a complex discipline that has evolved from isolated research fields into an essential "infrastructure" covering healthcare, production, logistics and climate monitoring. Building a mature AI infrastructure is impossible without international cooperation, as the technology relies heavily on massive data and immense computing power, which require multiparty collaboration.

Regarding the inclusive development of AI, Burnaev warned that existing AI technologies could greatly magnify current global development gaps. To prevent a single culture or value system from dominating, he proposed two key measures: countries should collaborate in basic education and scientific research, and the world must establish unified global benchmarks and technical standards in AI engineering to prevent operational failures across critical systems.

Burnaev's call for inclusivity resonates strongly with China's ongoing efforts. As a major AI power, China has always been an active advocate and practitioner of global AI governance, committed to ensuring that the achievements of intelligent technology benefit people of all countries more equitably.

"China will adhere to coordinating development and security, actively practice multilateralism, uphold the concept of 'people-centric and AI for good', and promote AI to always develop in a beneficial, safe and fair direction," said Zhou Haibing, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission.

This commitment has gained international recognition. The British journal Nature previously published an article noting that "China is leading global AI governance" and called on other nations to participate in addressing the common challenges brought by AI-related development.

China's push for global cooperation and governance is backed by its robust and rapidly growing AI ecosystem. Official data show that the country is home to over 6,000 AI enterprises, with the core AI industry scale expected to exceed 1.2 trillion yuan ($177.48 billion) this year, up nearly 30 percent year-on-year.

Furthermore, China is now the world's largest holder of AI patents, and its domestic open-source large models have surpassed 10 billion cumulative downloads globally.

The consumer market is also experiencing a continuous surge in new AI products. In 2025, annual shipments of smart terminals such as AI smartphones and AI computers in China exceeded 100 million units. With significant growth expected to continue this year, sales of AI phones and PCs are projected to surpass those of non-AI products for the first time.

The vitality of this industry was on full display at the conference, where Burnaev highlighted the abundance of smart robots. He identified embodied AI as the core track for the next stage of AI, noting that the emergence of various robot vision-language-action models and motion control models can significantly enhance industrial automation efficiency and handle operations in high-risk scenarios.

"The conference exhibited multiple types of robots and supporting models. The technological trends in this area are highly worthy of attention, and I have seen a large number of eye-catching technological achievements," Burnaev added.

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CHINA

Mudflat soccer



Young players compete in a mudflat soccer match as the sun casts their shadows on the muddy beach in Nantong, Jiangsu province, on Wednesday. The three-day provincial youth mudflat soccer invitational tournament features around 100 participants from cities across Jiangsu, showcasing the unique charm of the game. XU CONGJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Administrative public interest litigation boosts eco-governance

Dual-track mechanism enables better resolution of environmental problems

By YANG ZEKUN
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China's procuratorial public interest litigation system has become a key legal instrument for ecological and environmental protection, helping resolve long-standing governance problems through legal supervision, administrative coordination and judicial accountability, according to a senior prosecutor.

Since the system was fully implemented in 2017, procuratorates nationwide have handled more than 600,000 environmental public interest litigation cases, accounting for 47 percent of all such cases, Zhang Xueqiao, deputy prosecutor-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate, told China Daily.

Unlike traditional adversarial litigation, the system does not replace administrative authorities, Zhang said. Instead, procuratorates perform legal supervision through litigation-related procedures and urge government departments at all levels to fulfill their statutory duties.

Before filing lawsuits, procuratorates typically communicate with the relevant authorities and issue procuratorial recommendations. More than 95 percent of public interest damage cases are resolved before they reach the court. If an authority fails to act, procuratorates may file an administrative public interest lawsuit. If ecological damage remains unrepaired after the authority has fulfilled its duties, they may also initiate a civil public interest lawsuit to hold violators accountable for restoration and compensation.

Zhang said China's model has a distinctive institutional design. While some countries allow prosecutors to bring civil public interest lawsuits, few have established a systematic administrative public interest litigation system. China has developed a dual-track mechanism whereby administrative and civil public interest litigation operate in parallel, with administrative litigation serving as the primary approach.

River basin and marine governance has become one of the system's major priorities.

According to Zhang, basin governance is a global challenge because it spans administrative boundaries, involves multiple jurisdictions and requires coordination among various government departments, often resulting in fragmented responsibilities.



Zhang Xueqiao

To address these challenges, procuratorates have targeted weak cross-regional coordination, inadequate interdepartmental cooperation and inconsistent enforcement standards in major river basins. The SPP has directly handled or guided landmark cases involving the Wanfeng Lake, Nansi Lake, ship pollution along the Yangtze River, water governance in the Pearl River Basin and marine ecological protection in the Bohai Sea.

Those cases have promoted coordinated action among procuratorates at the national, provincial, city and county levels, helping resolve long-standing environmental problems affecting large areas and attracting widespread public concern, Zhang said.

The SPP has also established regional coordination mechanisms aligned with major national development strategies. In the Yangtze River Basin, 19 provincial-level procuratorates and relevant city-level procuratorates have established 21 cross-regional coordination mechanisms covering all river sections along provincial boundaries. The SPP and the Ministry of Water Resources have also established a Yellow River Basin coordination platform to facilitate information transfers, case handling, information sharing and consultations among nine provinces and autonomous regions.

Despite the progress, Zhang acknowledged that cross-regional and cross-basin governance still faces challenges, including inadequate information sharing, the technical complexity of evidence collection, and inconsistent standards between administrative law enforcement and judicial rulings.

He said procuratorates will strengthen cooperation with administrative authorities, focus on major river basins and key regional ecological issues, and make better use of direct case handling by the SPP and provincial procuratorates to bridge governance gaps between upstream and downstream areas and between opposite riverbanks.

Since March 2025, the SPP has launched a two-year supervision campaign on water environment governance covering the Yangtze, Yellow and Pearl rivers. Procuratorates are also focusing on industrial solid waste, mine restoration, soil pollution, livestock breeding pollution, and water and soil conservation.

The system has also supported green and low-carbon development. By May this year, procuratorates nationwide had handled 57,000 related cases involving green spatial planning, industrial transformation and urban-rural green development.

New technology

Professional assessment has long been a challenge in ecological cases because environmental damage appraisals are often costly, time-consuming and technically demanding.

To address the issue, the SPP and the Ministry of Justice have expanded the network of environmental damage appraisal institutions and promoted an "appraisal first, payment later" model, with 141 partner institutions now participating.

Nearly 500 ecological testing laboratories have been established at procuratorates nationwide, achieving full coverage at the city level. The SPP has also created a national database of more than 800 technical experts, while 28 provincial-level procuratorates have established their own expert databases.

Digital technology is increasingly being integrated throughout the case-handling process.

Zhang said procuratorates use remote sensing satellites and territorial spatial planning data, administrative enforcement data and artificial intelligence to identify clues on a large scale. In Foshan, Guangdong province, a big data model for water environment governance identified 45 clues in a single screening, leading to 39 cases.

From January 2024 to April 2025, ecological litigation laboratories at provincial- and city-level procuratorates supported more than 4,500 case-handling activities and issued more than 3,500 testing reports.

In farmland protection cases, prosecutors have used satellite imagery, land parcel records and drone-based 3D modeling to collect evidence and quantify damage caused by illegal occupation of farmland, forests, grasslands and wetlands.

Digital tools are now used throughout the process, from information discovery and investigation to supervision of duty performance, rectification assessment and follow-up reviews, helping prosecutors verify whether ecological restoration projects have achieved tangible results, Zhang said.

The SPP has promoted the Yixinweigong volunteer cloud platform, recruiting 126,000 volunteers nationwide. The volunteers have submitted 38,000 clues and participated in 40,000 activities, including hearings and follow-up visits.

China's experience has also attracted growing international attention.

A number of Chinese cases have been included in the United Nations Environment Programme case database, while cases involving Nansi Lake governance and Yangtze River ship pollution control have been featured at international conferences, Zhang said.

In June, the SPP held a roundtable with the Brazil Federal Public Prosecutor's Office and ClientEarth on prosecutorial cooperation in global environmental governance. Representatives from Australia, Mongolia, Poland, the United Kingdom, Vietnam and other countries attended. Vietnam has authorized its procuratorial organs to pilot public interest litigation, drawing on China's experience.

Looking ahead, Zhang said procuratorates will implement the provisions of the ecological environment code, support special legislation on procuratorial public interest litigation, and improve rules governing case scope, procedures, evidence collection and liability determination.

They will continue to focus on pollution prevention and control, green and low-carbon development, ecosystem protection, carbon peaking and carbon neutrality, and national ecological security. Future work will place greater emphasis on professional supervision, closer coordination with administrative law enforcement, broader public participation and wider application of legal supervision mechanisms.

"Ecological and environmental public interest litigation has entered a stage of high-quality development," Zhang said. "This requires prosecutors to handle cases with greater precision, stronger professional expertise and more effective coordination."

Digital management system puts Dunhuang's camel rides on fast track

By HU YUMENG
and **MA JINGNA** in Lanzhou

As tens of thousands of tourists flock to Dunhuang, Gansu province, during the summer peak season, keeping crowds moving smoothly across the desert landscape has become an increasingly complex task. More and more, artificial intelligence is helping lighten the load on personnel on the ground.

At the Mingsha Mountain and Crescent Spring Scenic Area, camel rides across the dunes are among the city's signature attractions. During peak travel seasons, however, surging visitor numbers once left tourists waiting up to 60 minutes.

To ease the bottleneck, the scenic area launched its Desert Camel Ride digital management system in 2025. Visitors can now reserve camel rides in advance through a mini program, online travel platforms or self-service kiosks, eliminating long lines.

The platform digitally manages ticketing, reservations, camel assignments and boarding procedures. It automatically matches visitors with camel teams and displays real-time boarding information on electronic screens.

"Since its launch, the intelligent system has cut waiting times by more than half during peak periods, making the experience much smoother and reducing visitors' frustration," said Li Xiaoqing, deputy director of the service center.

She added that tour guides have also welcomed the system, saying it has made camel ride operations more efficient and orderly.

Handlers also use a dedicated mobile app that notifies them when to bring their camels to the boarding area, rather than waiting with the animals in holding areas throughout the day.

"That means fewer camels have to remain in the waiting area for extended periods, which not only improves efficiency but also helps reduce the environmental impact in the scenic area," Li said.

Along the camel ride route, camel-shaped traffic lights — an innovation unique to the scenic area — guide camel caravans safely across intersections while doubling as a popular photo spot.

"The traffic lights help keep both camels and tourists moving in an orderly way, and everyone follows the rules," visitor Mu Xinyue said. "It's also become one of the most interesting places to take photos."

AI is also playing a growing role at the nearby Mogao Grottoes.

An intelligent command center analyzes reservation data, visitor flows and environmental conditions to optimize cave openings, tour routes and visitor distribution.

> "Since its launch, the intelligent system has cut waiting times by more than half during peak periods, making the experience much smoother and reducing visitors' frustration."
>
> **Li Xiaoqing,** deputy director of the service center at the Mingsha Mountain and Crescent Spring Scenic Area

"We've moved from managing crowds after they form to preventing congestion before it happens," said Lei Zhengguang, director of the cultural promotion department at the Dunhuang Academy.

He said the platform also coordinates tour guide scheduling, shuttle bus operations and ticket reservations, helping balance public access with heritage conservation.

The adoption of AI is expanding well beyond Dunhuang.

Huangshan Mountain in Anhui province uses AI to predict congestion and recommend personalized routes, while West Lake in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, directs visitors toward less-crowded attractions.

In Guizhou province, the Xijiang Qianhu Miao village introduced an AI platform for ticket verification, multilingual services and personalized recommendations. According to Chinese online travel platform Mafengwo, AI-powered ticket verification has improved efficiency by up to 10 times, while complaint response times have fallen from 48 hours to four hours.

Yang Yanfeng, director of the online tourism research center at Beijing Union University, said tourism is particularly well suited to generative AI because standardized services, such as trip planning and ticket booking, make intelligent assistants both practical and effective.

He acknowledged that challenges remain, including high development costs, fragmented data systems and concerns over data security.

For Li, however, the rise of AI has come at the right time.

She believes scenic areas should embrace the technology to deliver better services, improve operational efficiency and enable smarter management.

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Visitors line up on camels as a screen displays departing numbers at the Mingsha Mountain and Crescent Spring Scenic Area in Dunhuang, Gansu province, on Sunday. ZHANG XIAOLIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

2,000-year-old alcohol discovered in Ningxia tomb

By HU DONGMEI in Yinchuan
and **HU QING**

A cereal-based alcoholic residue, dating back to the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), unearthed by archaeologists at a cemetery in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, is expected to shed new light on cereal processing, grain utilization and brewing techniques among the Qin people.

Experts said the discovery not only represents the best-preserved liquid alcoholic beverage sample from the Warring States Period ever reported in China, but also provides rare physical evidence of how the Qin people brewed grain-based alcohol more than 2,000 years ago.

The findings were published in the June edition of the Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports.

According to the study, the residue was discovered at the Shanjiabao cemetery in the southwest of Yuanzhou district, Guyuan. The cemetery, surrounded by a series of frontier defense facilities, lies about 2 kilometers south of the Qin Great Wall dating to the Warring States Period.

Chinese archaeologists excavated 183 tombs at the site, 179 of which belonged to the Qin people. Tomb M39, located at the northernmost edge of the cemetery, yielded a bronze bottle with a garlic-shaped mouth.

The bottle was sealed with textile on the inside and organic-tempered daub on the outside. After removing the seal with a sterile scalpel and forceps, researchers extracted about 3,740 milliliters of clear, light blue-green, odorless liquid, along with a small amount of sediment.

Wang Xiaoyang, who led the archaeological project at the Shanjiabao cemetery, said the bottle's multilayer seal effectively minimized evaporation and contamination, allowing the liquid to remain largely intact for more than 2,000 years.

To identify the beverage's composition and brewing techniques, a research team led by Wen Rui, a professor at Northwest University's School of Cultural Heritage, used a range of analytical methods, including Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy, or FTIR, as well as analyses of starch grains, phytoliths and yeast microfossils.

The analyses revealed characteristic flavor compounds, diagnostic organic acids, starches, phytoliths and yeast, providing multiple lines of evidence to identify the beverage's ingredients and reconstruct its brewing process, according to the study.

Microfossil analysis confirmed that the primary brewing ingredients were broomcorn millet and grains from the Triticeae tribe, including wheat and barley. Wang said the finding may reflect the development of the subsistence economy during the period. "Alcohol production was only possible when grain harvests generated a surplus."

Zhang Hongying, deputy director of the Ningxia Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, said the findings demonstrate that the Qin people had mastered the use of cereal-based *qu*, a traditional fermentation starter that enabled simultaneous saccharification and fermentation.

Wen said the study fills a gap in research on alcoholic beverage production by the Qin people during the Warring States Period in Ningxia and helps reconstruct how they brewed grain-based alcohol.

The findings provide further evidence of China's long-standing tradition of cereal-based fermentation and offer new material evidence for research on agriculture in the pre-Qin era (before 221 BC), ancient dietary culture and the evolution of handicraft techniques, he said.

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CHINA



FORGING SHIELDS WITH CODE

Software pioneer builds digital backbone of national defense despite personal misfortune

Wang Ji (front) talks with his students about renowned scientists at the library of the National University of Defense Technology in Changsha, Hunan province, in May. ZHOU FUJING / FOR CHINA DAILY

By **LI SHANGYI**
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Around 7 am, as he does every morning, Wang Ji wheeled himself into his office at the College of Computer Science and Technology of the National University of Defense Technology. For more than four decades, the campus has been where the 57-year-old has devoted himself to advancing software engineering in support of national defense — contributions that led to him being honored as a national "Role Model of the Times" on Wednesday.

His wheelchair has been a constant companion for the past 11 years, ever since he underwent an amputation below the hip. Yet just as no one could count the miles it has carried him, no one could count the keystrokes his fingers have made.

"As long as my mind is clear and my hands can still move, I can keep working," Wang said.

Regarded as a talented student by his professors and peers, Wang entered university before turning 14 in 1983. At that point, he had already made up his mind to dedicate his career to computer science research. The university's campus in Changsha, Hunan province, witnessed his transformation from a student to a researcher, and from a young boy to a military officer.

His given name, Ji, means halberd in Chinese, a traditional weapon that combines a spear and a dagger-axe. Living up to the hopes his parents placed in that name, Wang has spearheaded efforts to make defense software more predictable and reliable, even though his own life has been shaped by unexpected twists and uncertainties.

Powering ahead

"There was a spark in his eyes whenever he talked about computers," recalled Tang Yuhua, who served as a teaching assistant at the college in 1984. Compiler theory and mathematical logic were Wang's favorite subjects. Tang remembered that the young student always sat in the front row and eagerly asked questions during class.

In the early 1980s, China saw rapid development in supercomputing. In 1983, the National University of Defense Technology developed the country's first supercomputer, Yinhe-1, or Galaxy, making China the third country in the world to independently design and build a supercomputer after the United States and Japan.

Chen Huowang, chief software system lead of the Galaxy project, became Wang's mentor and quickly recognized his exceptional talent in computer science. He told Wang that the essence of computer science lies in rigorous logical reasoning and formal proof.

In 2003, under Chen's guidance, Wang published a paper on high-confidence software engineering technology. By introducing the concept of high-confidence software technology, he became one of the pioneering figures in the field in China. At the time, the discipline was still relatively niche and was widely regarded by his peers as both highly challenging and theoretically demanding.

"He is like a radar," said Mao Xiaoguang, who also studied under Chen and who is now a professor at the university's College of Computer Science and Technology. "He not only tracks the latest developments in the field but also thinks deeply about where those advances will lead."

Wang said his research has always been driven by the needs of national defense. He realized that military information systems, like the human body, could become "ill", and that tools capable of detecting hidden flaws in software were essential to ensuring military security.

Wang and his team have developed a suite of specialized tools designed to diagnose different types of software defects from multiple analytical perspectives.

The technologies developed through this research have made significant contributions to improving the safety and reliability of mission-critical software used in aerospace systems and major weapons platforms.

Promoted to associate professor at 28 and full professor at 33, Wang appeared to be on an unstoppable career trajectory, with nothing standing in the way of his remarkable talent.

However, Wang's life took an unexpected turn in January 2013. After experiencing severe chest pain accompanied by numbness in both legs, he was diagnosed with an aortic dissection, a life-threatening condition.

A grueling 13-hour operation saved his life. But the disease had already caused extensive muscle necrosis in his lower limbs.

Yu Fang, an associate chief physician in the department of orthopedics at Xiangya Hospital of Central South University in Changsha, said Wang underwent several amputation surgeries to remove the necrotic tissue. Although the operations were successful, Yu and his colleagues were devastated, knowing that Wang would never walk again.

Several days after the first amputation in February 2013, Wang's wife, Huang Chun, who is also a researcher at the college, told him what had happened. "He was remarkably calm and accepted the reality," she recalled.

Yet the interruption proved to be only temporary. Confined to his hospital bed, Wang soon began reading work messages on his phone and asking about the progress of research projects, turning his hospital ward into a makeshift office. As his condition improved, he even began holding research group meetings with his students in the ward.

Zhou Jingwen, a professor at the college who was one of Wang's doctoral students at the time, attended those meetings in the hospital ward. He recalled that the discussions were no different from their regular research meetings. Despite Wang's illness, all of his graduate students completed their studies and graduated on schedule.

"Wang is like the ocean. While enduring countless storms, he remains serene," Yu said.

In 2015, Wang returned to his office at the university in his wheelchair.



At age 8, Wang speaks on behalf of new seventh graders during the opening ceremony of his middle school in Changde, Hunan, in 1978. PROVIDED BY LIU GUIZHI / FOR CHINA DAILY

RESUME

A member of the Communist Party of China, **Wang Ji** was admitted to the National University of Defense Technology in 1983 and joined the military in April 1990. After receiving his doctorate in 1995, he stayed at the university and has worked there ever since. He is currently a researcher and doctoral supervisor at the university's College of Computer Science and Technology.

In 2003, Wang published one of the earliest academic papers in China on high-confidence software engineering technology, systematically establishing the discipline's theoretical framework and technical system. In 2004, he launched the country's first graduate course on high-confidence software technology. In 2015, he helped promote the establishment of the Formal Methods Technical Committee of the China Computer Federation.

Wang has received the first prize of the Military Science and Technology Progress Award and the second prize of the National Science and Technology Progress Award. He has been awarded one second-class and two third-class individual merit citations. Last year, he was named a national model of self-reliance. Earlier this month, he was honored as a national "Role Model of the Times".

Wang's wife, Huang Chun, is a core member of the Tianhe supercomputer compiler team at the National University of Defense Technology and a recipient of the National March 8th Red-Banner Pacesetter award. Their family was named a "national five-good civilized family" in 2016 and was recognized as one of the "third cohort of national civilized families" in 2025.

Unbroken spirit

Those around Wang considered his survival a miracle. His return to work came as yet another surprise. He applied for a defense research project immediately after his return.

When they visited Wang in the hospital, his colleagues and students all hoped that he would return to them. Wang said that knowing he was still needed gave him the determination to return.

"My goal has never changed," he said. "Only the way I pursue it has."

He continued to travel alone on business, attend academic conferences, and mentor his students. Those who work with Wang said he has always insisted on self-reliance, never asking others for help as long as he was capable of doing something himself.

To support him, the university installed wheelchair ramps at the entrances to his office building and the campus canteen. Instead of using an electric wheelchair, he insisted on using the manual one to help him exercise more.

Chen Liqian, a professor at the university on Wang's team, said Wang had become even more focused on his work since the illness. "He often points us to papers that are closely related to our research, papers we hadn't noticed yet, but he already had," Chen said.

In 2021, Wang was diagnosed with kidney failure. He now undergoes four-hour dialysis sessions three times a week. Yet instead of slowing down, he said he wants to make the most of the time he has. Even during dialysis, he reads academic papers and attends online meetings. "For him, reading papers is a form of rest," his wife said.

On days when he does not undergo dialysis, Wang keeps to a disciplined routine: arriving at the university around 7 am, taking a short break at noon, returning to work at 2 pm, and heading back to the hospital in the evening. "Even on holidays, you can usually find him in his office," said Huang Zhen, his driver.

The researcher currently supervises more than 20 master's and doctoral students. Although his own time has become increasingly precious, he remains generous in sharing it with them.

Zhao Jing, one of his students, said Wang's office door is always open for one-on-one discussions. "His smile puts me at ease whenever I run into difficulties in my research," she said.

Fan Kai, one of Wang's master's students, said his mentor's wheelchair soon faded into the background. "Whenever we discussed research, I hardly even noticed he was in a wheelchair," Fan said.

The most noticeable change may be in his diet. According to Wang Ting, who has known Wang Ji for more than 30 years, Wang Ji used to be a food lover, with a particular fondness for the rice noodles sold near the campus. However, since being diagnosed with kidney failure, he has had to strictly control his intake of water and food. To make drinking water more enjoyable, Wang bought a machine for the office to make sparkling water.

"His illness never changed who he was. Even in adversity, he remained as kind, optimistic and passionate about life as he had always been," said Wang Ting.

Vision and mission

On Wang Ji's desk, two monitors stand along with a keyboard. There is also an electronic display screen for discussions with his team.

The office is modest, but the work carried out there has long been at the forefront of the field. Since the 1990s, Wang has devoted himself to software technology research, a pursuit he describes as his lifelong dream. High-confidence software technology is part of it.

Wang Huaimin, a professor at the university and an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said he was impressed by Wang Ji's pioneering spirit and his exceptionally broad research perspective. "Even after returning to work, he has maintained a vigorous and ambitious mindset, demonstrating remarkable persistence and resilience," he added.

Wang Ji said the university's spirit and traditions have profoundly shaped his career. As the birthplace of China's first supercomputer and a leader in the country's supercomputing development, the university instilled in him the importance of technological self-reliance.

"We cannot rely on technologies controlled by others," he said. "Key and core technologies must be mastered by ourselves."

Established in 1953, the university has overcome a large number of cutting-edge technological challenges and achieved a series of breakthroughs in the research and development of advanced weapons and equipment.

As the chief technical expert, Wang led his team in developing a project that won the First Prize of the Military Science and Technology Progress Award in 2025.

Wang encourages students to base their research on reality instead of intuition. "Scientific research is not a sprint to chase the latest trends, but a marathon that keeps pace with the nation's needs," he said. So far, Wang has trained more than 120 master's and doctoral students in the field.

As defense systems undergo an intelligent transformation, Wang and his team are focusing on the reliability of artificial intelligence, aiming to ensure that AI can better serve the country's major strategic needs.

Though he cannot take part in conventional warfare, Wang said, "I can still stand on the front line of high-level scientific and technological self-reliance, forging shields with code."

Zhang Zhaoxing and Yan Jin contributed to this story.

Online
See more by scanning the code.







Left: Wang reads essays during a dialysis session in Changsha. HE SHUYUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY **Center:** Wang gives a speech during the 2020 CCF ChinaSoft conference in Chongqing. ZHU MINGHUI / FOR CHINA DAILY
Right: Wang leafs through books at the university library in May. FAN JUNWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

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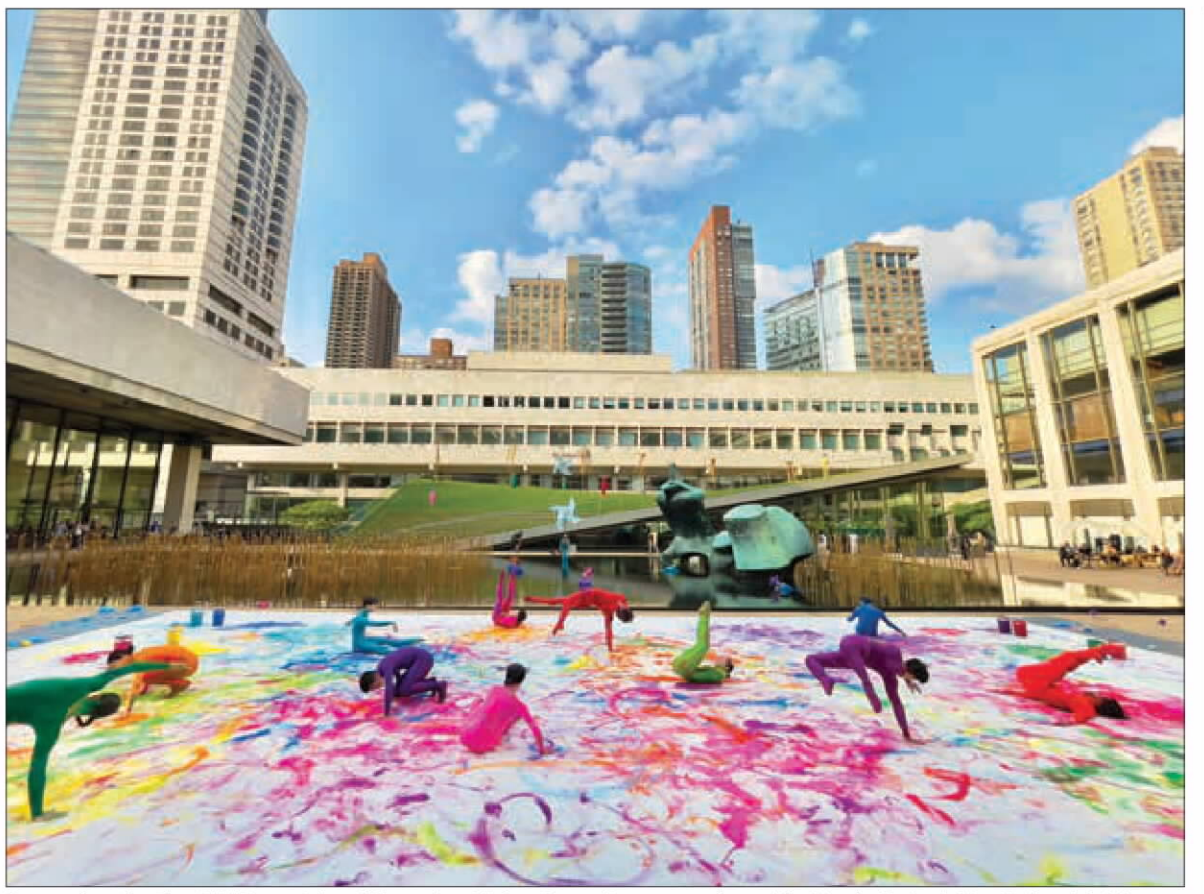

Dancers from the Shen Wei Dance Arts and Guangdong Modern Dance Company, perform at the Lincoln Center in New York on July 23. BELINDA ROBINSON / CHINA DAILY

Chinese dance troupe wows audience in New York City

Choreographer Shen Wei combines painting, dance, poetry and music at Lincoln Center

By **BELINDA ROBINSON**
in New York
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Hundreds of art lovers enjoyed a stunning dance performance called *MindScape* by legendary Chinese choreographer Shen Wei on Wednesday at the Lincoln Center in New York City.

The free, unique, spellbinding outdoor 45-minute performance was a part of Chinese Arts Week that ran July 22 to July 26.

Performed by a troupe of over 20 dancers from Shen Wei Dance Arts in collaboration with Guangdong Modern Dance Company, the work was co-commissioned by the Lincoln Center and American Dance Festival.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily backstage at the event, Shen described his vision for the performance that blended painting, dance, movement and poetry to illustrate the "spiritual pursuit of inner harmony and transcendence".

"This one is so complex. It has poetry, productions, video, dance, live music and painting, visual arts, performance arts, and in some way, it is blended together at the same time and it lifts people's spirits," he said.

"It's not just something that's put together. It's not just about integrating something together. It's that we go lift up people's spirits, right now. So, every time you see it, you feel good after the show and have really nice, positive energy about life."

The audience watched as the dancers, dressed in brightly-colored unitards, began the show by lining up around a massive blank, white, canvas on the ground.

A few dancers stood in The Paul Milstein's Reflection pool. Some had a large windmill on their head that spun as they danced.

On the canvas, one-by-one, the dancers dipped their hands into brightly colored paint that matched their unitards and used their entire bodies to spread the paint across the canvas while matching the tempo of the music.

Nicholas Cemalobic, 25, a member of the audience, described the performance as terrific.

"I think the topology of the space is really exciting," he told China Daily. "I think it was nice to be able to look at things in the foreground and in the water, it was like a feast for the eyes. I mean, I wouldn't even have known that these were dancers who hadn't trained together, knowing that they all come from far and wide is pretty motivating."

As the performance progressed, the large, blank, white canvas became a massive, living, painting with swirling colors.

The work embodied the key tenets of Shen's approach to dance, which is that the human body is a canvas. It brought dancers from both Eastern and Western backgrounds together.

Zak Ryan Schlegel, rehearsal director and dancer with Shen Wei Dance Arts, told China Daily: "I think that Shen Wei has spanned his entire career holding the binary of the Eastern/Western marriage. And I think his language is a common language. It's his dream of a common language. And so, I feel as though the work is a visual metaphoric full multidisciplinary expression of what's possible between the East and the West, in full, unifying harmony."

He added that the work feels like it "truly ties together Shen Wei's long legacy in the field. It feels as though from his collective experiences and the languages he's created across his long arc as a choreographer, this piece truly realizes all of those languages and brings them into a full spectrum. It feels like it sheds light on his past and it brings him into the future."

Born in Hunan, China in 1968, Shen moved to New York in 1995. This year, he celebrated 30 years of his first work at Lincoln Center after 11 productions.

He hopes *MindScape* will bring the "happiness of life" to the audience.



Hundreds of art lovers enjoy a stunning dance performance by Shen Wei, in New York on July 23. BELINDA ROBINSON / CHINA DAILY



Shen Wei works with his team at the Lincoln Center in New York City on July 23. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"For me, born in China, growing up in China, and working in New York and the West, live in Paris and the West and the East actually for me there is so much beautiful, values of things to share rather than competing with each other," Shen said.

He chose the theme for the performance based on his journey of traveling and living around the world in China, Europe and America for over 30 years. He wanted to send the message that a person's spiritual journey is just as important as the pursuit of material things.

"You can see the team, there are Chinese people, there are American people, Western people, all different races, different backgrounds, to have that like a life, living, working together, there's no conflict through art. It shows that today, we're just people. We're just the same," Shen said.

Ricardo A. Zayas, 42, from Brooklyn, New York, took part in the show and has been a dancer with Shen Wei on and off for almost 20 years since graduating from Fordham University. He enjoys combining his Western background with Eastern art.

"It's something that we rarely, if ever, have seen put together, so it's made this alien hybrid thing that nobody really does, especially not like Shen Wei. So, it's been nice to learn this style that has a very, you know, specific mark on dance.

"This show has a lot of what I'd call his greatest hits, and his philosophies and dance, but it also has a lot of whimsy, which is a new, refresher, direction for him, which is fun to see."

Several members of the audience called the performance "amazing" and "remarkable".

Andreas Ortega, 22 from Brooklyn, New York said afterwards: "I liked it a lot! My favorite part was definitely the painting section and I really liked the way that their bodies hit the accents of the music. It was a nice fusion of Eastern and Western arts together."

Int'l cooperation, openness deemed vital to AI's global future

By **LIA ZHU** in San Francisco
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> "For AI to benefit all people, technology and international cooperation must move forward together."
>
> **Doreen Bogdan-Martin,** secretary-general of the International Telecommunication Union

At the recently concluded 2026 World AI Conference, China pressed its case for open-source artificial intelligence ecosystems and deeper international cooperation on AI governance, a push that is seen as important for continued development and for addressing global problems.

The Chair's Statement issued at the conference, which was held in Shanghai earlier this month, described open source and openness as vital pathways toward inclusive AI development. It called for the joint development of open-source ecosystems and urged more robust international cooperation to share ideas and shape solutions to the major issues and pressing challenges facing humanity in the AI era.

Richard Dasher, director of the US-Asia Technology Management Center at Stanford University, said in an interview with China Daily that he sees merit in China's approach to promoting open models and international collaboration.

"International cooperation is good. It should be promoted," he said. "I think that open source has a role. You want to give people alternatives, not make them do something only one way."

Dasher pointed to the global nature of cloud computing as a reason why cooperation across borders is not just desirable but necessary. "The world of cloud computing is sort of intrinsically global, and you need data from multiple places in order to have good enough quality models," he said. "You can't deal with just a limited data set with the current technology, and so I think there's a lot of good in what China is promoting."

The conference came at a moment when Chinese open-weight AI models have been steadily closing the performance gap with leading US systems, while undercutting them sharply on price. Adoption of these Chinese open-source models has increased rapidly worldwide, including the United States.

That momentum was on display at the conference, when Beijing-based startup Moonshot AI unveiled its newest open model, Kimi K3. The model is reported to be catching up to the top versions of Anthropic's Claude and OpenAI's ChatGPT. With 2.8 trillion parameters, Kimi K3 is said to be the world's largest open-weight AI system by that measure.

Open-weight models release an AI system's core components publicly, allowing anyone to download them. This allows users to run the models on their own computers, study their inner workings, and modify them to suit specific needs — a departure from the closed, proprietary approach favored by many Western companies.

At the same time, Dasher cautioned that openness alone does not guarantee success. "The open-source models can be good. They can be flexible. You also have to worry about the quality, though," he said.

Drawing a historical parallel, Dasher recalled the rivalry between Microsoft and Unix in the early decades of personal computing. Unix, an open-source model, splintered into more than 10 popular variants as developers modified it freely, he said, which allowed Microsoft's proprietary Windows operating system to gain the upper hand for a time. He suggested a similar dynamic could play out in AI, where proprietary players such as OpenAI and Anthropic currently hold strong positions.

Even so, Dasher argued that open-source models will remain important for the field's long-term development.

"For continued development, open source will be very important. Probably most university students who are studying how to develop models will learn from open-source models, so they'll be used to the open source," he said.

Ultimately, he said, the market will judge AI systems less on whether they are open or closed and more on practical performance. "You have to deliver something that's cost-effective. It has to be secure and support privacy, and it has to be very effective. It has to work. Those will be the characteristics that the market cares about more than whether it's open source or closed source."

The call for international cooperation in AI has echoed well beyond Shanghai. Speaking at the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance in Geneva earlier this month, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, secretary-general of the International Telecommunication Union, said, "For AI to benefit all people, technology and international cooperation must move forward together." An AI-driven future, she said, should include "everyone, especially the 2.2 billion people who have yet to join the digital world".

Dasher identified two areas where he believes international cooperation is especially urgent: health data and climate change.

On health, he said pooling more diverse, international data sets, while safeguarding individual privacy, would meaningfully improve the quality of medical analysis.

"I would think that health data is very important, and it's something where there are national security considerations, but to the extent that you don't damage individuals' privacy, then not only the larger data set that you use, the more diverse data set you have, the better the analysis will be," he said.

"Lifestyle in China is different from lifestyle here. Lifestyle in Europe is different from lifestyle here. It's good to have people representing all of those populations in some sort of healthcare analysis. I think that will encourage international work," he added.

Climate change, Dasher said, is a similarly borderless problem demanding a coordinated global response.

Despite persistent concerns over national security, Dasher expressed confidence that international cooperation on AI will continue to expand, as its benefits increasingly outweigh the risks. "I think that we will still see international cooperation to the extent that it doesn't have a negative impact on national security. I mean, that's a natural thing that everybody has always been concerned about," he said. "But I think that the benefits of international cooperation mean that you'll find a way to solve the security problem."



Visitors at the booth for Chinese AI Startup Moonshot's Kimi K3 during the World AI Conference in Shanghai on July 17. NG HAN GUAN / AP

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CHINA DAILY

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WORLD WATCH
By Djoomart Otorbaev

Enduring impact of Jiang's legacy

The centenary of Jiang Zemin's birth provides an important opportunity to assess one of the most transformative periods in the history of the People's Republic of China.

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, with Jiang as the core of the central leadership, China navigated an era of profound domestic reform and international change. Building on the historic reform and opening-up initiated by Deng Xiaoping, Jiang institutionalized these reforms, strengthened the socialist market economy, safeguarded political stability and laid the economic and institutional foundations that continue to support China's modernization today.

Under Jiang's leadership, China underwent a significant economic transformation, one of the most notable in human history, while maintaining political stability.

The figures alone highlight the magnitude of this achievement. China's nominal GDP grew from about $347 billion in the late 1980s to nearly $1.47 trillion in 2002, more than quadrupling. For most of this period, annual GDP growth surpassed 9 percent, even reaching 13-14 percent several times. These consistently high growth rates were unmatched for an economy of China's scale and significantly shifted the country's role in the global economy.

Foreign trade expanded even more dramatically. Total trade increased from approximately $111 billion in the late 1980s to more than $620 billion by 2002 and exceeded $850 billion by 2003. China rapidly evolved from a poor developing economy into one of the world's leading manufacturing and trading powers.

During the same period, annual foreign direct investment rose to more than $50 billion, while the country's foreign exchange reserves increased from less than $6 billion to nearly $290 billion, providing a powerful foundation for long-term macroeconomic stability.

These accomplishments didn't occur overnight. While Deng Xiaoping's leadership set China's reform and opening-up in motion, the period under Jiang saw these reforms further consolidated and institutionalized through the collective efforts of the Party and government.

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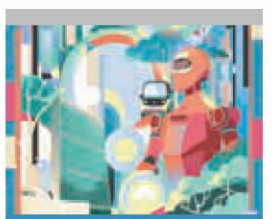

INSIDE
Widening scope of digital and AI governance
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A grand gathering is held to commemorate the birth centenary of late leader Jiang Zemin at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Monday.
FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Jiang's 'glorious life' celebrated

President addresses grand gathering in Beijing to mark centenary of late leader's birth

By MO JINGXI
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President Xi Jinping lauded on Monday the "indelible contributions" of late leader Jiang Zemin and called for efforts to continue advancing the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, as he addressed a grand gathering in Beijing to mark the centenary of the late Chinese leader's birth.

"Comrade Jiang Zemin lived a glorious life, a life of struggle," Xi said, noting that Jiang had made indelible contributions to safeguarding the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, breaking new ground in reform and opening-up in all respects, achieving overall moderate prosperity in people's lives, and successfully advancing socialism with Chinese characteristics into the 21st century.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, called on the whole Party and the Chinese people of all ethnic groups to learn from Jiang's exemplary qualities and continuously advance the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Jiang was the core of the third generation of the Party's central collective leadership and the principal founder of the Theory of Three Represents, which stipulated that the CPC should always represent the development trends of China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of China's advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.

He was born in August 1926 in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province. In 1989, he was elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee. He passed away in 2022 at the age of 96.

During a revolutionary career spanning more than 70 years, Jiang fully demonstrated his great talent, bold vision, key role and exceptional art of political leadership as a Marxist statesman, Xi said.

Xi spoke highly of Jiang's steadfast commitment to communist ideals and his devotion to the Party and the people, calling on Party members to draw strength from his firm political convictions.

On the new journey, Xi stressed, it is imperative to uphold the overall leadership of the Party and the centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee, unswervingly strengthen full and rigorous Party self-governance, and ensure that the Party remains the strong leadership core in the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Jiang always stood with the people and cared for their well-being, Xi said, calling for efforts to learn from the late leader's dedication to and profound love for the people.

Xi noted the importance of always bearing in mind that "this country is its people; the people are the country".



President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, delivers an important speech at the gathering on Monday in Beijing. LI XIANG / XINHUA

Xi's quotes

Comrade Jiang Zemin made indelible contributions to safeguarding the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, breaking new ground in reform and opening-up in all respects, achieving overall moderate prosperity in people's lives, and successfully advancing the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics into the 21st century.

On the new journey, we should stand ready to withstand high winds, choppy waters, and even dangerous storms, resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests, and continue to write a new chapter in the miracles of fast economic growth and long-term social stability.

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OVERSEAS TRAVELERS SNAP UP CHINESE BRANDS

Perceptions have shifted from 'made in China' to 'designed in China'

By HE QI in Shanghai
heqi@chinadaily.com.cn

On an August afternoon in Shanghai, Mara-Kristin Lutz stepped out of the Songmont boutique, clutching the coveted tote bag that had topped her city break shopping list.

The Austrian fashion industry veteran — who had previously worked at Louis Vuitton — had researched the brand's latest collections on social media long before touching down in China. It was the bag's understated craftsmanship and thoughtful design language that won her over.

She was now dressed almost entirely in Chinese brands with her jacket and sun mask both from Chinese sports brand Anta. She also carried a bottle of perfume she had just purchased the day before from Chinese aromatherapy brand To Summer, and has placed other orders on Chinese online shopping platform Taobao.

Lutz's carefully curated shopping list is no longer an isolated quirk — it has become a hallmark of the surging wave of international visitors to Shanghai. As China's expanding visa-free policies fuel an inbound tourism boom, shopping for quality products from the country's homegrown brands has emerged as a cultural trend for global travelers.

According to the State Taxation Administration, the number of foreign travelers claiming departure tax refunds surged 366 percent year-on-year in the first half of the year, while the value of refunded goods and payouts grew 69 percent. From January to May, Shanghai Customs verified 201,000 tax refund applications, with sales reaching 1.92 billion yuan ($285 million) — year-on-year increases of 300 percent and 62 percent, respectively.

See ***Shopping,*** *page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.

New growth drivers gain ground amid transition

By ZHANG CHENXU and ZHOU LANXU

China's shift toward new growth drivers gathered pace in July, with advanced manufacturing, technology-intensive exports and services consumption providing growing support for economic activity, officials and experts said.

New growth drivers contributed over half of industrial output growth in the first seven months of the year. Retail sales of services outpaced those of goods and external demand remained resilient, bolstering prospects for continued economic expansion.

However, they added that a deepening contraction in fixed-asset investment and slowing retail sales growth could weigh on the economy, and called for more forceful policy support.

The comments came as fresh data released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Monday showed that the country's industrial output rose 4.5 percent year-on-year in July, following a 5.3 percent rise in June.

The high-tech and equipment manufacturing sectors maintained robust growth in July, with value-added output rising 16.9 percent and 12.3 percent year-on-year, respectively, the bureau said.

Wang Guanhua, a spokeswoman for the bureau, said at a news conference in Beijing that new growth drivers contributed an estimated 50.9 percent to industrial output growth in the first seven months of this year.

Zhu Feng, China chief economist at JPMorgan, said that China has made solid progress in upgrading its manufacturing sector, with exports, industrial output and investment all pointing to stronger competitiveness in advanced manufacturing.

Meanwhile, the consumption mix continued to improve as spending shifted further toward services. The share of services in per capita spending rose 0.2 percentage point year-on-year in the first half, while retail sales of services grew 5 percent in the first seven months.

Growth in retail sales of goods slowed and the contraction in fixed-asset investment deepened, with the property sector remaining the main drag on investment.

Zhu from JPMorgan said a major challenge for China's economy is the pace of its growth driver transition.

Retail sales, a key gauge of consumer spending, grew 0.6 percent year-on-year in July, slowing from a 1 percent rise in June.

Fixed-asset investment declined 6.7 percent during the January-July period from a year earlier, deepening from a 5.7 percent drop in the first half, according to the NBS.

Yin Yanlin, deputy director of the Committee on Economic Affairs of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, urged policymakers to strengthen countercyclical adjustments and introduce additional measures to bolster investment.

"Policymakers should capitalize on easing imported inflation pressures to cut the reserve requirement ratio and policy rates when appropriate," Yin added.

In the latest move, the National Development and Reform Commission, China's top economic regulator, said on Monday it will accelerate the rollout of new policy-based financial instruments for 2026 and step up support for private investment projects.

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INDEPTH

China's booster shot for drug innovation

Robust regulatory reforms, greater investment and growing talent pool propel global biotech ascent

By **WANG XIAOYU**
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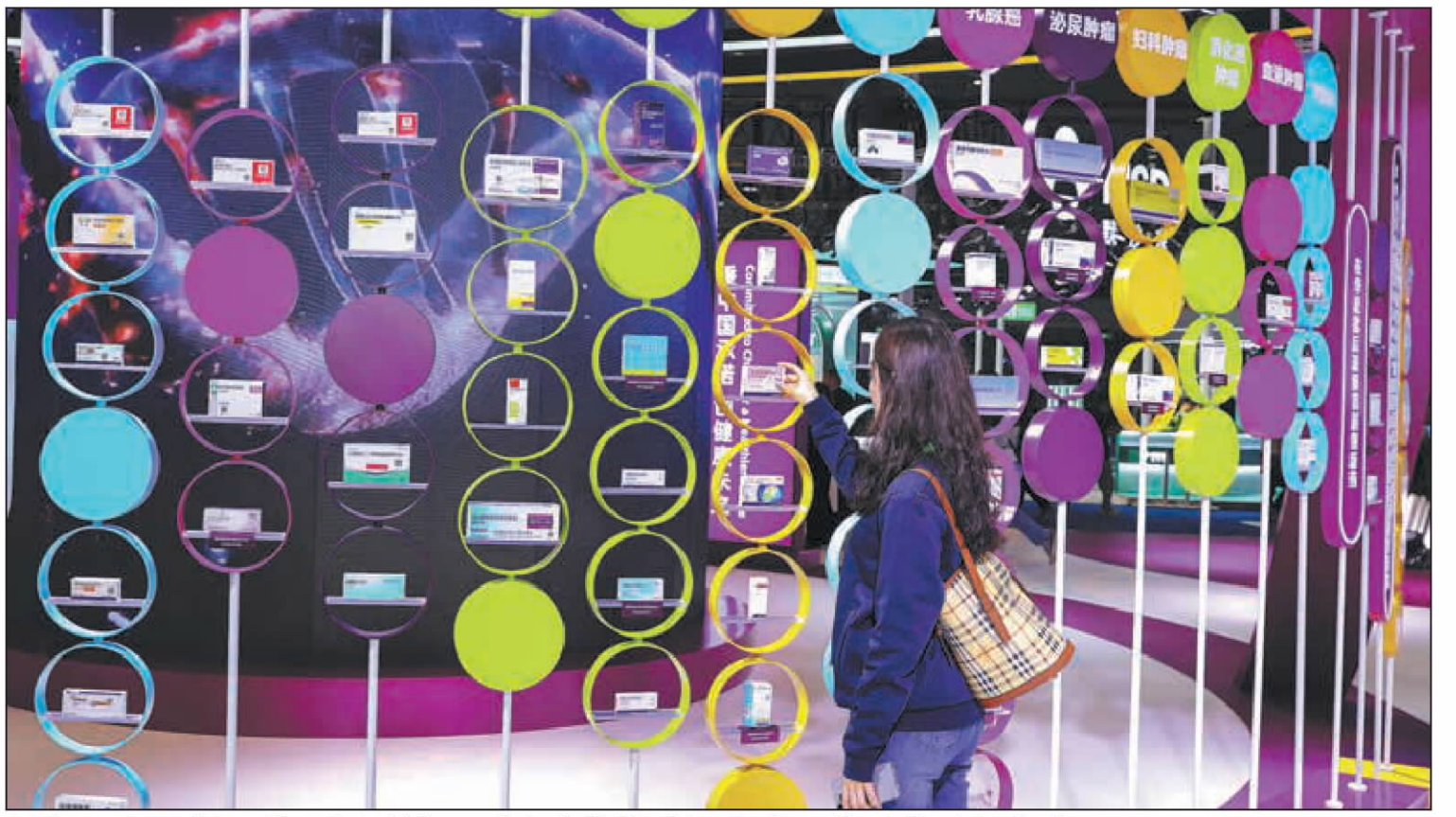

A visitor examines medicines at the product exhibition area during the 8th China International Import Expo in Shanghai on Nov 9. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

China has emerged as a global powerhouse in drug innovation, and industry experts expect the rapid growth to continue in the years ahead.

Official data showed that China approved 38 new drugs in the first half of this year, 31 of which were developed domestically. All 11 drugs, featuring new molecular targets and mechanisms of action, were produced in China.

The approvals, combined with a record $110 billion in innovative drug out-licensing deals during the same period, have demonstrated that "China's pharmaceutical industry has achieved a systemic leap forward in innovation quality", Tao Qing, a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said at a recent news conference.

China's progress is also reshaping the global R&D landscape. Worldwide, the volume of early-stage drug development nearly doubled from 2015 to 2024, while the traditional United States-led model is giving way to a two-hub system centered on both the US and China, according to a study headed by health policy experts at Georgetown University in Washington.

The US share of early-stage programs during the period fell to 37 percent from 48 percent, while China's share surged to more than 32 percent from just 8 percent, said the study published online in the Journal of the American Medical Association in late March.

"China's drug development pipeline increasingly includes innovative and transformative therapies, moving beyond the older programs that succeeded in developing follow-on products," Richard Pazdur, former director of the US Food and Drug Administration's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, wrote in an opinion piece accompanying the study.

"In some areas, including antibody-drug conjugates, bispecific antibodies and cell therapies, China now rivals or surpasses the US in scale and, in some areas, innovation. Regulators must prepare for an environment in which some therapies with substantial patient benefit may be studied primarily, or even exclusively, in China," he added.

Li Haiyan, chief director of the Drug Clinical Trial Center at Peking University Third Hospital, told an industry conference in July that while China ranks first globally in the volume of innovative drug molecules under development, only about 7 percent of the pipeline currently targets entirely new treatments, pointing to considerable untapped potential for first-in-class breakthroughs.

"We have strong momentum going forward, and the next five years are poised to see a surge in innovative drugs with truly novel targets," she said.

Reasons for rise

Robust regulatory reforms since 2015, combined with rising investment and a growing talent pool, are regarded as the key forces propelling China's biotech ascent. After more than a decade, "a virtuous cycle fostering domestic pharmaceutical innovation has fully taken shape", said Jin Chunlin, director of the Shanghai Institute of Medical Science and Technology Information.

Jin said that a thriving innovation ecosystem features a strong investor appetite for early-stage, high-risk R&D, supported by a track record of solid returns, alongside upgraded drug review and approval standards that are now fully in line with international regulatory frameworks.

"Clinical data generated in China have increasingly gained recognition from overseas regulators, including the US Food and Drug Administration, which has laid critical groundwork for the industry's global expansion," he said in a recent interview with People's Daily.

Jin also pointed out that domestic drugmakers have gradually shifted away from homogenized research efforts, moving instead toward more differentiated and higher-value target portfolios.

Among the key engines powering the growth is the national healthcare security system, which has steadily expanded coverage for innovative drugs and bolstered corporate profits.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, China added 516 medicines to the national medical insurance drug list, including 167 innovative drugs, Zhang Ke, director of the National Healthcare Security Administration, said in a recent article.

The average time for a novel drug to progress from market approval to the list has been shortened from five years to about one year, Zhang said.

As of May 2025, national medical insurance funds had spent 410 billion yuan ($61 billion) on drugs — typically innovative medicines — that were added to the list following price negotiations with drugmakers, according to official data. Their inclusion on the list is estimated to have generated more than 600 billion yuan in pharmaceutical sales.

InnoCare Pharma, founded in 2015 and headquartered in Beijing, reported its first full-year profit in 2025 and continued to post gains in the first quarter of this year. The financial turnaround was fueled by rising product sales and proceeds from global business development agreements, the company said.

Chang Jinghua, head of market access at InnoCare, said the company's core product, orelabrutinib — a novel therapy for cancers and autoimmune diseases — has had all four of its indications, the legally defined use for a drug, covered by the national reimbursement list. Since its inclusion in 2021, sales of the drug have climbed at an annual rate of nearly 50 percent.

"A number of domestic drugmakers, including us, have started turning a profit," Chang said.

"Healthcare reimbursement policy has helped create a closed-loop ecosystem that nurtures innovation. The cycle starts with heavy R&D spending, leads to better patient access and lower out-of-pocket costs, and then channels back to companies to fuel the next wave of R&D," he said.

InnoCare secured another crucial funding source from a licensing deal with global pharmaceutical company Zenas BioPharma late last year. The deal, worth more than $2 billion, grants Zenas global rights to develop and commercialize orelabrutinib.

A defining moment for China's biotech innovation came in 2024, when ivonescimab — a lung cancer drug developed by China-based Akeso — outperformed Merck & Co's immunotherapy heavyweight Keytruda in head-to-head trials. The drug gained its first market approval in China in May 2024 and was added to the reimbursement list the same year.

Xia Yu, chairwoman and CEO of Akeso, said the reimbursement listing means Chinese patients can promptly access world-class, homegrown therapies that are affordable. For domestic drugmakers, commercial returns are now increasingly tied to expanded patient access.



Medical technicians work in a research laboratory of Simcere Pharmaceutical Group in Haikou, Hainan province, on July 1. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Left: A leader of Youcare Pharmaceutical Co inspects its products in Beijing on Feb 14. Its nebulized inhaler has received clinical trial approval from the United States and Australia. MAO JIANJUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Below: A Chinese innovative drug is on display at the Zhongguancun Exhibition Center in Beijing on July 25. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



> "In some areas, including antibody-drug conjugates, bispecific antibodies and cell therapies, China now rivals or surpasses the US in scale and, in some areas, innovation. Regulators must prepare for an environment in which some therapies with substantial patient benefit may be studied primarily, or even exclusively, in China."
>
> **Richard Pazdur,** former director of the US Food and Drug Administration's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research

Last year, the company generated 3.056 billion yuan in revenue, with product sales reaching 3.033 billion yuan, up 51.5 percent year-on-year.

Different approach

Sunshine Lake Pharma, a Guangdong-based drugmaker that began as a generic medicine producer, offers a different insight into the industry's maturation.

Zhang Yingjun, chairman of the company, said innovative drug R&D is now largely bankrolled by revenues from its generic drug business, supplemented by pre-IPO shareholder backing, platform-based financing and government grants.

The inclusion of its insulin products in the nation's centralized bulk-buy procurement program has secured large supply contracts with public hospitals, providing a stable profit stream. Last year alone, insulin sales generated 244 million yuan in revenue, up about 78.7 percent year-on-year.

"The strong cash flow feeds back into R&D, creating a virtuous cycle that sustains long-term growth," he said.

That revenue is expected to climb further, buoyed by overseas market penetration. The company has passed multiple on-site Good Manufacturing Practice inspections conducted by US and European Union drug regulators, and its insulin product officially received FDA clearance this year. The company projects sales of $30 million by year-end and more than $500 million by 2030.

Innovation and overseas expansion are now seen as two pillars for future growth, according to company executives. The company has so far secured regulatory approval for four novel drugs from China's National Medical Products Administration, three of which were authorized over the past year.

Given the intensifying competition in the biotech sector, Zhang said it is crucial to differentiate products in the pipeline. The three recently approved drugs all fall within the company's traditionally strong therapeutic areas of infectious diseases and diabetes, while four novel candidates in late-stage Phase III trials are focused on chronic respiratory diseases and oncology.

"We have steered clear of overcrowded segments such as lung cancer and breast cancer. Instead, we are actively exploring tumor types with large patient populations but limited effective treatment options, including colorectal, pancreatic, liver and kidney cancers," he said.

Li Baiyong, chief science officer at Akeso, said the favorable external environment will continue to foster innovation in the sector.

He said that the high execution efficiency of R&D in China, combined with relatively low costs for personnel, equipment and manufacturing facilities, are key draws for multiple international pharmaceutical companies seeking partnerships with Chinese firms.

Ensuring oversight

Sun Hao, a lung cancer specialist at the Guangdong Provincial People's Hospital, said clinical studies in China are moving at a faster pace than in many other countries. In global multicenter trials, data from Chinese sites often come in substantially earlier.

Sun said regulators have been stepping up oversight to keep pace with the accelerating R&D activity.

In June, the country issued a new edition of the Good Clinical Practice for Drugs guidelines, placing greater emphasis on defining clear boundaries of responsibility, risk identification, and quality management throughout trials.

In May, the nation released a data protection regulation for drugs — an important component of the pharmaceutical innovation framework. The document provides a six-year protection period for clinical trial data on innovative drugs.

"In the field of lung cancer, the volume of research focused on the Chinese population already ranks first in the world," Sun said. "Looking ahead, it is expected that both the market and the primary impetus for drug development will increasingly originate from China."

Huang Huiqiang, a professor at Sun Yat-Sen University Cancer Center, said the growing number of oral presentations delivered by Chinese researchers at international meetings reflects increasing recognition from the global medical community.

He said that for homegrown companies seeking overseas expansion, challenges persist — including high clinical trial costs abroad and a lack of familiarity with foreign markets.

"It is important to recruit talent familiar with overseas drug manufacturing and regulatory rules, and build cooperation with foreign companies for long-term development," he said.

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TOP NEWS

US set to reduce drills with ROK

Washington announces decision to scale back joint exercises in move seen as overture to DPRK

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong
kelly@chinadailyapac.com



Protesters rally to oppose joint military exercises between the United States and the Republic of Korea outside the US embassy in Seoul, capital of the ROK, on Monday. AHN YOUNG-JOON / AP

United States President Donald Trump said on Sunday that he has ordered the Pentagon to "substantially reduce" joint military exercises with the Republic of Korea, announcing the decision just before the two countries' annual drill kicked off.

Observers said the abrupt message might be interpreted as the Trump administration's intention to engage with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for future talks, while some said it could also be an attempt, driven by domestic pressure, to shift the focus from the prolonged Iran conflict, in which the US has been mired.

"These exercises are not only costly, with much of these costs paid for by the United States of America (as usual), but send a signal that is totally inappropriate and hostile, to a country that, as long as Donald J Trump has been President, has been unthreatening and respectful," Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social, referring to the DPRK as he cited his "very good relationship" with the country's top leader Kim Jong-un.

During Trump's first term, the US and the ROK had postponed or scaled back their combined exercises to create the conditions for dialogue with the DPRK. In 2018, Trump suspended the annual exercise after his first meeting with Kim in June that year.

When asked if China would support renewed dialogue between the US and the DPRK, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said during a regular news briefing on Monday that maintaining peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula and advancing the political settlement of the Korean Peninsula issue serve the common interests of all parties.

The ROK's presidential office said on Monday that friendly relations between DPRK and US leaders will lead to meaningful dialogue between the two countries and discussions aimed at advancing peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula.

The ROK has also been closely coordinating with the US on the joint exercises, it said, according to Yonhap News Agency.

Trump's announcement was posted at 5:04 pm US Eastern Time on Sunday, or at 6:04 am ROK time on Monday, the date of the start of the annual Ulchi Freedom Shield, or UFS, joint drill.

The ROK's military authorities said later that the UFS combined exercise, running through Aug 27, is being carried out normally and there has been no specific request from the US side regarding adjustments to the scale of the exercise, according to Yonhap.

The DPRK has condemned the US-ROK joint military exercise, criticizing it as "a rehearsal for an aggressive war" and posing "a grave threat" to the security of the DPRK as well as the region, the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency reported on Friday.

Pyongyang also vowed to respond to a new level of threat with a new level of deterrence.

Since taking office in June last year, ROK President Lee Jae-myung has repeatedly made reconciliatory gestures toward the DPRK. On Saturday, the ROK's Liberation Day, Lee said in a speech that he hopes to begin discussions with the DPRK to formally end the Korean War as the directly involved parties, refraining from unnecessary confrontation and replacing the unstable armistice with a peace regime.

"There was an indication that he (Trump) might make some overtures toward the DPRK," Lee Sangho, a professor of political science and diplomacy at Daejeon University in the ROK, told China Daily.

Though Trump mentioned the costs paid by the US for the joint military drills and the ROK's refusal to join the US in the "denuclearization" of Iran in his post, Lee, who is also president of the Korea Association of National Intelligence Studies, said the main reason for the announcement was that Trump is looking for measures to boost his popularity as he faces challenges from the conflict with Iran and the upcoming US midterm elections in November.

Noting that Trump also posted a photo showing him standing side by side with Kim at the demilitarized zone between the ROK and the DPRK in 2019, Lee said the announcement to reduce military exercises with the ROK can be seen as something that was offered to reengage with the DPRK.

"I don't think this was fully discussed with the ROK side before the announcement was made," Lee said.

Kim Dong-yup, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, in a commentary published on the online news publication Pressian on Monday, said that Trump's instruction may not be the result of a carefully designed peace strategy for the Korean Peninsula, but rather a decision driven by a mix of frustrations over cost-sharing complaints, his personal relationship with Kim and transactional sentiments toward the ROK.

Reform: Industrial productivity substantially improved

From page 1

Under Jiang's leadership, the concept of a socialist market economy, officially endorsed at the 14th CPC National Congress in 1992, became China's primary guiding principle for modernization. This strategy demonstrated that market forces could function effectively within socialism, strengthening the Party's central role in the nation's development.

Jiang's rich professional background influenced his leadership style. Trained as an electrical engineer and experienced as a factory manager, he brought technical discipline and administrative pragmatism to governance. Serving as mayor and Party secretary of Shanghai gave him firsthand knowledge of urban development, international trade and technological progress.

Fluency in English and a strong grasp of international affairs enabled him to engage confidently with global leaders as China's international influence grew.

One of his most significant contributions was turning reform from a tentative experiment into a lasting institutional framework. Alongside Zhu Rongji, who would later serve as premier, he initiated a series of structural reforms that reshaped the national economy.

The 1994 fiscal and taxation reform greatly enhanced the financial power of the central and provincial governments through the adoption of a modern tax-sharing framework. This change substantially boosted central revenue, equipping Beijing with the fiscal resources needed to pursue national development plans and sustain macroeconomic stability.

State-owned enterprise reform represented another historic milestone. Under the principle of "holding on to the large while letting go of the small", China retained public ownership in strategic sectors such as energy, telecommunications, transportation and finance while restructuring thousands of inefficient enterprises. Although these reforms involved difficult adjustments, including the restructuring of tens of millions of jobs, they substantially improved industrial productivity and strengthened the competitiveness of China's State-owned champions.

Housing reform between 1997 and 1999 marked another decisive turning point. The transition from administrative housing allocation to a market-based housing system created one of the world's largest real estate markets, stimulated domestic demand, accelerated urbanization, and created an important engine of economic growth for the following two decades.

Among the major milestones of the period, China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001 stands out as a historic milestone. After 15 years of negotiations, China successfully entered this multilateral trading system. It further advanced reform and opening-up, modernized trade legislation, and harmonized thousands of regulations with international standards. The WTO accession accelerated China's integration into global value chains and subsequently firmly established the country as the "factory of the world".

During this period, the Chinese government also actively promoted a "going global" strategy, encouraging Chinese enterprises to acquire advanced technologies, invest abroad and participate more actively in international markets. This strategic vision anticipated China's eventual emergence as a major country with increasing global influence.

Jiang's contribution to the nation's political culture was no less significant. His contribution to the Party's theoretical development was reflected most prominently in the Theory of Three Represents, which was incorporated into the Constitution of the Communist Party of China at the 16th CPC National Congress in 2002, and it enriched the Party's theoretical foundation by stipulating that the CPC should always represent the development trends of China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of China's advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.

This theory reflected the ongoing evolution of Chinese society. It allowed successful private entrepreneurs to become Party members, integrating new productive forces into the development of socialism while maintaining the CPC's leadership. This adaptation strengthened the Party's ability to govern a rapidly modernizing country.

President Xi Jinping, speaking at a gathering in Beijing to commemorate Jiang's birth centenary, praised Jiang's political conviction, dedication to the people, innovative spirit, far-sighted strategic thinking and extraordinary courage.

Jiang also made enduring contributions to China's international standing. During his presidency, Hong Kong successfully returned to the motherland in 1997 under the principle of "one country, two systems". China won the right to host the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, expanded diplomatic engagement worldwide and pursued a foreign policy emphasizing peaceful development, cooperation and mutual benefit.

His leadership also extended to national defense modernization. Jiang promoted the modernization of the People's Liberation Army, advanced military professionalism and required the armed forces to withdraw from commercial business activities, strengthening their focus on national defense.

The CPC regards Jiang as a distinguished Marxist, a prominent proletarian revolutionary, an esteemed statesman, a military strategist and a diplomat. These characterizations highlight both his personal virtues and the important role of his leadership in history.

China's remarkable achievements did not happen overnight. Continuous reform from one generation to the next, economic modernization, social stability, technological progress and strong Party governance combined to help China confidently and strategically enter the 21st century. Jiang's successor Hu Jintao further advanced reform and opening-up, while under the leadership of President Xi, socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era.

China's development proves that socialism with Chinese characteristics can evolve with change while ensuring stable institutions.

Jiang therefore occupies an important place in the history of China's reform and modernization. His tenure represented an important stage in a broader process of continuity and renewal, in which successive generations of the Party's leadership built on what had been achieved, addressed new challenges and laid the foundations for further progress.

The author is a former prime minister of the Kyrgyz Republic. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Shopping: Chinese brands win with design and quality

From page 1

Like Lutz, a growing number of foreign tourists touch down with meticulously curated shopping lists already in hand.

Russian traveler Evgeniya Azarenkova did extensive research before coming to Shanghai. She said she believes that Chinese brands have their own design identity. "The silhouette is different. It always has this character that makes it different."

Lutz also praised the exceptional quality of Chinese products. "There is still a stigma in Europe that it's only bad quality in China, and this is totally not the case anymore," she said. "(In some cases) it's even higher quality compared to Europe, and the pricing is more affordable."

The price advantage is clear. According to Jiefang Daily, a pair of sneakers from popular domestic footwear brand Pane costs around 800 yuan, about 30 percent lower than comparable styles from top international brands.

According to Pane, its overseas social media following surged from just over 30,000 in September 2025 to more than 140,000 by June, with overseas visitors accounting for roughly 30 to 40 percent of foot traffic at its Shanghai store.

The final push to purchase, however, rarely comes from social media or brand promotion, but from the tactile experience of seeing and touching the product firsthand.

Another Russian traveler, Irina Rudometova, bought Pane sneakers as souvenirs. "They're comfortable and I like the design," she said, highlighting the shopping experience itself. "I like the lights and geometric forms inside (the store) — the atmosphere and the smell. For me, it's about atmosphere, not about the stuff."

More important, beyond the transactions, visitors' perceptions are rapidly shifting from "made in China" to "designed in China".

"When we were growing up, seeing something 'made in China' meant something cheap, but right now it's changing a lot. It may be the same price as a well-known foreign brand, but the quality is different, the style is different — very authentic," said Azarenkova, the traveler from Russia.

Zhang Zihan, founder of An Action A Day, a domestic activewear brand launched four years ago, views this shift in a broader context.

"Chinese brands are gradually entering the global mainstream — not only through affordability, but through core product strength, culture and aesthetics. This trend is also expanding from traditional categories, such as automobiles and consumer electronics, to everyday consumer goods," she said.

Zhang noted that markets in Europe and the United States account for 85 percent of the brand's cross-border sales.

Industry insiders said the biggest edge that Chinese brands have is the all-around competitive strength they've built up in the country's massive, fast-moving local market.

"We have accumulated experience interacting with a vast and dynamic base of Chinese consumers, and we have already withstood the most direct and rigorous scrutiny from them," Zhang added.

Chen Tianyi contributed to this story.


Customers line up outside the Songmont boutique in Shanghai on Saturday, waiting for their turn to enter the shop.
GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Centenary: Foresight of Jiang highlighted

From page 1

Xi called for adhering to a people-centered development philosophy, maintaining close ties with the people and making solid steps in promoting the all-around development of the people and common prosperity for all.

Highlighting Jiang's innovative spirit, Xi said the late leader had continuously advanced innovations in theory, institutions, science and technology, culture and other fields in response to the evolving needs of the times and practice.

Xi called for further deepening reform and opening-up, modernizing China's system and capacity for governance and unleashing creativity across the Party and society to generate sustained momentum for economic and social development.

Jiang's far-sightedness and strategic thinking were highlighted by Xi. With an international perspective and a vision for the future, Jiang advanced the cause of the Party and the country with a slew of major decisions and measures, Xi said.

Jiang made arrangements with foresight for building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and put forward a series of thoughts on foreign affairs and international strategies to advance the development of a multipolar world and economic globalization in the right direction.

Looking ahead, it is essential to fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, accelerate efforts to create a new development pattern and make solid headway in promoting high-quality development, Xi said, calling for further efforts to build a community with a shared future for humanity and add more positive energy to world peace and development.

Xi also highlighted Jiang's extraordinary courage and vision. Jiang made resolute decisions at key historical junctures and critical moments, and responded calmly to risks and challenges, securing the steady advancement of China's reform and opening-up as well as socialist modernization, Xi said.

In particular, Jiang led China to successfully withstand the impact of the Asian financial crisis and secure complete victory in the battle against the severe floods in 1998, Xi said.

"On the new journey, we should stand ready to withstand high winds, choppy waters and even dangerous storms, resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests, and continue to write a new chapter in the miracles of fast economic growth and long-term social stability," Xi said.

About 6,000 people were present at Monday's commemoration, which was presided over by Li Qiang and attended by Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi — all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee — as well as Vice-President Han Zheng.

Also on Monday, a symposium on the life and thought of Jiang Zemin opened in Beijing and will run through Wednesday. Cai Qi attended and addressed the opening ceremony.

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ASIAFOCUS

Editor's note:
In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.

1.5m families in Indonesia lose aid over gambling

JAKARTA — The Social Affairs Ministry of Indonesia has suspended the distribution of social assistance to nearly 1.5 million beneficiary families enrolled in the basic food program after data cross-referencing the Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center, or PPATK, flagged their accounts for online gambling transactions.

Social Affairs Minister Saifullah Yusuf confirmed earlier in August that around 1.5 million beneficiary families had been identified in the latest data sweep.

Among them, 794,475 families were also recipients of the Family Hope Program, or PKH, a conditional cash transfer scheme aimed at the country's poorest households.

Aid disbursement to all flagged recipients has been temporarily frozen pending a verification process.

"There are 1,494,652 beneficiary families flagged for online gambling, based on data we received from the PPATK. We are currently investigating and examining the matter further," Saifullah said, as quoted by Bisnis.com.

The staggering figure marks a sharp increase over the 2025 data-matching exercise, which identified approximately 600,000 beneficiary families with transactions linked to online gambling.

The ministry now faces mounting pressure to tighten oversight of the multitrillion-rupiah social protection programs.

The Financial Services Authority has revealed that, based on reports submitted by lenders to the PPATK, activities with suspected links to online gambling surged 260 percent last year.

The share of suspected online gambling activities among all reported suspicious transactions rose from 18.37 percent in December 2024 to 48.83 percent in December 2025, while the figure stood at 35.28 percent as of the first quarter last year.

The probe will also form part of a broader effort to update the national integrated social economic data, a centralized database designed to improve the accuracy of social assistance targeting.

"They may no longer meet the criteria for receiving social assistance. There is evidence that the aid is being used for online gambling. We are investigating this further, which also serves as part of our data-updating process," he said.

Digital literacy

Saifullah stressed the importance of digital literacy and personal accountability among aid recipients, warning against negligence that could enable account misuse.

"People must not be careless, for instance, by letting others use or exploit their accounts. We consistently provide outreach, education and support to beneficiaries through these social support workers. We are doing this continuously," he added.

The crackdown underscores the government's growing concern over the rampant spread of online gambling, which has increasingly penetrated low-income communities.

Questions are mounting over the key figure behind the sponsorship of a Jakarta-based online gambling network, following early May's raid that uncovered hundreds of people operating across 75 domains and gambling websites from an office building in the heart of a business district in West Jakarta.

Lawmakers have urged the police to deepen their investigation into the network's funding flows as investigators are scrambling to find the financiers behind the gambling ring.

THE JAKARTA POST, INDONESIA



World feels the heat

Farmers struggle to secure water for irrigation amid prolonged drought, at the Donam Reservoir in Daegu, South Korea, on Aug 11. YONHAP

El Nino is expected to trigger extreme weather conditions across globe

A global insurance firm warned on July 30 of the growing risks from a predicted strong El Nino, which forecasters fear will trigger extreme weather conditions in many regions of the world, including Asia.

Insurance company Munich Re said the El Nino climate pattern that is already strengthening in the Pacific Ocean will push up global temperatures. Europe and North America have witnessed record temperatures, heat waves and wildfires since May.

The extreme summer heat, which scientists say is being fueled by climate change, comes as natural disasters caused worldwide losses estimated at nearly $112 billion in the first half of 2026, Munich Re said in its half-yearly global update on natural catastrophes.

Among the costliest disasters were twin earthquakes in Venezuela and a series of storms in the US, with both sets of disasters causing an estimated loss of $30 billion each.

Looking ahead, it is El Nino that worries insurers.

"Asia-Pacific is likely to be the region which will suffer most from El Nino. We must brace ourselves for a higher typhoon risk in Japan and Korea as well as for heat waves, drought and wildfires in other regions like Southeast Asia, India and Australia," said Achim Kassow, a member of Munich Re's board of management responsible for the Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Africa division.

El Nino is part of a natural cycle. It is a periodic warming of surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, triggering worldwide changes in winds, atmospheric pressure and rainfall patterns.

It occurs every two to seven years and typically increases global temperatures by releasing heat stored in the ocean. But stronger, or "super", events that lead to very warm surface waters occur once every one to two decades and can trigger deadly and costly extreme weather.



People use umbrellas and electric fans to cool themselves in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Aug 9. ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

El Nino is the flip side of La Nina, a periodic cooling of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. La Nina events typically cause cooler and wetter weather in Southeast Asia and eastern Australia.

The US government's Climate Prediction Center said on July 9 that the current El Nino has continued to build and is likely to be one of the strongest in more than 75 years.

Malaysia could experience temperatures of up to 40 C in early 2027 as El Nino intensifies, the Malaysian Meteorological Department said on July 7.

The department's deputy director-general of operations Ambun Dindang said El Nino was expected to peak between November 2026 and January 2027, with rainfall expected to decrease across most parts of Malaysia.

Tobias Grimm, Munich Re's chief climate scientist, said El Nino intensifies many weather extremes and shifts the global risk profile.

"While some regions may experience fewer extreme weather events, others, like parts of Asia-Pacific, face a higher likelihood of severe weather. At the same time, climate change is increasing the intensity, duration and loss potential of many weather-related hazards," he told The Straits Times.

For instance, in East Asia, the risk of typhoons is generally higher, with potential changes in storm tracks and intensity. Southern and eastern China typically receive above-average rainfall, increasing the risk of flooding, he said.

Likelihood of drought

Other regions, including parts of India, often experience below-average rainfall, raising the likelihood of drought and water stress.

"The key takeaway is that El Nino shifts the distribution of weather-related risks across Asia. Many parts of Asia-Pacific are subject to elevated natural catastrophe risks in the second half of 2026," he said.

Munich Re is a reinsurer, providing "insurance for insurance companies". For instance, such firms may help to cover large catastrophic losses.

Munich Re said that of the worldwide losses from natural disasters, estimated at nearly $112 billion from January to June, only $44 billion in losses was insured.

In the Asia-Pacific, total losses amounted to about $8.7 billion, significantly lower than in previous years, with the 10-year average losses for the same period, adjusted for inflation, at $32 billion. Just over $1 billion was insured.

Severe flooding in central and southern China in May and a large bushfire in Australia triggered major financial losses.

In Europe, severe winter storms caused extensive damage. In just over a month, nine storms affected Portugal and Spain at the start of 2026, Munich Re said.

The most destructive was Storm Kristin in late January, which caused losses of about $7.7 billion, of which around $1.8 billion was insured.

In the US, tornado outbreaks and winter storms killed scores of people and caused damage totaling $47 billion, of which $34 billion was insured.

Munich Re also pointed to growing risks from severe heat, noting that record-breaking heat waves dominated the first half of the year in North America and Europe.

"Studies show a clear link between heat waves and climate change," it said. "Heat waves are the natural hazard that claims the most lives.

"It is difficult to quantify the financial impact of heat waves, as they do not usually result in any direct damage to property."

Pointing to the risks of increasing temperatures globally, it added: "Instead, the damage is chiefly caused by falling productivity and production standstills, but also by damage to infrastructure, transportation breakdowns and crop failures."

THE STRAITS TIMES, SINGAPORE

Vietnam becomes ASEAN's 2nd-largest aviation market

BANGKOK — UK-based aviation data provider OAG reported that total airline capacity in Southeast Asia fell by 1.2 percent from July 2025 to 50.4 million seats in July 2026.

Vietnam has overtaken Thailand to become Southeast Asia's second-largest commercial aviation market, as overall airline seat capacity across the region declined, OAG said.

In Southeast Asia, domestic airline capacity declined by 1.3 percent and accounted for 45 percent of the region's commercial aviation market, while international capacity fell by 1.5 percent and represented the remaining 55 percent.

The contraction was attributed to rising fuel costs driven by tensions in the Middle East, which prompted several Southeast Asian airlines to reduce international services.

Indonesia retained its position as Southeast Asia's largest commercial aviation market, with 10.9 million seats in July, up 0.3 percent from the same month last year.

Vietnam moved ahead of Thailand into second place after recording 7.4 million seats, an increase of 5.6 percent year-on-year.

7.4
million seats
Vietnam moved ahead of Thailand into second place after recording 7.4 million seats in July, an increase of 5.6 percent year-on-year.

Vietnam Airlines, the country's national full-service carrier, also became the largest airline in Southeast Asia by seat capacity. It offered 2.81 million seats during the month, up 0.1 percent from July 2025.

Thailand, previously the region's second-largest aviation market, fell to third place with 6.9 million seats, down 3 percent year-on-year.

Malaysia ranked fourth with 5.2 million seats, down 8.3 percent, followed by the Philippines with 4.9 million seats, down 4.1 percent.

OAG data showed that Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines all recorded declines in commercial airline capacity.

The reductions were linked to disruption caused by the conflict between Iran and the United States, as well as renewed tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz.

Jet fuel prices rose sharply and remained elevated as the situation intensified, increasing operating costs for airlines.

As a result, several carriers reduced or suspended direct and connecting services between the Middle East and the three Southeast Asian countries.

THE NATION, THAILAND

Poll to decide Malaysia's national fruit

KUALA LUMPUR — The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security of Malaysia is proposing that the Department of Statistics Malaysia conduct a nationwide survey to gather public views on the choice for national fruit.

This will provide the government with a reference point before deciding which fruit should get the title, says Chan Foong Hin, deputy minister of agriculture and food security.

Currently, Malaysia does not have an officially recognized "national fruit".

Replying to a question on Tuesday on the option of a national fruit in Dewan Negara, or the upper house of the Parliament of Malaysia, Chan said the ministry has so far received two applications: one from the Durian Manufacturer Association nominating the durian, and another from the Malaysian Pineapple Industry Board nominating the pineapple.

"The government will not directly select one over the other, as all fruit industries must be treated fairly. Therefore, we propose conducting a survey so that the people can vote for their preferred national fruit," he said.

He explained that the survey aims to comprehensively understand the people's choices and analyze the factors influencing their preferences — including national identity, cultural value, popularity, and economic value.

He cited the example of India which chose the mango as its national fruit, while Bangladesh selected the jackfruit.

When asked by Sin Chew Daily when the nationwide survey would commence, Chan later clarified that the Agriculture Ministry is leaving the exploratory work to the Department of Statistics, and that the initiative remains at a very preliminary stage.

SIN CHEW DAILY, MALAYSIA



A worker arranges durian fruits for sale inside a shop in Shah Alam, Malaysia, on June 23. FAZRY ISMAIL / EPA

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WORLD



Palestinians salvage iron from the rubble of buildings destroyed by Israeli airstrikes, in Gaza City on Sunday. JEHAD ALSHRAFI / AP

Hamas urges pressure on Israel

Group calls on key players to press for ceasefire road map

CAIRO/JERUSALEM — Palestinian militant group Hamas on Sunday urged mediators and guarantors to press Israel to approve the road map for the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement.

The call was made in a statement issued following a meeting in Cairo between a Hamas delegation — led by Khalil al-Hayya, head of the group's political bureau — and representatives of the mediators and guarantors of the ceasefire agreement.

The delegation urged the mediators and the United States-led "Board of Peace" to push Israel to implement all its commitments under the first phase of the agreement, halt killings and ground incursions, and approve the road map for the second phase of the agreement, the statement said.

Hamas also said it had accepted the road map, citing its aim to secure a permanent ceasefire, full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, sustained humanitarian aid, and the start of work by the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, according to the statement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said earlier this month that Israel rejected the US-backed road map and would not withdraw its forces from Gaza until Hamas was fully disarmed.

The "Board of Peace" published a 15-point road map on July 31 for implementing the next phase of the Gaza agreement.

It includes an end to military operations, the transfer of civilian governance to the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, and the decommissioning of heavy weapons, weapons stockpiles, military production facilities and tunnels, alongside arrangements for an Israeli withdrawal.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump's envoy Jared Kushner met Netanyahu on Monday after holding talks with Hamas leaders.

A diplomatic official confirmed to Agence France-Presse that the meeting had begun late on Monday morning.

Kushner — Trump's son-in-law — met al-Hayya in the Egyptian city of El-Alamein on Sunday, sources with knowledge of the discussions told AFP.

Kushner demanded that Hamas verify it is giving up its weapons, a key sticking point for Netanyahu, and that the group renounce any future role in governing the Palestinian territory, the sources said.

Netanyahu is expected to meet behind closed doors with Kushner and Nickolay Mladenov, the high representative for Gaza on the "Board of Peace".

Awaiting response

A Hamas official said the group told Kushner it was committed to the Gaza plan and wanted pressure on Netanyahu.

"Hamas is awaiting the US administration's response regarding Israel's position on the agreement," the official told AFP.

Netanyahu, who is facing elections in October that polls show will be tight, has increasingly been willing to defy Trump, whose support he once highlighted in his campaign.

After initially voicing muted criticism of the Gaza plan, Netanyahu last week told his cabinet that he rejected it and vowed not to pull troops from the Palestinian territory.

In an interview, Itamar Ben-Gvir, a far-right national security minister in Netanyahu's cabinet, called for mass killings in Gaza.

"I think targeted eliminations should be carried out in Gaza every night. Take out 30 or 40," Ben-Gvir said in comments that surfaced on Sunday on a podcast with a former Gaza hostage.

Until recently, Israel was striking Gaza nearly every day, attacks that have killed more than 1,250 people since an October truce deal came into effect, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

On Sunday, the foreign ministers of eight Muslim-majority countries condemned Israel's declared rejection of the road map.

"Such rejection confirms that Israel now bears responsibility for obstructing the efforts to bring peace in Gaza," the foreign ministers of Egypt, Qatar, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkiye and Saudi Arabia said in a joint statement.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Beijing slams Takaichi's remarks for blurring war crimes

By JI HAISHENG
jihaisheng@chinadaily.com.cn

China has condemned Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's address at the National Memorial Ceremony for the War Dead, saying her remarks shunned reflection on historical lessons and blurred Japan's responsibility for its acts of aggression.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian made the comment on Monday at a regular news briefing following Takaichi's speech at the ceremony held in Tokyo over the weekend.

Takaichi avoided the words "remorse" and "lessons learned", spoke ambiguously about Japan's war crimes, and attempted to turn back the wheel of history, Lin said.

"This once again exposes the sinister attempt of the Takaichi administration to cover up, distort and reverse the verdict on Japan's history of aggression, which has drawn strong condemnation and widespread opposition from all parties," he said.

On the day marking Japan's defeat and surrender in World War II on Saturday, Takaichi made a monetary offering to the "shrine honoring war criminals", while Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi and other senior officials and politicians went to pay homage in person, Lin said.

Such moves have further heightened the vigilance of Asian neighbors and the international community over Japan's future trajectory, he said.

Lin cited Japanese observers as saying that a country unable to reflect on its past cannot earn trust, and that the defense minister's actions amount to supporting the war of aggression.

As this year marks the 81st anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the World Anti-Fascist War, as well as the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Tokyo Trials, Lin underscored the importance of fostering a correct view on history.

"Only by facing up to history and drawing lessons from it can people avoid repeating mistakes made in the past and straying down the wrong path again," he said.

"We once again urge the Japanese authorities to listen earnestly to the voices of justice from within Japan and the international community, deeply reflect on their war crimes, and make a complete break with militarism, rather than going further down the wrong path," he added.

China's zero-tariff policy boon for Zimbabwe trade

By LAWRENCE PAGANGA
in Harare, Zimbabwe
For China Daily

Zimbabwean exporters to China have received a major boost after Beijing implemented a zero-tariff policy, opening vast opportunities for Zimbabwean products in one of the world's largest markets.

Early this year, China announced the zero-tariff policy on goods from Zimbabwe and 52 other African countries from May 1.

Archford Mabuka, a Zimbabwean analyst, said the move comes as China has emerged as one of Zimbabwe's most dynamic export destinations.

"The facility provides duty-free access for a wide range of products, including agricultural commodities, processed foods, horticultural products, textiles, leather goods, industrial inputs and selected manufactured products," Mabuka said.

"The growth in exports over the past five years demonstrates both the strength of demand in the Chinese market and the potential for further expansion under the new arrangement," he said.

"This remarkable growth reflects China's increasing appetite for Zimbabwean products and underscores the strategic importance of market diversification."

The development aligns well with Zimbabwe's industrialization agenda, which seeks to move beyond raw commodity exports toward greater value addition and beneficiation, he added.

ZimTrade, the national trade promotion organization, launched a practical guide last week to help exporters navigate China's zero-tariff policy and meet Chinese market requirements.

The guide outlines applicable rules of origin for exported products, as well as compliance with China's sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, product standards and customs procedures.

It also highlights the need to strengthen logistics systems to ensure goods can be moved into the Chinese market reliably and cost-effectively, while encouraging exporters to move beyond raw commodities toward value-added products that capture a larger share of the value chain.

ZimTrade assured exporters that it would support them "from origin certification to market intelligence and buyer linkages" in China.

"This is one of the most significant trade openings Zimbabwean exporters have been offered in recent years," said Allan Majuru, the organization's CEO.

"Understanding exactly what is required will determine their success in utilizing the benefit of this window," he said.

"The zero-tariff treatment is an opportunity to change that picture and to bring new products into the Chinese market that previously faced tariff barriers, diversifying Zimbabwe's export base beyond raw materials," he added.

Zimbabwe's minister of information, publicity and broadcasting services, Zhemu Soda, described the zero-tariff policy as "low-hanging fruit" for Zimbabwean businesses.

"Those who are into agriculture and other sectors should take advantage of it to increase trade with China. It's a good opportunity for expanded trade," he said.

Strategic opportunity

Jimmy Psillos, chairman of Zimbabwe's Competition and Tariff Commission, said the policy presents a strategic opportunity for the country's export sector.

"By allowing qualifying products to enter the Chinese market duty-free, the initiative opens access to one of the largest and most dynamic consumer markets in the world," he said.

The arrangement is unilateral and reflects China's broader commitment to strengthening economic cooperation with Africa, creating "a critical window for Zimbabwean firms to position themselves in the Chinese market", he added.

As Africa's third-largest blueberry producer, Zimbabwe has already begun taking advantage of the policy, recently exporting its first shipment of blueberries to China.

Trade between Zimbabwe and China reached a record $4.4 billion last year, up 15 percent from 2024, according to the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce.

"For Zimbabwe, this is more than a trade concession — it is an industrialization opportunity," the chamber said.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Off to the races



Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva speaks at a rally at a stadium in Sao Bernardo do Campo on Sunday, kicking off his campaign. Lula, 80, is seeking a fourth and final term as voters in Latin America's largest economy head to the polls on Oct 4.
ADRIANO MACHADO / REUTERS

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Briefly

CHINA

Chile's foreign minister to pay 5-day official visit

Chile's Foreign Minister Francisco Perez Mackenna will begin a five-day official visit to China on Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian announced at a regular news conference on Monday. Over more than half a century since the two countries established diplomatic ties, China-Chile relations have stayed at the forefront of China's relations with Latin American and Caribbean countries, Lin said. China looks forward to using this visit to have in-depth exchange of views with the Chilean side on bilateral relations and international and regional issues of mutual interest, so as to carry forward friendship, expand consensus, deepen cooperation and push bilateral relations to a new level, he added.

DR CONGO

Ebola outbreak now nation's deadliest ever

A fast-spreading Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now the country's deadliest ever after killing more than 2,300 people in three months, government figures showed on Monday. The United Nations says the Ebola outbreak is "the fastest-growing on record" and is killing a victim every 30 minutes in the DR Congo. Declared on May 15, the outbreak is thought to have already been spreading for several weeks by that point. In its latest toll on Monday, the Congolese authorities said that 2,325 people had died in the current outbreak, from 4,945 confirmed cases. The deadliest Ebola outbreak ever hit western Africa in 2013-16, killing more than 11,300 people.

CHINA DAILY—AGENCIES—XINHUA

The People's Republic of China
The People's Court of Shaodong City, Hunan Province

Public Notice

LE DIEM THUY,

Notice is given hereby that this Court has accepted the divorce petition filed by the Plaintiff, Zeng Yongyang, against you. Given that you are currently absent and your address remains unknown, we are hereby providing you, in accordance with the law, with copies of the Civil Complaint, the Notice of Response, the Notice for Evidence Submission, and the Court Summons via a public notice. These documents will be considered served 60 days after the date of the said public notice. The deadline for submitting a statement of defense and presenting evidence will be 30 days following the end of the aforementioned public notice period. This case is scheduled for a public hearing at 10:00 a.m. on December 21, 2026 in the Fourth Trial Courtroom of this Court. You are requested to attend the court hearing punctually. If you fail to do so, the case will proceed to trial by default in accordance with legal provisions.

The People's Court of Shaodong City, Hunan Province
The People's Court of Shaodong City, Hunan Province (seal)
August 7, 2026

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COMMENT

Editorials

Unswervingly advancing cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era

A grand gathering was held on Monday in Beijing to commemorate the birth centenary of the country's late leader Jiang Zemin.

President Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the gathering in which he recalled the "indelible contributions" Jiang made to safeguarding the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics and successfully advancing it into the 21st century by breaking new ground in reform and opening-up in all respects and achieving overall moderate prosperity in people's lives.

Jiang's political career unfolded during a period of profound changes. The country faced complicated domestic and international circumstances following the end of the Cold War, and it was navigating the difficult transition toward a socialist market economy and deeper integration with the world economy. Against that backdrop, Jiang demonstrated a rock-solid political conviction, profound dedication to the people, an innovative spirit, farsighted strategic thinking and extraordinary courage in addressing risks and challenges.

These qualities are still relevant today.

Jiang had remained unswervingly firm in communist ideals, utterly loyal to the Communist Party of China and the people, and resolutely committed to the cause of the Party and the people. He emphasized the importance of strengthening the Party's leadership and effectively improving Party building as the country advanced reform and opening-up and developed its economy.

Xi highlighted Jiang's view that the farther the country advances along the path of reform and opening-up and the more its economy develops, the more crucial it becomes to strengthen the Party's leadership and improve Party building.

Jiang also demonstrated a profound love for the people, always standing with them, caring about their well-being and stressing that development ultimately serves the people. Under his leadership, major initiatives, including the large-scale development of the country's western regions and poverty alleviation, helped improve people's living standards and contributed to the country's historic transition to moderate prosperity.

Today, learning from that people-first approach means adhering to the philosophy of development centered on the people, helping them resolve difficulties and promoting common prosperity through the country's modernization.

Lauding Jiang's achievements, Xi hailed his efforts in continuously advancing innovations in theory, institutions, science and technology, culture and other fields.

By pooling the wisdom of the whole Party, Jiang created the Theory of Three Represents, which further answered the questions of what socialism is and how to build it, and creatively addressed what kind of Party to build and how to build it.

The establishment of the socialist market economy as a reform objective and China's accession to the World Trade Organization reflected the innovative and pragmatic spirit of adapting to changing circumstances while firmly pursuing development. The same spirit is indispensable today as China confronts a rapidly changing world marked by technological transformation, economic restructuring and geopolitical uncertainty.

We must now properly respond to the questions facing China, the world, the people and the times, and constantly break new ground in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times, Xi said.

Jiang's farsightedness and strategic thinking were highlighted by Xi. With an international perspective and a vision for the future, Jiang advanced the cause of the Party and the State with a slew of major decisions and measures.

That strategic vision is also necessary today, when it is essential to fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, accelerate efforts to create a new development pattern, and make solid headway in promoting high-quality development.

Jiang's courage in critical moments is equally instructive. He made resolute decisions at key historical junctures and critical moments, and responded calmly to risks and challenges, securing the steady advancement of China's reform and opening-up as well as socialist modernization.

The commemorative gathering can help the country effectively draw strength from Jiang's legacy to face new challenges.

"On the new journey, we should stand ready to withstand high winds, choppy waters, and even dangerous storms, resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests, and continue to write a new chapter in the miracles of fast economic growth and long-term social stability," Xi said.

In the process, it is imperative to uphold the overall leadership of the Party and the centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee, unswervingly strengthen full and rigorous Party self-governance, and ensure the Party remains the strong leadership core in the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

'China push' in Asia fabricated alarmism

A New York Times article, titled "As China Pushes to Expand in Asia, Trump Focuses on Iran", published on Saturday, encapsulates a typical trope among the political circles and media in the United States: when in trouble, blame others.

The piece attempts to paint an alarmist picture of the region trembling under the shadow of "Chinese ambition" as the US administration focuses its attention on the Middle East.

Beneath its surface concern for the US' Asian allies are dialectical currents that are logically flawed, historically selective and dangerously misleading. It serves less as a report on regional sentiment and more as a projection of US anxieties masquerading as analysis.

Its reasoning is built on the bedrock of breathtaking ironies: It is the US that launched the conflict with Iran that has become another costly quagmire in which the US finds itself trapped. It is Washington that is seeking to cultivate a Cold War-like division in Asia by pushing a narrative of bloc competition and pressuring countries to choose sides, often at the expense of their economic interests. And it is the US that is resorting to economic coercion, tariff wars and technological "decoupling" in a bid to restructure the global supply chains in its favor, harming the very economies it claims to protect.

It is the misjudged self-serving US foreign policy that is the source of instability in the region, not so-called Chinese "expansion".

The New York Times article's primary "evidence" for the so-called "Chinese expansionism" is a recent incident at Ren'ai Reef in the South China Sea. Here, the reporting is not just flawed but deliberately obfuscating and biased.

While it did admit that for decades the Philippines has sought to claim the reef in the disputed waters by rotating troops to a World War II-era ship it grounded there, it fell short of criticizing Manila for its ploy to occupy the Chinese reef.

Manila's illegal grounding of its warship at Ren'ai Reef in 1999 is the root cause of tensions between China and the Philippines. An objective analysis of the current situation would inevitably trace the current frictions to that unilateral provocation instigated by the Philippines.

Instead, the article deliberately presents the current frictions as the result of unprovoked Chinese "acts of aggression". This is a clear case of agenda-driven journalism, where the historical context is dismissed to fit a preordained narrative of "Chinese bullying".

Yet the most manipulative aspect of the article's narrative is its claim of palpable "Asian anxiety". While there may be concerns in capitals such as Tokyo and Manila, these are not representative of the broader Asian sentiment. In fact, the findings of a Pew Research Center survey in July reveal a starkly different picture.

The poll found that in a majority of the 36 countries surveyed, favorable views of China have surpassed those of the US, including in key US allies such as Canada and Australia. This shows that it is the US that suffers from a lack of trust, not China.

The true intent of the article is to express dissatisfaction with the Donald Trump administration's entanglement in the Iran conflict, and to raise concerns that Washington may be too distracted to focus on the Asia-Pacific region, thereby allowing China's influence there to surpass its own. This is typical US sleight of hand.

The article is simply projecting Washington's anxieties about its declining influence and costly misadventures in Asia. By fabricating and selectively using facts and viewing China through a biased lens, it constructs a narrative of a new Cold War that serves its own ideological agenda.

While some politicians in Tokyo and Manila are betting on the US for political gain, in general, Asian countries hope to achieve development together. The anxiety the article tries to sell is not germane to the majority of people in Asia. Instead, it is a fiction manufactured for political purposes.

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

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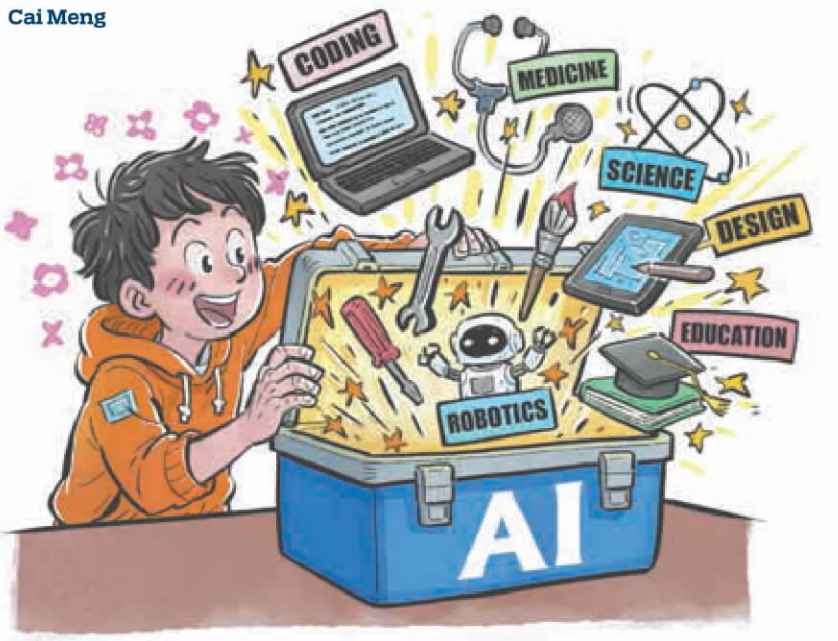
Cai Meng



Opinion Line

US' endless science frontier risks receding to 'golden age' of a few

In November 1944, as Allied armies pushed across Europe and the United States raced to develop nuclear weapons, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt asked Vannevar Bush, head of the US Office of Scientific Research and Development, how wartime science could serve peace. Bush's answer, *Science: The Endless Frontier*, became one of the most consequential policy documents of the modern era. Its premise was simple: let the federal government fund basic research, give scientists room to follow curiosity and trust that discoveries would eventually produce prosperity, health and national strength. For over eight decades that bargain helped define science in the US.

Now, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Director Michael Kratsios' *Science: A New Golden Age* proposes something different. Where Bush trusted institutions, Kratsios distrusts "legacy" ones. Where Bush emphasized exploratory research, Kratsios emphasizes national missions. Where the postwar system tried to protect scientific judgment from political direction, the new model places science more explicitly in the service of national competition.

The contrast reflects two different countries. Bush wrote from a position of confidence. The US had emerged from World War II with its industrial base intact, its universities ascendant and a flood of European scientific talent arriving at US laboratories.

Kratsios writes out of anxiety. Manufacturing has migrated overseas. China is viewed by Washington as a scientific and technological competitor. Artificial intelligence is compressing the distance between discovery and application. The proposed revolution in the government's policies on research is driven by the anxiety that the US invents while others manufacture.

The report published last month argues that federal money is too concentrated in elite universities. It proposes directing more money toward individual researchers, start-ups, focused research organizations and industry-linked laboratories. Peer review is portrayed as too conservative. In its place would come challenge prizes, Advanced Research Projects Agency-style programs, "golden tickets", longer-term grants, and mission-driven initiatives in AI, quantum computing, nuclear fusion, robotics and advanced manufacturing.

The postwar system worked because authority was distributed among government, universities, industry and philanthropy. It was inefficient, competitive and sometimes maddening. Yet its "looseness" created room for discoveries whose uses nobody could foresee. The transistor, the internet, biotechnology and countless advances in medicine did not arrive because a government mission statement correctly predicted them.

Science is not an assembly line. A government can announce a mission to build a fusion reactor; it cannot order the next transistor or modify the DNA of living organisms.

The geopolitical stakes are even larger because the report is ultimately a response to China, as some observers said. But it is here that the change of approach becomes self-defeating. China is not the Soviet Union. China combines extensive public support with powerful companies, enormous manufacturing capacity, market scale and deep integration into global trade and scientific networks.

Consider Apple. Washington has reportedly pressed the company not to source memory chips from Chinese suppliers. Apple may ultimately comply. But finding alternatives can cost more.

This is the paradox of the new strategy. In trying to compete with a comprehensive Chinese system, Washington risks technically nationalizing a science enterprise whose greatest strength has been its openness.

Political priorities can also make collaboration more difficult. US allies and partners may increasingly be asked to align their research, supply chains and standards with Washington. China, meanwhile, will have incentives to deepen its own international networks. The world could gradually develop two parallel scientific ecosystems.

Bush's frontier was endless because it was open. Kratsios' frontier risks becoming fortified, directed and inward-looking.

The reform of the US' research system should make it more open not merely more obedient to political missions; more connected to industry, without sacrificing basic science; and more resilient, without confusing openness with weakness.

The first golden age of US science was built on confidence that the future could not be completely planned. The danger of the new one is that, in trying too hard to plan the future, Washington may close off the very frontier it is trying to conquer.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Enhancing safety equipment industry critical

Editor's note: *China has released a five-year plan for the development of the safety and emergency equipment industry. Xinhua News Agency spoke to Ao Li, vice-president of the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, and Gao Hong, vice-chair of the China Safety Industry Association, about the country's emergency response capabilities. Below are excerpts of the interviews. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The plan outlines 15 specific tasks in four key areas of the industry: fostering innovation, promoting the use of safety and emergency equipment, nurturing industry players and enhancing the industry ecosystem.

Among these, innovation is prioritized, with dedicated sections highlighting the need for breakthroughs in critical technologies and the integration of emerging technologies. The plan calls for leveraging artificial intelligence, embodied intelligence, brain-computer interfaces and satellite remote sensing to drive the development of safety and emergency equipment.

Standards serve as an important bridge between technological innovation and practical application, while also providing the foundation for the safe and orderly development of the industry.

The plan calls for the rapid development and implementation of a range of essential standards, including those for technologies and equipment that are adaptable for both routine and emergency use. It also places emphasis on international technical exchanges and cooperation on standardization.

Its forward-looking approach to building a standards system provides clear guidance for the industry's development. Authorities are accelerating work on standards for emerging and integrated fields, including AI-enabled applications and safety and emergency response robots. The development of a system of standards will be advanced in parallel with technological research and development, testing and verification, and demonstration projects. China will also actively participate in the formulation of international standards, translating its extensive engineering expertise into an advantage in standard-setting.

Ultimately, the value of equipment lies in its performance in real-world operations. The plan calls for developing a number of key application scenarios for safety and emergency equipment and promoting the wider adoption of equipment featuring advanced technologies and proven effectiveness in practical applications.

The household and community safety and emergency response sector, along with urban and rural fire protection, has strong market potential. The plan aims to increase the penetration of household and community safety and emergency products at the grassroots level.

Demand for products such as electrical fire monitoring equipment and rapid-response systems for fires involving new energy vehicles is growing rapidly, driving the growth of the fire protection market.

The plan outlines measures for upgrading fire protection infrastructure, promoting the iteration and upgrading of smart firefighting equipment, and supporting urban renewal. These measures will help sustain market momentum in the fire protection sector and expand the application of safety and emergency equipment.

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VIEWS

Robert Lawrence Kuhn

Jiang's engineering of a nation endures

Centenaries invite the long view. They ask, looking backward, what changed because that person lived and led. Aug 17 marks the 100th anniversary of former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin's birth, and my answer is both historical and personal. The reforms he consolidated and the scientific ambition he envisioned have come to full fruition in President Xi Jinping's new era. At a gathering commemorating Jiang's birth centenary on Monday, Xi called for learning from Jiang's extraordinary courage and vision, his dedication to and profound love for the people.

I should declare a personal interest. I spent several years writing Jiang's biography. When I woke up to the news of his death on Nov 30, 2022, I felt as though I had lost a member of my own family — the occupational hazard of biography, and also its privilege.

When historians explain how China moved from the margins of the world economy to its center — the ascent that defines the new era under Xi — part of the explanation will run through the 13 years in which an electrical engineer from Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, led a country he was called upon to lead.

Xi's "new era" has its own historical circumstances, priorities and methods. Yet it rests on foundations consolidated during Jiang's leadership. Deng Xiaoping launched reform and opening-up in 1978 and revived its momentum through his southern tour in 1992. Jiang's indispensable achievement was to preserve, institutionalize and extend that course when domestic uncertainty and international pressures placed China's future direction in doubt. He and his successor Hu Jintao helped make reform and opening-up the irreversible operating system of the country.

The turn did not come easily. When Jiang said "I now understand that the market economy is critical for China" that admission was revelatory. He possessed an engineer's respect for results and an intellectual's ability to revise his understanding. Under his leadership, the socialist market economy became established doctrine. State-owned enterprises were restructured under the then premier Zhu Rongji. Zhu passed away on Aug 12.

During that era, fiscal, banking and regulatory institutions were rebuilt; foreign investment expanded; and China entered the World Trade Organization in 2001, the act that welded China's productive capacity to global demand. Ideologically, Jiang's Theory of Three Represents brought entrepreneurs and other emerging groups into the Party framework, modernizing the Party and enabling it to lead a diversifying economy.

Jiang's most deeply held strategic conviction, however, concerned science and technology. As an engineer and minister of the electronics industry, he believed national strength ultimately depended on scientific capacity, education, industrial upgrading, and mastery of advanced technology. "Rejuvenating the nation through science and education" became State strategy. He called for Chinese universities to be world-class and helped cultivate the institutions and talent from which China's contemporary technological capabilities have blossomed.

Nowhere was the conviction bolder than in space. In 1992, when China's GDP per capita was under $400, Jiang approved China's human spaceflight program and its patient three-step design: spacecraft, then orbital laboratory, then space station. Jiang named the spacecraft himself — Shenzhou, or "divine vessel". On Nov 30, 2022, Shenzhou-15 docked with the Tiangong space station, and for the first time six Chinese astronauts were in orbit together, completing the handover that finished the station's construction. Jiang passed away that afternoon. Thirty years from the vision to its fulfillment.

It is this inheritance that Xi's new era has carried to fruition, and well beyond. The economy Jiang bound to world trade is now, by purchasing power parity, the largest on earth, and China is the foremost trading nation, producing roughly 30 percent of global manufacturing value added.

The industrial-scientific ecosystem, begun under Jiang, strengthened by Hu and championed by Xi, now supports leadership in electric vehicles, batteries, renewable energy, high-speed rail, and is a formidable competitor in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and biotech. And the military modernization Jiang began has accelerated under Xi into forces of another order, with a large navy and reaching into cyberspace.

The continuity is structural and institutional. In Jiang's era, China sought entry into the international system, while in the new era, China is helping to shape it and contributing to global governance. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China fused science, education, talent, development, and security into a unified program of Chinese modernization; Xi's "new quality productive forces" and the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) call for advanced manufacturing, green transition, and technological self-reliance.

A centenary tribute should not become hagiography. The Jiang era's rapid growth was not without cost, and China's arrival at the center has drawn friction as well as admiration. A serious accounting holds both sides in superposition. The enduring logic is adaptation: learning from experience, correcting what fails, safeguarding stability without allowing it to become stagnation, and opening to the world while strengthening indigenous capability.

Jiang deserves to be remembered whole. He loved languages — serviceable English, Russian and Romanian, fragments of others — and delighted in using them in diplomatic exchanges.

At one private dinner he decreed that only English be spoken, teasingly instructing the interpreter not to translate for a minister who had neglected to learn it, and chiding another who kept his excellent English quiet for fear of embarrassing his leader. "You wouldn't embarrass me," Jiang told him. "You would help me improve." Then he confided that he had been secretly studying Spanish for a year, to prepare for a trip to South America.

I chose to write Jiang's biography because I was convinced that his life offered a singular way to tell China's story across eight historic decades of transformation. The book's Chinese edition became one of China's bestselling books of 2005. When Jiang passed away in 2022, the biography briefly returned to number one. History, I wrote then, will be kind to Jiang Zemin.

History is kind not because it forgets imperfections. It is kind when distance permits perspective — when personality is separated from caricature, consequences from slogans, and durable achievement from transient fashion.

Jiang did not initiate reform and opening-up, but he made them irreversible. He did not invent China's technological ambition, but he made science, education and human spaceflight pillars of national strategy.

Xi's new era has brought those long investments to their fullest fruition, moving China decisively toward the center stage of the world. On Jiang's centenary, I remember the leader, the engineer, the insatiably curious man — and I remain confident that history will be kind to him.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn is the author of The Man Who Changed China: The Life and Legacy of Jiang Zemin (2005)*, and the creator and host of Closer To Truth on science and philosophy. He received the China Reform Friendship Medal in 2018. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

Abdul Wahed Jalal Nori

Connectivity keeps global trade on even keel

The tensions around the Strait of Hormuz are often viewed through the familiar lens of Middle Eastern geopolitics. While this is understandable, it misses the broader picture. The real issue lies in a structural weakness that has quietly been building for decades: the world economy has become extraordinarily efficient, but remains dangerously dependent on a handful of strategic corridors. The lesson from Hormuz is therefore not about a single waterway, but about the future of globalization itself.

For much of the post-Cold War era, globalization was based on the assumption that deeper economic interdependence would gradually reduce geopolitical risks.

As production networks expanded, trade volumes surged and supply chains stretched across continents, many believed that disrupting global commerce would be too costly for any rational actor. Yet recent events suggest that interdependence has merely changed the nature of vulnerability rather than eliminating it.

This paradox has become more visible over the past five years. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of concentrated manufacturing networks. The 2021 Suez Canal blockage revealed how a single incident could disrupt global commerce. Attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea forced vessels to take longer and costlier routes, while the recent tensions in Hormuz reminded the world that even the perception of disruption can trigger higher insurance premiums, volatile energy prices and renewed inflationary pressures. These are not isolated events. Together, they reveal a common structural reality: the arteries of globalization have become its biggest strategic vulnerability.

History offers a valuable perspective. Civilizations have seldom thrived solely due to abundant resources or superior military power. Their influence rested equally on securing the routes through which goods, technology and ideas moved. The ancient Silk Road connected civilizations across Eurasia. Venice flourished by protecting Mediterranean commerce. Britain's maritime supremacy opened the door to global trade. While the strategic geography has changed, the underlying principle has not. Today's shipping lanes, energy corridors, undersea communication cables and digital networks perform the same function. They are the invisible infrastructure upon which modern prosperity depends.

What distinguishes the present era is the unprecedented degree of interdependence. Businesses pursued efficiency by minimizing inventories, concentrating production and relying on just-in-time delivery. Governments encouraged open markets, assuming that commercial integration would naturally reinforce stability. This model generated remarkable growth, lifted millions out of poverty and accelerated technological progress. But resilience was sacrificed in pursuit of efficiency. The more optimized the system became, the less capable it was of absorbing unexpected shocks.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

This marks a profound shift in international politics. During much of the 20th century, strategic competition revolved around territory, ideology and military alliances. Today, it increasingly revolves around the resilience of connectivity. Maritime chokepoints, ports, logistics hubs, semiconductor supply chains, energy infrastructure and digital networks have become strategic assets whose uninterrupted functioning is essential not only to economic prosperity but also to national security. The central question is no longer who controls the largest territory, but who can sustain the networks upon which global commerce depends.

For Asia, the implications are especially significant. The region has become the center of global manufacturing, innovation and trade, yet its success remains closely tied to secure maritime connectivity. Energy imported through the Strait of Hormuz fuels industries in Asia. The Strait of Malacca is one of the world's busiest commercial arteries. Disruptions in the Red Sea affect exports from East Asia to European markets. Geography has once again emerged as a decisive factor in economic strategy — not because borders have become more important, but because connectivity has become indispensable.

This changed environment calls for a different strategic mindset. Instead of viewing resilience as the opposite of efficiency, policymakers should recognize that resilience is now a prerequisite for sustainable growth. Diversified transport corridors, robust regional logistics, digital infrastructure, strategic reserves and supply-chain flexibility are no longer optional economic policies; they are essential components of long-term national security.

China's long-term emphasis on connectivity should be seen within this broader context. Initiatives to strengthen infrastructure, expand transport corridors and improve regional connectivity are often discussed primarily in terms of trade and development. But they also help build a more resilient international trading system. In an era characterized by geopolitical uncertainty, diversified connectivity reduces systemic risk, bolsters regional stability and supports continued economic integration.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is equally central to this evolving landscape. Positioned at one of the most strategically significant locations in the global economy, ASEAN's significance extends beyond facilitating trade. It can play a larger role in strengthening maritime governance, improving regional information sharing, coordinating emergency shipping arrangements and promoting practical cooperation on supply-chain resilience. Such initiatives would reinforce ASEAN's long-standing commitment to dialogue, openness and regional stability while contributing to the security of global commerce.

Looking ahead, three priorities deserve greater attention. First, governments should diversify critical transport and supply networks so that no single corridor becomes an overwhelming point of failure. Second, strategic foresight should become a core function of economic governance through regular stress-testing, scenario planning and horizon scanning. Third, major trading nations should deepen cooperation on protecting the global commons — from shipping lanes to digital infrastructure — because the stability of these systems serves a shared international interest rather than the interests of any one country alone.

The Strait of Hormuz is not simply another geopolitical flashpoint, but a reminder that globalization is entering a new phase. The first era of globalization rewarded efficiency above all else. The next will reward resilience, diversification and strategic foresight. Nations that recognize this transition early will be better equipped to navigate an increasingly uncertain international environment.

The defining competition of the 21st century will not be determined solely by military capabilities or economic size. It will also be shaped by the ability to keep the world's essential arteries open, resilient and trusted. In that sense, the real lesson from Hormuz is not about the Middle East. It is about how the international community chooses to safeguard the future of globalization itself.

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



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Rural schools promise to leave no single kid behind

For the past month, my wife and I have been living in my village in Fuyuan, China's easternmost city, in Heilongjiang province, to escape Beijing's summer heat. During our routine daily walks, we often passed a village school, a few hundred meters from Wusulijiang, a river along the China-Russia border.

As a former researcher of comparative education, my wife suggested we go in and take a look.

The campus was empty as the summer vacation was on. The only faculty member present there was friendly. He not only allowed us in but also showed us around. The school has a four-story academic building with about a dozen classrooms.

It has a football field covered with artificial turf and surrounded by a synthetic 200-meter racetrack apart from a playground for basketball and other sports.

"Guess how many students we have," our guide asked us with a smile. We knew that the number of students in China's rural schools had been dwindling for some years now, and the dip could be sharper in this sparsely populated frontier area.

Before I could say there might be around 100 students, our guide answered his question himself: "Nine students in nine grades from primary to junior high. And we have more than 20 faculty members."

The next second, I found myself shutting my eyes and mouth as I did a quick mental calculation to conclude that the local government was spending a few million yuan each year to cover the faculty's salary and operational costs to ensure the nine students got their compulsory education.

Such a big investment in the few students' education displayed the people-centered approach of the Chinese government. No one should be left behind.

On the other hand, to speak honestly, maintaining rural schools for a shrinking student population is becoming a significant challenge for many local governments in the country.

These governments need to adopt practical, down-to-earth measures to reduce education costs and ensure sustainability.

These governments need to adopt practical, down-to-earth measures to reduce education costs and ensure sustainability.

In the past three decades or so, about 300 million rural residents have moved to the cities and counties in search of better-paying jobs. Many of them took their children along for better educational opportunities in the cities and counties.

As a result, the rural schools are seeing a dramatic outflow of students. Statistics show that from 2018 to 2023, the number of rural primary school students decreased by 31 percent. That means millions of rural students have left their rural schools.

The school we visited, for instance, once hosted several hundred students from nearby villages. Now that about one-third of the households in the village have moved to the urban areas with their children, the dwindling of the village school was anything but unexpected.

Most of the villagers I spoke to said they would rather send their children to boarding schools in the headquarters of Fuyuan city 50 kilometers away rather than the next-door village school.

If the children are too young, they even arrange to rent an apartment in the city and send the mother or grandparents to stay with the kids.

For many years now, an increasing number of village schools have been shutting down as students move to the so-called central schools — the school in my village being one of them — for compulsory education. Now, even these central schools are finding it difficult to survive as fewer students enroll each year.

The No. 1 Central Document released in February 2026 has emphasized the need to strengthen the coordinated provision of basic public services in county areas.

The document calls for the careful optimization of the layout of rural primary and secondary schools and kindergartens, ensuring the retention and effective operation of necessary small-scale rural schools and kindergartens.

It also proposes the implementation of a county-level high school revitalization action plan, the promotion of urban-rural school community construction, and the strengthening of coordinated allocation of teachers within counties.

Additionally, it encourages the online sharing of quality classes between urban and rural schools and calls for comprehensive measures to increase efforts in preventing school dropouts and ensuring education retention in rural areas.

The document points the right direction.

Effective problem-solving measures — such as teacher-exchange programs, long-distance education, and predesigned small-scale rural school models — should be studied and implemented to get rural schools out of the condition they find themselves in now.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

CAI CUIHONG

Widening scope of digital and AI governance

China and the US can expand communication channels to mitigate shared risks and help build a constructive relationship of strategic stability



In July, China submitted its position paper on global cyber governance in the digital intelligent age to the Global Mechanism on Information and Communications Technologies in the Context of International Security, the first plenary meeting of which opened at the United Nations headquarters in New York. The paper identifies rising artificial intelligence-related cyber risks, growing threats to critical infrastructure, a lower threshold for cyberattacks and interstate cyber conflict, and the deliberate fragmentation of global digital industry and supply chains. It calls for peace and stability in cyberspace, respect for digital sovereignty, inclusive development and multilateralism. It also proposes that countries should promote the establishment of global standards for assessing cybersecurity risks associated with large AI models and principles for cross-border data flows. The document offers a new perspective on the next phase of major countries' motivations in digital and AI governance.

First, China's move from cyber sovereignty to digital sovereignty reflects the widening scope of global technology governance. Its 2010 white paper, The Internet in China, placed the internet within China's sovereign jurisdiction. The 2017 International Strategy of Cooperation on Cyberspace identified peace, sovereignty, shared governance and shared benefits as principles of international cooperation. Building on these positions, the 2026 paper argues that states have the right to choose, according to their national conditions, their development paths in AI and other digital technologies, as well as the technologies, products, and services they adopt.

This extends sovereignty beyond cybersecurity, jurisdiction, and internet governance to include AI development, technological choice, data security, supply chains and participation in international rulemaking. In practice, digital sovereignty comprises autonomy in development, freedom of technological choice and equal participation in rulemaking.

That sovereignty, however, requires material capacity. According to the International Telecommunication Union, about 2.2 billion people remained offline in 2025. Although 5G covered 55 percent of the global population, coverage reached 84 percent in high-income countries but only 4 percent in low-income countries. Weak infrastructure, limited digital skills and unaffordable technologies mean that autonomy remains more a principle than a reality for many developing countries.

China and the United States are major providers of digital technologies and infrastructure. Their technological pathways, export policies and standards shape the options available to other countries. Their influence will therefore depend not only on technology and standards, but also on whether they can offer reliable, affordable and sustainable solutions without foreclosing alternatives. Narrowing the digital divide will be an important measure of the appeal of their governance models.

Second, China-US competition and cooperation in the AI sector is expanding beyond individual technologies into a broader contest over technological ecosystems and governance rules. Chips, computing power and foundation models remain central, but long-term advantage will increasingly depend on three capabilities: building an integrated ecosystem that links hardware, cloud services, models, applications and digital infrastructure; shaping rules for safety testing, data governance, conformity assessment and technical standards; and encouraging other countries to adopt cost-effective technologies and governance frameworks.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Both countries' policies reflect this shift. China's position paper stresses each state's right to choose its development path and technologies, while opposing forced alignment, exclusionary arrangements and supply-chain fragmentation. In July 2025, the US released Winning the AI Race: America's AI Action Plan, centering on innovation, AI infrastructure and international leadership. A related executive order in July 2025, Promoting the Export of the American AI Technology Stack, called for an "American AI Exports Program" offering allies and partners full-stack packages covering hardware, data center storage, cloud services and networking, AI models, systems and standards.

As the performance gap between leading Chinese and US models narrows, the next phase of China-US digital and AI governance is likely to exhibit four interrelated trends: persistent structural competition; further divergence between their technological ecosystems; continued but limited interdependence; and growing selective cooperation.

Third, institutional differences do not remove the need for joint risk management. AI can strengthen cyber defense, but it can also amplify risks arising from malicious-code generation and exploitation, online fraud, deepfakes and disinformation.

Drawing on the AI Incident Database, Stanford University's 2026 AI Index Report states that recorded AI-related incidents rose from 233 in 2024 to 362 in 2025, an increase of about 55.4 percent. Together with weak responsible-AI benchmarking and disclosure — which refer to systemic gaps where tech companies publish vague ethical principles or superficial test scores that fail to measure real-world safety, operational fairness, or human rights impacts — this rise is placing greater pressure on safety testing, incident reporting, and governance mechanisms. Neither country could easily contain the consequences of a major attack on electricity grids, financial systems, hospitals, or transportation networks, or the cross-border spread of severe AI risks.

The two countries already have a foundation for dialogue. On May 14, 2024, they held their first intergovernmental AI dialogue in Geneva. At the May 2026 China-US presidential meeting, they discussed AI and agreed to hold further intergovernmental dialogue. AI governance thus remains one of the areas in which official communication can survive strategic competition. Cooperation need not wait for broad strategic trust; it can begin with their common interest in preventing major risks.

A practical agenda could proceed on three fronts. At the operational level, the two sides can strengthen emergency communication, information sharing, technical verification and crisis de-escalation for major cyber and AI incidents, especially those affecting critical civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, electricity grids, water systems, financial networks and civil aviation.

At the regulatory level, China and the US can seek basic compatibility in terminology, thresholds and procedures for large AI model safety testing, severe-incident classification, vulnerability disclosure, risk notification, and low-sensitivity cross-border data flows serving the public interest.

At the multilateral level, both countries can work through the United Nations to help developing countries strengthen digital infrastructure, emergency-response systems, governance capacity and multilingual safety tools, without tying such assistance to political alignment or exclusionary procurement.

The aim is not strategic convergence, but to preserve the communication channels and risk-reduction mechanisms needed to manage competition, mitigate shared risks and help build a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability.

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SHEN YUJING AND DONG JIMENG

Dividends not division

The two major countries should work together to address risks posed by AI and ensure the technology is harnessed for the global good



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

While pursuing healthy competition, China and the US should deepen practical cooperation to enable AI technologies to serve the well-being of people across the world. This serves the fundamental interests of both countries and meets the shared expectation of the international community.



Shen Yujing



Dong Jimeng

A new round of the artificial intelligence revolution driven by large language models is accelerating at a rapid pace. AI has evolved far beyond a purely technical issue to become a core strategic variable reshaping the global competitive landscape. As a transformative technology spearheading the new scientific and industrial revolution, AI is comprehensively reshaping modes of production and industrial structures. Competition and collaboration centered on AI will help shape the balance of power among major countries in the 21st century.

Over the past two years, major economies have stepped up efforts to formulate top-level national AI strategies, embedding AI in national development blueprints and mobilizing nationwide resources to sustain their competitive edges in this field. In July 2025, the United States released Winning the AI Race: America's AI Action Plan, charting a decisive course to cement US dominance in AI. In November 2025, the US launched the Genesis Mission, described as a historic nationwide initiative comparable in urgency and ambition to the Manhattan Project during World War II. It integrates supercomputing resources, research datasets from several national laboratories and private-sector large-scale model capabilities to build a unified computing platform. In July 2026, the White House published the report Science: A New Golden Age, advocating an overhaul of the US research system.

China and the US are leading the global development of AI. According to core AI indicators in Stanford University's 2026 AI Index Report, China and the US account for the vast majority of global resources and outputs in computing capacity, industrial application and high-impact academic papers — a lead unlikely to be challenged by other nations in the near term. In computing supply, both countries maintain advantages in high-end chip reserves and the scale of computing hubs. An Oxford University study titled AI Compute Sovereignty: Infrastructure Control Across Territories, Cloud Providers and Accelerators, found that major AI computing clusters are concentrated in the two nations: 26 in the US and 22 in China.

Stanford's report also indicates that the US retains an edge in developing top-tier frontier models, yet China is closing the gap rapidly. While the US leads in quantity, Chinese models are catching up fast in quality. The comprehensive performance gap between leading Chinese and US frontier models stands at just 2.7 percent, with models from both sides alternating at the top of rankings since early 2025, marking a phase of parallel technological progress. Regarding supporting factors such as AI talent and data, the US still hosts the world's largest pool of elite AI researchers and retains advantages in attracting top original innovators. According to China's National Development and Reform Commission, China possesses one of the biggest cohorts of AI engineers, producing more than 5 million STEM graduates every year. In 2025, according to the National Data Resource Survey Report (2025) released by China's National Data Administration, China generated 52.26 zettabytes of data, accounting for 27.44 percent of the global total and ranking among the world's largest data resource holders. These scale advantages in talent and data lay a solid foundation for sustained long-term AI growth.

AI is a shared endeavor of humanity, and its sound development bears on the common well-being of all. As the two major forces driving global AI progress, China and the US can transcend zero-sum competition, strengthen their collaboration, jointly address global challenges arising from AI and advance the ethical and beneficial development of AI.

First, China and the US can work together to support AI cooperation between the Global North and the Global South as well as South-South cooperation to build an open and inclusive global AI governance system. Severe imbalances persist in global AI development, with many developing countries facing bottlenecks in computing power, data, talent and technology. Both sides should abandon zero-sum thinking, uphold the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, and help developing countries build their AI capacity through technology transfer, capacity building and talent training.

Second, China and the US can jointly guard against AI risks. While rapid AI innovation unlocks enormous opportunities, it also brings risks including algorithmic bias, privacy breaches and ethical conflicts, with potential implications for international security and global stability. Faced with these transboundary risks, China and the US can deepen dialogue and cooperation on AI safety governance, ethical norms and standard-setting, and jointly improve early-warning and response mechanisms to ensure AI evolves along a secure and reliable track.

Finally, the two countries can jointly harness AI to benefit humanity and tackle global challenges. AI offers new tools to address climate change, public health emergencies, food insecurity and energy shortages. The two nations can pursue pragmatic cooperation in AI-enabled low-carbon transition, pharmaceutical research and equitable access to quality education, turning AI into a powerful instrument for resolving shared challenges facing humankind.

History shows that the dividends of technological revolutions can reach all humanity only through positive interaction and responsible leadership among major countries. While pursuing healthy competition, China and the US should deepen practical cooperation to enable AI technologies to serve the well-being of people across the world. This serves the fundamental interests of both countries and meets the shared expectation of the international community.

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BUSINESS

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CIFTIS set for heavy turnout in Beijing

Services sector fair confirms some 300 Fortune Global 500 firms will attend

By **REN QI**
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The 2026 China International Fair for Trade in Services, which is scheduled to be held from Sept 9 to 13 in Beijing, has entered its final preparation stage with a strong focus on facilitating enterprises' overseas expansion.

Since its inception, CIFTIS has resonated with the development of global trade in services, becoming an important platform for countries to showcase innovative achievements in the services sector, promote policy exchanges and foster trade cooperation, said Wei Mingqian, deputy general manager of Beijing North Star Co Ltd.

Wei said the successful hosting of the event relies heavily on media attention, recalling that the 2025 CIFTIS attracted over 3,200 registered journalists and achieved record-high coverage, fully demonstrating the innovative achievements of China's high-quality services sector.

This year's event will feature exhibitions, promotional negotiations, achievement releases and support activities, Wei added.

Demonstrating a continuously rising level of international engagement, nearly 300 Fortune Global 500 companies and industry-leading enterprises have confirmed their on-site participation.

For the first time, the 2026 CIFTIS will debut a "going global services promotion roadshow area".

This innovative section will feature professional institutions and enterprises related to finance, law, accounting, intellectual property, advertising and human resources to conduct promotional pitches and information sharing.

Centered on key themes such as the commercialization of achievements, open cooperation and new quality productive forces, the area aims to provide enterprises with one-stop services geared to help them expand overseas. More than 40 related roadshow activities have already been scheduled.

"The registration of exhibitors is drawing to a close, with those from nearly 70 countries, regions and international organizations having confirmed their participation to set up exhibitions," Wei said. He highlighted that Norway, as the guest country of honor, and Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, as the guest provincial region of honor, will be setting up dedicated pavilions.

The upcoming fair will also highlight major debuts. More than 80 enterprises and institutions — including Alibaba, Schneider Electric and GE Healthcare — plan to release over 180 innovative achievements covering artificial intelligence, healthcare, cultural exports and green development.

"Relevant countries, international organizations and provinces will host over 190 forums, conferences and promotional activities," Wei said.

Highlighting long-term cooperation, the fair has expanded its sponsorship roster to include new partners like Beijing Data Group. Furthermore, the event will launch 28 new cultural and creative products, including co-branded chocolates, Wei said.

To provide an immersive consumption experience, the 2026 CIFTIS will feature over 70 support activities, extending beyond the main venue to multiple areas across the city.

Furthermore, the fair is prioritizing technological integration to upgrade its service quality.

"We are fully integrating digital technology into the entire process of the exhibition," Wei said, adding that the event will utilize AI translation devices, intelligent recommendation platforms and AI itinerary assistants to help participating enterprises efficiently connect with global partners.

Catering services have also been upgraded, with fixed seating tripled to accommodate up to 10,000 visitors, complemented by smart coffee and ice cream machines, while optimized shuttle buses will feature smart positioning and real-time information.

Ticketing for the 2026 CIFTIS has officially opened to the public via its official website, app and mini-programs, Wei added.



A humanoid robot performs for media during an event relating to 2026 China International Fair for Trade in Services at a robot training center in Beijing. AP

Dow eyes growth in multiple sectors

By **ZHENG XIN**
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Dow, a United States-based materials science company, sees massive opportunities in China in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, data centers, new energy, mobility and circular economy solutions, and vows to continue expanding its investment as the country deepens its transition toward high-quality development.

Amid a complex global economic landscape, this steadfast commitment underscores the country's enduring appeal to foreign investors, driven by clear policy direction and rapid industrial upgrading, said a senior Dow official.

For Crystal Huang, president of Dow Greater China, the nation stands out for its policy clarity, industrial resilience and long-term commitment to innovation-driven growth. These factors, she noted, are providing global businesses with greater confidence to invest, innovate and grow alongside China's economic transformation.

"China combines scale, a highly integrated manufacturing ecosystem, world-class infrastructure, and increasingly sophisticated customer demand," Huang said. "This is critically important for materials science companies like Dow, which seek to carry out localized research and development, manufacturing and application-driven innovation."

China currently represents Dow's second-largest market globally and its largest outside the US. Despite global headwinds, Huang highlighted that the country's economic performance this year has demonstrated remarkable resilience, characterized not just by the pace of growth, but by an ongoing pivot toward higher-value development.

As China's innovation ecosystem becomes an increasingly vital engine of growth, frontier technologies are fundamentally reshaping industrial capabilities, she said.

"AI and other high-end technologies are becoming powerful catalysts for productivity growth and industrial upgrading in China," Huang said. "For multinational companies like Dow, this creates opportunities to accelerate collaborative innovation on next-generation solutions and achievement transformation with our Chinese customers."

To capitalize on these shifts, Dow is actively reinforcing its local footprint. Last year, the company launched its first global cooling science studio in Shanghai, designed to deliver sustainable cooling solutions for booming industries like AI, the internet of things, robotics and automation. By March 2026, Dow had already expanded this lab to support key industry trends including vehicle electrification, autonomous driving and smart technologies across the mobility value chain.

The company is simultaneously upgrading its manufacturing network to match the country's industrial ascent. Following the completion of a major silicone expansion in Zhangjiagang, Jiangsu province, last year, Dow announced last month a fresh series of targeted investments to expand its global specialty silicones capabilities.

New liquid silicone rubber, or LSR, manufacturing expansions in Zhangjiagang are expected to begin operations in 2027, catering to high-performance applications in mobility and healthcare.

Amid significant shifts in international commerce and capital flows, China is fortifying its manufacturing and supply networks, said Li Xingqian, vice-chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

Simultaneously, the nation is deepening its global integration by lowering market entry barriers, optimizing the corporate climate and implementing targeted policies to stabilize foreign investment, Li said.

"China's dual emphasis on expanding domestic demand and pursuing high-standard opening-up is strengthening its long-term economic resilience and cementing its role in global value chains," said Huang.

Looking ahead to the second half, Dow remains highly optimistic about sectors aligned with the country's development priorities. "We believe China's strengths — including its innovation ecosystem, manufacturing capabilities, talent pool and market scale — will continue to support high-quality development," Huang said.

Luxury brands shine bright in China

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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A growing number of international fashion and footwear brands are posting robust sales growth in China as affluent consumers continue to spend on brands with distinctive positioning and disciplined retail strategies.

Ralph Lauren Corp, Tapestry Inc and Birkenstock Holding all reported double-digit growth in the Chinese market in their latest quarterly results, suggesting demand remains resilient for brands that combine premium positioning with localized marketing and product offerings.

The results contrast with a broader luxury sector that has struggled with softer consumer spending in China over the past two years.

Ralph Lauren delivered one of its strongest performances globally in the first quarter ended June 27, with revenue in China surging more than 40 percent from a year earlier. Asia revenue increased 24 percent, driven by growth across all major markets, while North America also posted double-digit gains.



View of a Ralph Lauren shop in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Ralph Lauren executives said during an earnings call that they do not expect quarterly growth above 40 percent to continue, but forecast low double-digit growth in China for the full fiscal year, underscoring the market's increasing strategic importance.

The Chinese market accounted for about 10 percent of Ralph Lauren's global revenue in the latest quarter, compared with roughly 2 percent before COVID-19.

The New York-based company attributed the performance to strong demand for womenswear and handbags, brand marketing and a disciplined retail strategy focused on six key cities. Management also confirmed Ralph Lauren will participate in the China International Import Expo for the first time later this year, signaling further investment in the market.

The company has also invested heavily in brand building. Recent campaigns have included a Beijing polo tournament, Wimbledon-themed marketing as the tournament's official outfitter and Ralph's Coffee shops inside select stores, offering consumers a lower-cost entry point into the brand.

Women's apparel, outerwear and handbags all grew by more than 20 percent globally during the quarter, outperforming the broader business.

Tapestry Inc, the New York-based owner of Coach, Kate Spade and Stuart Weitzman, also reported another strong quarter in China. The company said Asia-Pacific revenue rose 19 percent in both the fiscal fourth quarter and full year ended June 27. Sales in China increased 28 percent during the quarter and 35 percent for the full year.

Coach remained the group's primary growth engine, posting double-digit revenue growth in every quarter of fiscal 2026. Demand for leather goods remained particularly strong, helping lift average handbag selling prices by the mid-double digits.

The company added more than 2.5 million new customers globally during the quarter and about 11 million during the fiscal year, with Generation Z accounting for about 35 percent of new customers.

German footwear maker Birkenstock also continued to outperform in China despite weakness across parts of the global footwear sector.

For the fiscal third quarter ended June 30, revenue increased 13 percent to 720 million euros ($835 million), while Asia-Pacific sales rose 18 percent, or 23 percent on a constant-currency basis.

Revenue in China surged 50 percent from a year earlier, making it Birkenstock's largest market in the Asia-Pacific.

The results suggest that international brands with differentiated positioning continue to find growth opportunities in China, even as discretionary spending remains uneven.

"Demand for quality fashion has not disappeared," said Cheng Weixiong, a fashion industry analyst.

Cheng said Ralph Lauren's classic aesthetic, broad price architecture and disciplined discount strategy resonate with the country's middle-income consumers seeking versatile, premium apparel without the volatility seen in the broader apparel market.

Briefly

Inclusive loans to small firms rise

China's inclusive loans to small and micro enterprises maintained steady growth in the second quarter, said the National Financial Regulatory Administration. Outstanding inclusive loans to small and micro enterprises reached 38.9 trillion yuan ($5.73 trillion) at the end of the second quarter, up 8 percent year-on-year.

Moves to ensure rail safety amid rains

Chinese railway operators have bolstered measures to better safeguard the safety of rail transport amid heavy rainfall. In Shanxi province, the Taiyuan High-Speed Railway Engineering Section strengthened manpower, physical and technical defenses to solidify such efforts. Prior to forecasted downpours, the section utilized aerial drone inspections, manual foot patrols and dynamic observations to enhance hazard identification capabilities. Post-rainfall, it sent staff to check tracks, bridges, tunnels and drainage systems, with timely repairs executed. It shifted its flood prevention from reactive measures to proactive forecasting, ensuring the safe operation of high-speed railways.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Etihad to expand China flights

By **WANG YING** in Shanghai
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With high expectations for China's long-term growth, Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, has unveiled plans to increase its passenger services to China to 35 flights per week by the end of March, up from the current seven flights per week, making China its fastest growing market in 2027.

The airline is further expected to double capacity in China in the coming five to seven years, which would make the country the group's top three market in terms of revenue, said the top executive of the Abu Dhabi-based carrier.

"We have very big expectations. Our vision is to have at least two flights a day per destination in China together with China Eastern," said Antonoaldo Neves, chief executive officer of Etihad Aviation Group, during an exclusive interview with China Daily.

"I don't see any reason why our capacity of 35 weekly flights, together with China Eastern, can't double over the next five to seven years. We're really excited about the opportunities in the Chinese market," said Neves, adding that the group's growth in China is strengthened by its two partners, China Eastern Airlines and SF Airlines.

"We're currently flying only to Beijing, but we'll soon add services to Shanghai as well as to Shenzhen and Guangzhou (Guangdong province), Hangzhou (Zhejiang province) and Chengdu (Sichuan province). Expanding our passenger network will also increase the belly cargo capacity," he said.

According to the CEO, the carrier transports 2,600 metric tons of cargo every single week from the Chinese mainland to Abu Dhabi, with about 40 percent of that cargo being exports from China to Abu Dhabi, and 60 percent going beyond Abu Dhabi.

Although China currently accounts for only two of Etihad's roughly 300 daily flights, the planned capacity expansion is expected to make it one of the airline's three fastest-growing markets.

"In terms of both cargo and passenger revenue, China will become one of our five largest markets next year, and it won't take long before it ranks among our top three," said Neves.

The decision to launch the new services was driven by several factors, including growing tourism between China and Abu Dhabi, rising demand for both passenger and cargo transport, and the need to strengthen the carrier's partnerships through additional capacity.

"I truly believe that the world is getting more connected. Aviation grows two times the GDP in markets like China, like the UAE. So if GDP in China is growing 5 percent, aviation is going to grow 10 percent. If GDP in the UAE is growing 5 percent, it's going to grow 10 percent," he added.

According to the CEO, robust demand continues to underpin the aviation industry's growth, with Etihad's passenger capacity now 20 percent higher than a year ago. He said the biggest challenge facing airlines was the limited availability of new aircraft, as delivery lead times have stretched to three or four years. Even so, he said the long-term trend remained firmly positive.

The executive said he remained strongly bullish on the country's long-term prospects. He pointed to China's advances in information technology, artificial intelligence, the digital economy, robotics, automation, electric vehicles and renewable energy as evidence that the country's growth still has significant room to run.

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BUSINESS

Balancing green power, grid stability

Solar capacity on track to surpass coal-fired capacity in third quarter

By ZHENG XIN
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Driven by the surging electricity demands of high-end manufacturing and a rapidly expanding digital economy, China's energy landscape is witnessing a historic paradigm shift.

Solar power capacity is on track to officially surpass coal-fired capacity in the third quarter, driven by an explosive surge in electricity demand from new quality productive forces such as high-end manufacturing, artificial intelligence and electric vehicle infrastructure.

According to a comprehensive mid-year report released by the China Electricity Council, the nation's power sector is accelerating its green and low-carbon transition during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), entering a new stage characterized by scaled-up quality and systemic modernization.

China's total installed power generation capacity reached 4.01 billion kilowatts by the end of May, making it the first country to cross the 4-billion-kW threshold, said the CEC's recently released report on the analysis and forecast of the national electricity supply and demand situation in the first half.

By the end of June, total solar power capacity had caught up with coal, effectively tying it as the country's largest power source. New energy sources have now firmly established themselves as the undisputed main body of newly added power capacity, the CEC said.

"In the first half, total nonfossil energy power generation grew by 8.5 percent year-on-year, accounting for 44.5 percent of total power generation — an increase of 1.4 percentage points from the same period last year," said Hou Wenjie, director of the statistics and data intelligence department at the CEC. "More remarkably, the incremental growth of nonfossil energy power generation accounted for 70.7 percent of the total incremental power generation nationwide."

Conversely, traditional fossil fuels are seeing their dominance wane. Coal-fired power generation accounted for 49.7 percent of total power generation in the first half, dropping below the 50 percent mark for the first time in the nation's modern industrial history, Hou added.

Industry experts believe that China's installed power structure is seamlessly continuing its green and low-carbon transformation, a shift that is generating immense dividends not just domestically, but also globally.

Lin Boqiang, director of the China Center for Energy Economics Research at Xiamen University, said the continuous climb in installed capacity has significantly boosted overall power generation performance.

The incremental output from nonfossil energy already accounts for 70 percent of the country's total power generation increase, Lin said.

"China's massive manufacturing scale and technological innovation have reduced the global levelized cost of solar and wind power by more than 60 percent and 80 percent, respectively, over the past decade," Lin added.

High-quality Chinese new energy products have significantly enriched global supply and accelerated the world's low-carbon transition in recent years, according to a document titled "China's Position on the So-called Excess Capacity Issue" by the Ministry of Commerce.

China's green and low-carbon transformation serves as both a vital cornerstone of its high-quality development and a landmark contribution to global sustainability, the document said.

In terms of newly installed capacity, the first half saw the nation add 160 million kW of power generation capacity. Wind and solar power combined accounted for 110 million kW of the total, representing a staggering 70 percent of all new capacity added to the grid, said the CEC.

While the supply side of the grid goes green, the demand side is undergoing an equally profound structural transformation. The CEC said electricity consumption driven by the digital and smart economy is experiencing "explosive growth".

"In recent years, China has accelerated the development of new quality productive forces," said Jiang Debin, deputy director of the statistics and data intelligence department at the CEC. "New growth drivers represented by high-end manufacturing and the digital-intelligent economy continue to expand rapidly ... The robust growth in power consumption in these related industries has become the core engine driving the overall electricity consumption growth of the entire society."

The CEC report shows that electricity consumption in high-tech and equipment manufacturing stood out remarkably in the first half, surging 9.8 percent year-on-year. The growth rate was 6 percentage points higher than that of the same period last year, contributing to 32.8 percent of the total growth in industrial electricity consumption.



A power maintenance worker inspects the system's operation at the lower end of the distributed photovoltaic array installed on the roof of cattle and sheep pens in a modern agricultural industrial park in Zhangye, Gansu province, on July 28. WANG JIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



A worker is busy fulfilling orders for solar photovoltaic modules at Ronma Solar Technology (Jinhua) Co in Jinhua, Zhejiang province, on July 28. SHI KUANBING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Notably, every single subsector within this category recorded positive power consumption growth, the report said.

Simultaneously, within the digital economy, emerging business models — particularly internet data services such as AI data centers and EV charging and battery-swapping services — are exhibiting exponential power demand.

"In the first half, the combined monthly incremental electricity consumption of internet data services and battery swapping and charging services remained between 5.5 billion and 8.5 billion kilowatt-hours. These two sectors consistently accounted for 15 percent to 25 percent of the total societal incremental electricity consumption each month," said Jiang.

From January to June, these two sectors accounted for 59.3 percent of the total increase in electricity consumption in the tertiary industry, acting as the critical force driving that growth.

The EV sector's power appetite is particularly striking. The number of new energy vehicles on the road has surged. In the first half, the national EV charging and swapping service sector consumed 81 billion kWh. In June alone, power consumption hit 14.8 billion kWh, representing a year-on-year growth of 57.1 percent.

Internet data services are following a similar upward trajectory. The explosive boom in AI applications drove the sector's power consumption to 49.4 billion kWh in the first half, nearly matching the total consumption recorded for the entirety of 2024.

"Currently, the AI industry is shifting from a 'training-centric' phase to a phase where 'training and inference are equally important,'" said Jiang. "The volume of AI token calls remains in an exponential climbing channel, meaning the related electricity consumption will continue its high-speed growth for the foreseeable future."

Overall, high-tech manufacturing, data centers and EV infrastructure are rapidly evolving from marginal contributors into the "core increment" of China's power consumption, he added.

Despite the massive strides in renewable deployment, experts warn that the transition is not without operational hurdles.

"The power system is currently facing multiple pressures encompassing security of supply, renewable consumption and economic viability," Zhang said. "There is an urgent need to enhance the reliable output, active grid support and coordinated regulation capabilities of new energy during critical periods of peak system demand."

To address this, the recently drafted plan for renewable energy development during the 15th Five-Year Plan period has, for the first time, incorporated reliable substitution and peak power generation capabilities into its target system.

The plan proposes that by 2030, the average reliable capacity value of wind and solar power should be increased to 8 percent. Furthermore, it aims to increase the share of wind and solar electricity during summer and winter evening peaks to 20 percent, and to boost the newly added reliable peak power generation capacity of renewables by 300 million kW.

"At present, achieving these targets presents certain challenges," Zhang said.

To enhance the reliable substitution capability of new energy, she urged the industry to accelerate the construction of "grid-friendly" new energy stations, while upgrading older legacy wind and solar plants, encouraging capacity expansion and the rational pairing of energy storage systems to steadily improve their grid-connection performance.

"On the technical level, we must increase research, development and application of advanced technological equipment, such as grid-forming technologies, high-precision power forecasting and integrated dispatch systems, while also significantly increasing the proportion of long-duration energy storage," Zhang said.

Looking ahead, the CEC forecasts that as new quality productive forces continue to expand, related industries will see their share of power growth in the industrial sector and the tertiary sector climb even higher, pushing China's electricity consumption structure toward a more technology-intensive and green direction.

The report projects that newly added power generation capacity for 2026 will reach 400 million kW.

By the end of this year, total installed capacity will reach approximately 4.3 billion kW. Of this, nonfossil energy capacity is expected to hit 2.7 billion kW, accounting for about 63 percent of the total. Wind and solar power will officially comprise half of the nation's total capacity, while coal power's share will shrink to roughly 31 percent, the report said.

Hou projects that total electricity consumption will grow by 5 to 6 percent year-on-year in the second half, with the maximum unified grid load reaching between 1.57 billion and 1.63 billion kW.

Looking toward 2030, the CEC anticipates a fundamentally restructured grid characterized by growth in green power and stabilization of coal power.

"By that time, the power industry will have formed a completely new paradigm where new energy serves as the main body of installed capacity, and clean energy dominates actual electricity generation," said Ye Jing, director of the power supply and demand analysis division under the CEC's statistics and data intelligence department.

Under this new framework, solar power will firmly hold its position as China's largest single power source. Concurrently, legacy coal assets will be strategically optimized. Rather than serving as traditional baseload power, coal will be relegated to a supporting role, providing vital safety backup, flexible peak shaving and gap-filling support when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing.

This dual approach is designed to ensure the grid can handle the explosive demand from emerging technologies without sacrificing stability.

By successfully balancing this massive green expansion with rigorous grid stability, China is actively engineering a clean, low-carbon power sector — one fully equipped to fuel the nation's next wave of technological and industrial innovation, Ye said.

Energy storage bolstering nation's electricity system

By ZHENG XIN

China continues to maintain the world's largest installed capacity in new energy storage, marking a historic transition for the technology from a supplementary role to a critical backbone supporting the nation's modern power system, according to a newly released official report.

Surging past previous records, the country's installed capacity of new energy storage reached 136 gigawatts by the end of 2025, marking an 84 percent increase year-on-year and a massive 40-fold expansion compared to the end of 2020, said the China New Energy Storage Development Report (2026) issued by the National Energy Administration.

The sector's rapid growth has delivered immediate operational benefits to the national grid, the report said.

In 2025, new energy storage capacity broke the 100 GW milestone for the first time — more than double the total capacity of traditional pumped-hydro storage. Over the year, these facilities successfully absorbed more than 30 billion kilowatt-hours of renewable electricity, boosting the national renewable energy utilization rate by approximately 2 percentage points.

Investment in new energy storage, together with charging and battery swapping infrastructure, hydrogen energy, and integrated source-grid-load-storage systems, has also been rising in recent years, according to the NEA.

Xu Jilin, deputy director-general of the NEA's Department of Energy Conservation and Technology Equipment, said during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), China's new energy storage sector progressed from early-stage commercial application to a new phase of large-scale development, building a solid foundation for high-quality industry growth and multi-dimensional value creation.

In addition to rapid volumetric growth, the sector has demonstrated deepening technological innovation. A diversified development model has taken shape, led by lithium-ion battery storage while incorporating various advanced technological routes, according to the NEA.

Concurrently, the operational effectiveness and regulation capabilities of these storage systems have steadily improved.

The annual equivalent utilization hours for new energy storage nationwide rose from 611 hours in 2023 to 911 hours in 2024, and reached 1,195 hours in 2025, reflecting its expanding role in balancing power supply and demand, said the report.

This enhanced storage infrastructure played a pivotal role during recent summer electricity demand spikes driven by sustained economic growth and hot weather, during which national electricity loads broke historical records three times.

According to the report, storing energy during normal operations allows the system to stand firm at critical moments.

For instance, in July 2025, when national peak electricity demand exceeded 1.5 billion kW, major industrial provinces such as Jiangsu and Shandong mobilized centralized dispatch of new energy storage facilities during peak hours. Peak discharge power reached 7.14 GW in Jiangsu and 8.04 GW in Shandong — equivalent to operating seven to eight 1,000-megawatt coal-fired units at full capacity — with a simultaneous dispatch rate exceeding 95 percent.

This reliable performance was further supported by broader grid infrastructure upgrades, including the commissioning of the Shaanxi-Anhui ultra-high voltage direct current project, bringing the total number of operational UHV corridors nationwide to 46, with a cross-regional transmission capacity exceeding 340 GW.

Looking ahead, the report outlines key tasks for 2026 and plans for the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30). Key initiatives include supporting breakthroughs in core technologies, planning the construction of national energy research and development innovation platforms in the new energy storage domain, standardizing project management, and promoting efficient and value-driven market competition.



Technicians from State Grid Chuzhou Power Supply Company conduct an inspection at a smart energy storage sharing station in Chuzhou, Anhui province, on Aug 2. SONG WEIXING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Energy storage, coupled with auxiliary systems such as smart microgrids and vehicle-to-grid networks, plays a critical role in maintaining grid stability, said Zhu Gongshan, chairman of GCL Group, China's largest private power enterprise.

These technologies are indispensable for swiftly balancing power output against shifting demand. "By offering dependable backup electricity, they help forge a highly resilient and adaptable energy network," Zhu said.

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CHINA

Guangxi's courts bank on mediation

AI also plays key role in expediting intl commercial dispute resolutions

By **CAO YIN** in Nanning
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Courts in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region are making significant strides in establishing themselves as a preferred venue for resolving international commercial disputes, with mediation and artificial intelligence playing key roles in the effort.

As China's gateway to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Guangxi shares a dynamic border with Vietnam. Each day, trucks laden with tropical fruits and a steady flow of traders and travelers cross the border for business and family visits. Such frequent exchanges naturally give rise to disputes.

Between January 2020 and June 2026, courts across Guangxi handled 3,250 foreign-related civil and commercial cases involving 75 countries, including the United States, Vietnam, Japan and Canada. The cases covered a wide range of issues, from divorce and private loans to trademark infringement and contract disputes. In 2025 alone, courts in the region handled 1,059 such cases, with the number rising annually, according to the Guangxi High People's Court.

To position itself as a preferred destination for resolving international commercial disputes, the region's judiciary has made mediation a cornerstone of its approach, tailoring it to the distinctive nature of cross-border cases.

> "Our goal is to prevent commercial conflicts from escalating."
>
> **Liu Qiangqiang,** a border police officer in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region

At Youyiguan, or the Friendship Pass, in Pingxiang, a city on the Vietnam border, local judges work with police, market regulators, officials from the border economic zone and trade associations to address commercial disputes. When a cross-border trade dispute arises, police often first stabilize the situation and identify the key issues. If the dispute involves border trade, they alert the local court to conduct joint mediation.

"Our goal is to prevent commercial conflicts from escalating," said Liu Qiangqiang, a border police officer, highlighting how expedited mediation keeps trade flowing and prevents minor misunderstandings from becoming major disputes.

Zhou Meichu, head of the Puzhai community in Youyi township, also underscored the importance of mediation in resolving disputes involving perishable goods such as durians and jackfruits.

"Some businesses can wait, but fruit cannot. Time is money," he said. "Quick resolutions do more to ensure the stability of cross-border trade between China and Vietnam than simply announcing verdicts."

With years of experience in international trade and community management, Zhou has earned the trust of many merchants, both Chinese and foreign. He subsequently became a civilian mediator, assisting judges in resolving foreign-related commercial cases. To better understand the needs of Vietnamese traders, Zhou has enlisted three Vietnamese nationals with a strong grasp of cross-border business practices as his colleagues.

"Mediation only works when it stays within the legal framework. That's what gets to the heart of a dispute and keeps business relationships alive in the long run," he added.

In Dongxing, another city in Guangxi, Du Yimiao serves as one of the region's bilingual, business-savvy mediators. Located just across a narrow river from Vietnam, Dongxing sees daily cross-border trade. Since a circuit judicial team was established in the border area in 2014, it has resolved more than 1,400 border trade disputes, with a mediation success rate of nearly 50 percent.

Du, an overseas Chinese, holds positions in the local chamber of commerce and women's federation, giving her deeper insight into business practices and cultural norms on both sides of the border. Over the past four years, she has participated in 57 dispute resolutions.

"Language barriers and cultural differences may easily turn minor disagreements into major conflicts," she said, describing her role as a bridge between the two sides.

"The law sets the baseline — I make sure both sides understand their legal standing while reminding them of the long-standing business relationships we have built across the border," she added.

To strengthen the institutional framework for mediation, the Guangxi High People's Court has issued guiding documents to support the Belt and Road Initiative and improve the business environment. The region has also established the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area Nanning International Commercial Tribunal, further helping foster an institutional system for standardized mediation in cross-border cases.

The tribunal is also turning to AI to address one of the key challenges in international commercial disputes: identifying and applying foreign laws where applicable.

In 2025, the Guangxi Department of Justice and Guangxi Minzu University launched an artificial intelligence-powered legal service assistant. The platform has since incorporated more than 100,000 legal texts from ASEAN member countries, covering 100 core laws in seven languages. It provides legal consultation, policy interpretation and risk assessment, along with multilingual translation and cross-jurisdictional services.

Dang Shu, director of the rule of law research center at the Guangxi Department of Justice, said that compared with other AI tools, the dedicated legal assistant draws on official data sources from ASEAN countries and follows a rigorous translation process to ensure judicial accuracy.

Wu Xiaofan, president of the Guangxi Commercial Mediation Association, praised the platform's reliable database, saying it helps parties reduce the costs and time involved in mediation.

In a late-2025 durian contract dispute, for instance, the tribunal used the AI tool to retrieve, cross-reference and translate applicable Vietnamese laws for the litigants, resolving within minutes a dispute over the characterization of the business relationship that had long eluded consensus.

Since its establishment in September 2022, the tribunal's caseload has grown from 438 cases in 2023 to 610 in the first half of this year. Yang Ding, deputy chief judge, said she and her colleagues are embracing the technology to improve judicial efficiency and quality.

"We hope to build a fully integrated, digitally empowered dispute-resolution system tailored for ASEAN partners to advance the region's goal of becoming a preferred venue for international commercial disputes and supporting high-level opening-up," she added.

Precious painting



Visitors appreciate a T-shaped silk painting unearthed from Mawangdui Han Tombs during an exhibition titled *A House of Nobility: Aesthetics and Cultivation of Life in the Mawangdui Han Tombs* at the Shanghai Art Museum on Monday. Open from July 3 to Oct 7, the exhibition features precious artifacts excavated from the tombs in Changsha, Hunan province, which date back more than 2,000 years. ZHANG HENGWEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Generational efforts turn desert green

By **ZHAO JIA** in Beijing and **MA JINGNA** and **HU YUMENG** in Lanzhou

At Babusha Forest Farm on the southern edge of the Tengger Desert in Gulang county, Gansu province, 41-year-old Guo Xi can now use a drone to patrol 5,000 hectares of farmland for fire risks and pests, a once laborious task his grandfather's generation did on foot.

The transformation is just as striking when it comes to irrigation.

"My grandfather's generation hauled water on donkey carts, my uncles switched to farm vehicles, and by our generation we had 15-metric-ton water trucks. Now we have drip irrigation," said Guo, a third-generation desert-control worker whose grandfather, Guo Chaoming, was one of the founders of the farm.

Water trucks once struggled to reach remote stretches of sand. Today, Guo said, smart drip-irrigation systems can be managed remotely, making water delivery more precise and efficient.

"Desert control today is no longer simply about hard physical labor. We have to use technology to make desert control and forest management more efficient," he said.

Guo has observed the transformation since childhood.

"When I was young, wherever you looked, there was yellow sand," he said. "Now, wherever you look, it is green. The previous two generations worked for decades to leave us this oasis."

Now a father of three, Guo hopes one of his children will eventually return to Babusha after receiving a good education.

"I hope the next generation can use more professional and advanced technology to protect Babusha," he said.

The generational relay began in 1981, when six villagers from Tumen township — Guo Chaoming, He Falin, Shi Man, Luo Yuankui, Cheng Hai and Zhang Runyuan — all aged 50 or older, banded together to manage 5,000 hectares of shifting sand. They began planting trees and stabilizing dunes as desertification crept closer to villages and farmland.

As the original founders aged, their children took up the mantle. Guo Wangang, Communist Party of China secretary and head of Babusha Forest Farm, stepped in as a second-generation worker to continue his father Guo Chaoming's work.

For Guo Wangang, now 74, carrying on his father's legacy requires persistence.

"The most valuable thing in desert control is perseverance," he said. In summer, he still gets up at 5 am to arrange the day's irrigation and forest maintenance.

"There is a saying in desert afforestation: one part planting, nine parts tending," he said. "Planting a tree is only the beginning. What matters more is keeping it alive over the long term."

Since 2019, Babusha Forest Farm has completed desert control and afforestation on 13,900 hectares and restored about 10,587 hectares of degraded forest, according to local authorities. Vegetation coverage in the front-line areas under its management has exceeded 70 percent, forming a green windbreak about 10 kilometers from north to south and 8 km from east to west.

Water remains one of the farm's biggest challenges.

"A big tree takes decades to grow. Without water, it can disappear just like that," said Guo Wangang, gesturing with his hand.

In 2024, as a deputy to the provincial people's congress, Guo Wangang submitted a motion to address Babusha's water shortage. To resolve the issue, a 500,000-cubic-meter reservoir was constructed alongside an accompanying drip-irrigation network, ensuring a stable water supply source for the entire forest farm.

"One of the biggest worries on my mind has finally been lifted," he said. "The survival of the trees now has a fundamental guarantee."

The forest farm's progress is also reflected in the lives of the people who have worked there.

Reflecting on decades of labor, He Zhongqiang, another second-generation desert-control worker, said the work has brought a deep sense of fulfillment.

A severe sandstorm had earlier convinced him and his peers that controlling desertification on Babusha's original 5,000 hectares was not enough. They also needed to tackle surrounding sources of sand, he said.

They later expanded treatment to another 7,600 hectares of desertified land and, from 2003, spent a decade carrying out desert-control work around Wudaogou village.

"Seeing the land improve and people's lives become more secure makes all the hardship worthwhile," he said.

Ma Shengrong, a forest ranger at the farm, remembers how wind and sand once threatened local harvests.

"When I was a child, crops we had worked hard to plant were often buried in the sand or destroyed by strong winds, and a whole year's harvest could be lost," Ma said. "That no longer happens."

Another witness to Babusha's transformation is Liu Wancheng, 57, who joined the farm in 1991 after moving from the mountainous southern part of Gulang.

"It used to be 'sand advances, people retreat'. Now it is 'people advance, sand retreats'," Liu said. "When I first arrived, I earned just over 40 yuan ($5.93) a month. Now I can make more than 50,000 yuan a year through farm wages, seasonal desert control, and harvesting cistanche."

"We have not only brought the sand under control — but people can also earn an income from it," he said, adding that watching the desert turn green gives him a deep sense of achievement.

Today, Babusha's green economy goes far beyond individual harvesting. A free-range chicken farm sells more than 10,000 birds annually, generating more than 1.2 million yuan in output, while six Babusha-branded products — including cattle, sheep, goji berries and vegetables — are helping expand local agricultural industries.

For Wang Jiguo, deputy director of Gulang county's forestry technology center and a senior engineer, Babusha's core lesson is that desertification control must respect natural laws and local conditions.

"First make the land green, then help people prosper," Wang said, emphasizing that long-term restoration requires giving local people a direct stake in protecting the environment.

What species to plant and how to develop supporting industries, he noted, must be tailored to local soil, rainfall and climate.

"Restoring desertified land is not a short-term project," Wang said. "It demands a long-term commitment so that ecological protection becomes a mission passed from one generation to the next."

Offering a broader legal guarantee for such generational efforts, China's Ecological and Environmental Code, which took effect on Saturday, includes a dedicated section on desertification prevention and control.

Tong Yunshan contributed to this story.

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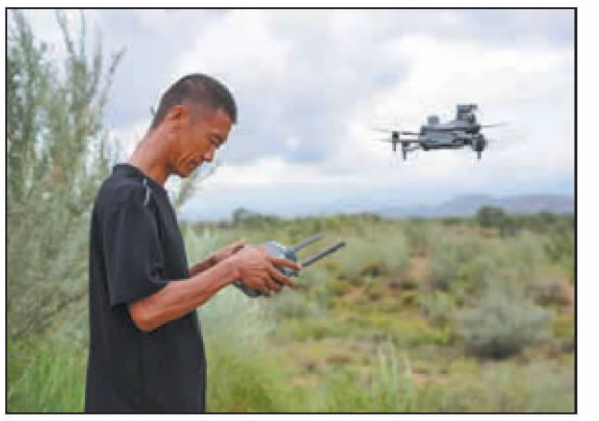

Desert-control worker Guo Xi controls a patrol drone at the Babusha Forest Farm in Gulang county, Gansu province, on Aug 11. LANG BINGBING / XINHUA

Carnivorous plant find validates Darwin

By **LI MENGHAN**
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Scientists have confirmed the discovery of the first carnivorous plant in the Saxifragales order — a group of non-woody flowering plants widely spread across temperate and cold mountain regions. The breakthrough validates a prediction made by British naturalist Charles Darwin in 1875.

The findings were published in the international journal Nature Communications on Aug 4. The study was conducted by a joint team of researchers from the Kunming Institute of Botany of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Yunnan province, the CAS Wuhan Botanical Garden in Hubei province, Jishou University in Hunan province, and the University of Florida in the United States.

The plant, *Saxifraga candelabrum*, grows in rock crevices located between 2,500 and 3,300 meters above sea level across the Hengduan Mountains on the southeastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Its entire body is covered in dense, sticky hair-like structures called glandular hairs that trap small insects.

In his 1875 book *Insectivorous Plants*, Darwin studied two European species from the same family and noticed their sticky hairs could catch insects. He suggested that some species in the group might actually feed on their prey. However, the analytical tools of his era were not advanced enough to test his theory, leaving the question unanswered for nearly 150 years.



An insect is captured by *Saxifraga candelabrum's* sticky hairs. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The discovery began during fieldwork in Shangri-La, Yunnan province, when researchers noticed *Saxifraga candelabrum's* sticky hairs were packed with bugs — averaging 71 insects per plant.

To prove that insect trapping was a permanent evolutionary trait rather than an accidental event, the team surveyed 45 historical plant samples collected between 1888 and 2016. Forty-three of them still had insects stuck to their hairs, proving the plant has been preying on insects for well over a century. Scientists also discovered that the plant uses floral scents to lure insects. However, its sticky traps mostly catch midges — small flies that do little to help fertilize the plant. Larger and more effective pollinators, such as hoverflies and wild bees, rarely get stuck. This smart tactic allows the plant to hunt for food without accidentally killing the insects it relies on to reproduce.

Many plants use sticky hairs purely to keep harmful bugs away. To prove *Saxifraga candelabrum* actually digests its catch for nutrients, researchers tested for digestion-aiding proteins. They found phosphatase — an enzyme that breaks down animal matter — right inside the plant's sticky hairs. They then used chemical tracking with nitrogen isotopes, which are special elemental markers, to confirm that the plant absorbs nitrogen from the digested bugs to fuel its flowering and fruit growth.

In addition, the research team mapped out a complete high-precision genome of the species.

Zhang Xinjian, first author of the study and a postdoctoral researcher at the Kunming Institute of Botany, noted that the findings challenge long-held botanical assumptions.

Zhang explained that while most known carnivorous plants use dramatic, specialized traps like pitchers or snapping jaws, this discovery serves as a reminder that quieter insect-eaters exist in nature. Sticky hairs traditionally viewed as simple self-defense mechanisms may actually double as feeding tools.

This suggests that insect-eating behavior among flowering plants may be far more common than previously realized, opening the door for the discovery of many more carnivorous species in the future.

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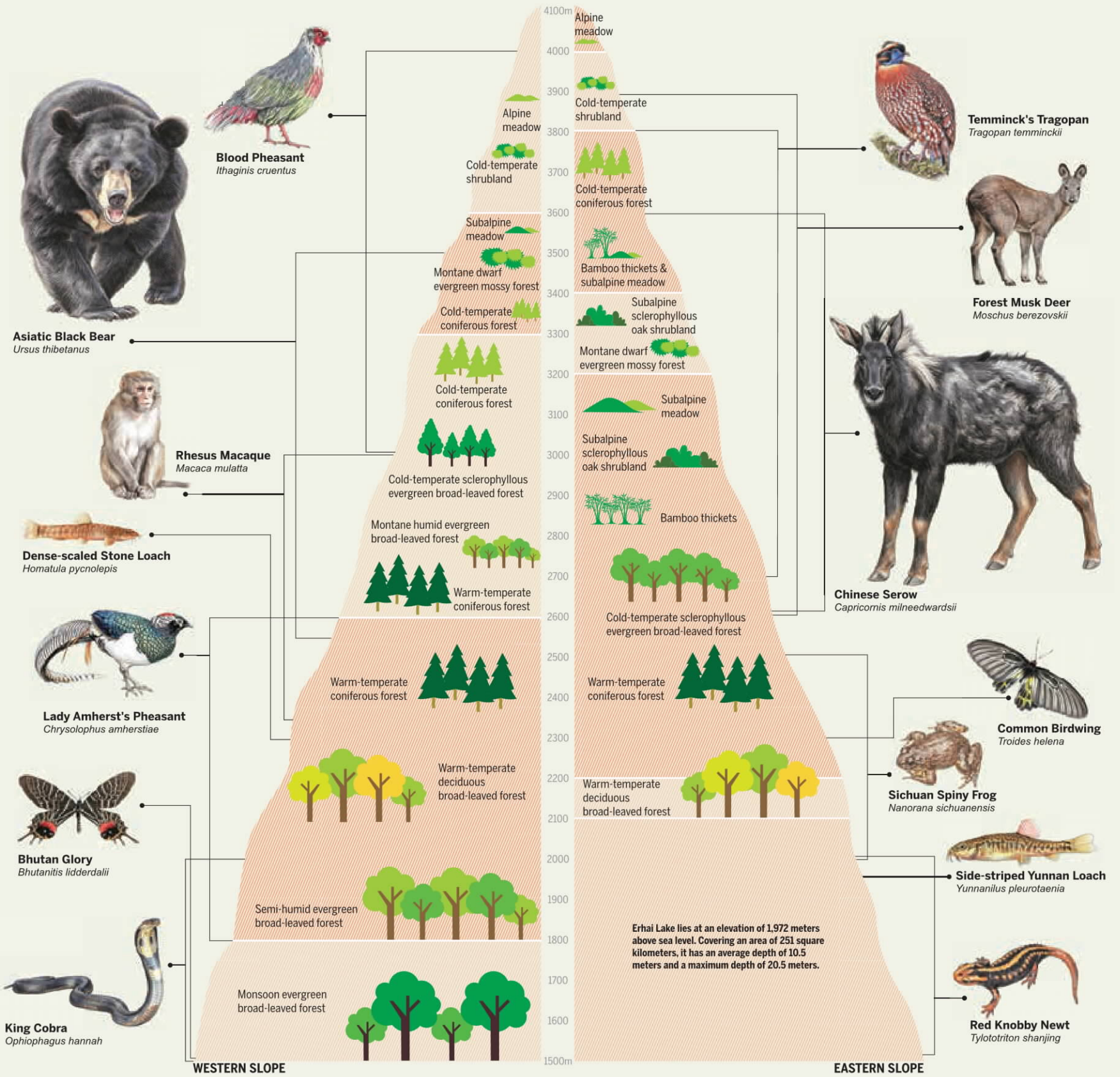
Editor's note: *As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.*

Uncovering a soaring scale of biodiversity

Survey of the Cangshan Mountains reveals wildlife paradise. **Yan Yujie** reports from Dali, Yunnan, with **Zheng Jinran** in Beijing



The Cangshan Mountains in Southwest China's Yunnan province have long been known as one of the country's richest reservoirs of biodiversity, home to forests, alpine meadows and thousands of animal and plant species.

After the results of a comprehensive three-year survey were released in April, the true and expanded scale of the mountains' biodiversity and intertwined ecosystems has been uncovered.

The scientific expedition, which featured some 4,000 visits by researchers from eight institutes at the national and provincial levels, covered an area of 966 square kilometers — roughly the size of New York City.

Surveying flora and fauna across elevations ranging from 1,360 meters to 4,122 meters, the researchers documented ecosystems, plants, fungi, wildlife and land use across the mountain.

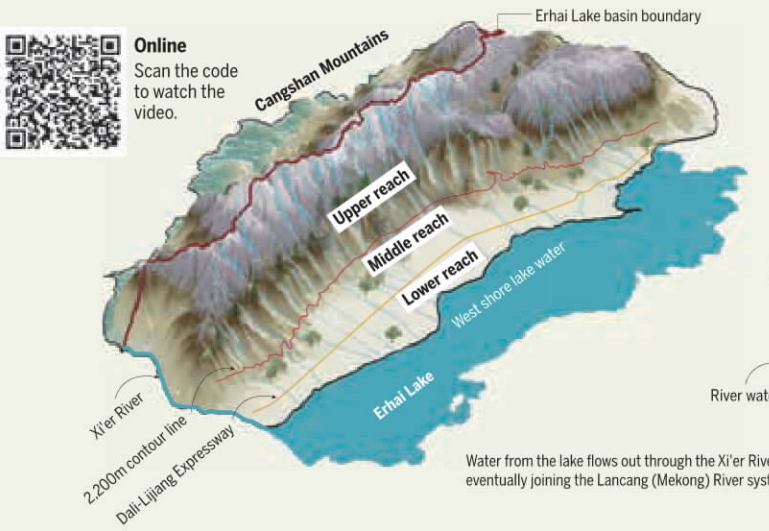
For Chai Yong, project secretary and head of the vegetation research team at the Yunnan Academy of Forestry and Grassland, the expedition was as much about humility as discovery.

"The mountain constantly reminds us how little we know," Chai, 50, said.

In 2023, Chai and three colleagues were conducting vegetation surveys near Xieyang Peak, the southernmost of Cangshan's 19 peaks, when they strayed from their planned route and became trapped in dense shrubs.

"We could see the city below us, but we couldn't find a way down," Chai recalled.

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.



Water from the lake flows out through the Xi'er River, eventually joining the Lancang (Mekong) River system.

The team eventually found a narrow gully and followed it to safety. The experience reinforced a lesson Chai now often shares with younger researchers: understanding nature begins with respecting it.

That respect has been matched by a growing understanding of the mountain's complexity.

Researchers on the survey established Cangshan's first comprehensive vegetation classification system, identifying 10 vegetation types, 20 subtypes, 79 formations and 131 plant communities. They also documented 10 previously unrecorded plant communities and discovered the distribution of monsoon evergreen broad-leaved forests on the mountain.

The expedition recorded 4,600 species of higher plants and 418 large fungi, as well as 578 vertebrate and 787 invertebrate species.

"Cangshan is not a collection of separate ecosystems," Chai said. "It's a living system in which forests, water and wildlife are deeply interconnected."

The expedition also shed new light on Cangshan's relationship with nearby Erhai Lake, an iconic attraction of Dali city.

Using stable isotope analysis, researchers traced the movement of water across the region and found that surface water and groundwater originating from Cangshan contribute more than 65 percent of Erhai's west shore water supply in the rainy season, confirming the mountain's role as a critical ecological barrier and natural reservoir.

The findings have provided important scientific evidence for conservation efforts in the area.

Researchers found that vegetation cover on Cangshan has generally increased since the late 1980s, while protected areas within the Cangshan-Erhai National Nature Reserve consistently outperformed unprotected regions in ecological health, highlighting the long-term benefits of conservation.

For those involved in the project, however, the expedition's significance extends beyond scientific papers or statistics.

The findings will help guide future conservation, ecological restoration and environmental education, ensuring that the mountain's forests, rivers and wildlife continue to thrive.

After years of trekking across ridges and valleys, Chai said he now sees Cangshan differently. "People often admire it for its scenery," he said. "But the more you study it, the more you realize its greatest beauty lies in the connections that hold the whole system together."

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CULTURAL HERITAGE



Dunhuang Academy's protection techniques have been successfully applied to the Jiaohe Ruins in Turpan, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.





Left: Mural restoration is carried out in one of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, Gansu province. **Right:** Guo Qinglin (second from right), director of the Dunhuang Academy, checks a multi-field coupling environmental simulation laboratory. **Below:** A distant view of the Mogao Caves. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Part of a mural restored in Dunhuang.

Taking Silk Road science global

Experts use advanced research to protect fragile earthen ruins and assist overseas partners, report **Wang Ru** and **Ma Jingna** in Dunhuang, Gansu.

Guo Qinglin still remembers a visit to Yumen Pass not long after he joined the Dunhuang Academy in 1999, in Dunhuang, Gansu province. He had followed senior colleagues to inspect the strategic Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) fort, a vital gateway on the ancient Silk Road, and nearby sections of the Great Wall in Gansu. As he watched the crumbling fortifications, he noticed the expression on Li Zuixiong's (1941-2019) face grow increasingly grave.

"We cannot let such heritage disappear on our watch. We must accelerate research and development of conservation techniques for earthen sites," he recalls Li, then deputy director of the academy, saying.

That moment set Guo on a path from geology graduate to one of the world's leading experts in the conservation of earthen sites. Now 50, Guo is director of the academy which oversees the Mogao Caves — a UNESCO World Heritage site comprising hundreds of Buddhist caves adorned with murals and statues dating from the 4th to the 14th centuries. Over the years, he has watched the academy's conservation capabilities steadily evolve. Today, he leads his colleagues in sharing their expertise abroad, helping safeguard treasures that belong to all of humanity.

Guo's entry into the field was almost accidental. After graduating with a degree in geology from Lanzhou University in Gansu, Guo was introduced to the Dunhuang Academy by his teacher. At the time, he had only a vague sense that cultural heritage protection was something "sacred".

"I remember I told Wang Xudong, who worked as a staff member recruiting graduates from my university and later became director of the academy, that I didn't know much about cultural heritage conservation," Guo recalls. "He replied, 'That's okay. You can learn gradually.'"

Conditions at the academy were tough in those days. Located on the outskirts of Dunhuang, the institution had limited amenities, and staff members could take a shuttle bus to downtown only twice a week to bathe or make phone calls. At the same time, a lack of domestic expertise in conservation prompted extensive international cooperation. Before Guo joined the academy, cooperation with institutions in Japan and the United States in the 1980s had already brought advanced conservation philosophies and techniques to Dunhuang's conservators.

"Building on that foundation, our professionals made further innovations and eventually developed three major technology systems surrounding the protection and repair of ancient murals, protection and consolidation of earthen remains, and digitization of wall paintings and painted sculptures in cave temples," Guo says.

From a team of four members in the 1960s, the academy's conservation workforce has grown to nearly 200 people.

Mural conservation offers a telling example. China had long possessed traditional techniques, but many relied on artisans' personal experience rather than scientific analysis. Through collaboration with US experts, Chinese professionals gained a deeper understanding of the causes of mural deterioration. They refined their methods through scientific research, transforming experience-based practices into science-based conservation.

The cooperation also helped improve procedures. Overseas experts introduced a value-analysis step that Chinese professionals had previously overlooked, helping establish a comprehensive workflow for cultural heritage conservation: value analysis, on-site investigation, environmental monitoring, deterioration mechanism analysis, plan formulation and final implementation.

"Later, we applied these procedures to more than 300 cultural heritage projects across 21 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, including the restoration of murals at the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Xizang autonomous region," says Guo. "When our methods are scientifically sound, we can largely ensure good outcomes."

Of the academy's three major technology systems, the conservation of earthen relics has posed the greatest challenge and remained a key focus for decades. Of China's 767,000 immovable cultural heritage sites, about one-third are earthen relics, many of which have been listed as World Heritage sites.

"Made of earth, such relics are relatively fragile, as they are often exposed outdoors and can easily collapse or weather, leading to their fast disappearance, along with the precious historical information they carry," Guo says. "Protection of earthen sites is a world-class challenge."

The academy's attempt to protect such sites started in 1992. Early attempts involved adding chemical consolidating materials. Later, geotechnical engineering techniques, such as grouting reinforcement, were introduced, gradually evolving into a comprehensive system. The system has been successfully applied to the Jiaohe Ruins in Turpan, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, since 2006, and the Xixia Imperial Tombs in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, since 1999, both of which are on the World Heritage List.

As protection techniques matured, the next frontier was understanding long-term effects of the environment. In 2020, the academy launched a multi-field coupling environmental simulation laboratory for mural and ruin protection.

The lab can simulate temperature ranges between -30 C and 60 C and relative humidity from 10 to 90 percent, as well as various climatic conditions across all four seasons, including wind, rain, snow, and sunlight for experimental testing. This allows researchers not only to understand a site's present condition, but also to glimpse its past and future, says Guo.

With these systems now well established, the Dunhuang Academy is increasingly taking its conservation expertise abroad. "Cultural heritage is a witness to a country's history, so every nation wants to protect it," says Guo. "Having benefited from international cooperation ourselves, we feel a responsibility to share our experience with counterparts abroad, to help them safeguard their heritage, which actually belongs to all of humanity."

In 2024, the academy signed memoranda with cultural heritage institutes in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia, covering joint site protection, exchanges of theories and techniques, cultural exhibitions, academic activities, and professional training. In 2025, the China-Kyrgyzstan Belt and Road Joint Laboratory on Cultural Heritage Conservation was approved for construction to advance these efforts. "Local people understand their own culture best," says Guo. "We offer techniques and discuss protection ideas together. In this way, we cooperate to protect their cultural heritage."

This year, academy professionals arrived at the ruins of the ancient city of Suyab in Kyrgyzstan, a key city on the ancient Silk Road that is now recognized as a World Heritage site, to establish a comprehensive experimental platform for heritage protection.

Aisin Duishanalieva, director of the Republican Inspectorate for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments of the Ministry of Culture of the Kyrgyz Republic, told Global Times earlier that the lab, built under the Belt and Road Initiative, has established systematic research capacity and will continue to develop. "Through this joint collaboration, we can study and excavate cultural relics along the Silk Road and better popularize them in our two countries," she said.

Guo says: "Our academy will remain engaged in domestic and international cooperation, protect grottoes and share their art with an increasingly open approach, and attract more scholars, especially young ones, to join us.

"We will conduct comprehensive, multidisciplinary research on Dunhuang sites in the broader context of human civilization, dig deep into their historical, artistic and scientific value, and contribute to the cultural diversity of the world," he adds.

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Living history book opens at Jingzhou city wall

By DENG ZHANGYU
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The ancient city wall of Jingzhou in Hubei province stands like a living history book. More than 2,000 years old, it has quietly "grown taller" in virtually the same location through successive dynasties, with its position shifting by less than 50 meters.

The Exhibition Hall of the Archaeological Site of Jingzhou City Wall, which opened earlier this year, offers visitors a clearer and more intuitive view of the wall's historical evolution and construction techniques over the past millennium.

Inside, the city wall is presented almost as a cross-section of history. Layers of brick and rammed earth dating from the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960) through the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties are stacked one upon another, recording the passage of time as clearly as tree rings.

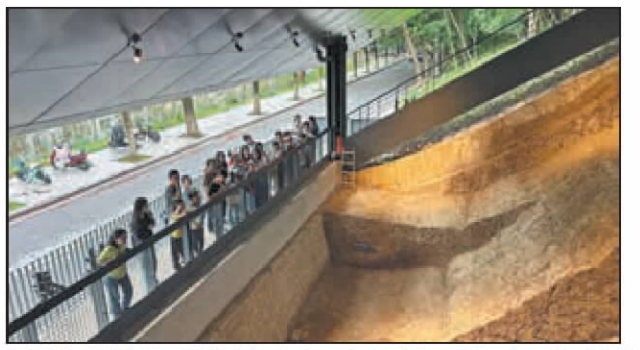
"The city wall is the only city defense and flood-control system in southern China that has remained in continuous use for more than 1,000 years. This exhibition hall turns an archaeological site into vivid history that can be understood at a glance," says Tian Yong from Jingzhou Museum.

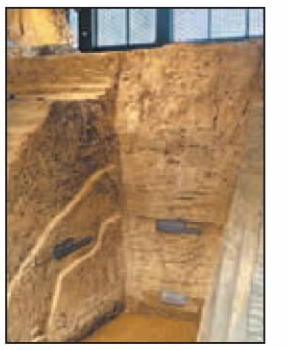
The exhibition hall was carefully built around the archaeological excavation site of Horse-face (*mamian* in pinyin) No 11. In 2019, during the restoration of the structure, archaeologists discovered an earlier brick wall beneath the Ming Dynasty wall. Since then, the archaeological team led by Tian has conducted three excavations at the site.

According to Tian, *mamian* is a specialized structural term for rectangular bastions projecting from a city wall. They reinforce the wall, enhancing its defensive capabilities. The Jingzhou City Wall stretches 11.28 kilometers, and has six ancient city gates and 25 horse-face-shaped bastions. Horse-face No 11 is located in the northern section of the wall.

Tian says archaeologists had never previously excavated deep into the wall out of concern for its structural integrity. Historical records show that the city wall existed during the Three Kingdoms (220-280) period, but there is no rigorous archaeological evidence.

The excavation has traced the wall back to the late Tang Dynasty (618-907). A rammed-earth wall from the Tang period was followed by a brick wall built during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, making it the earliest brick city wall discovered through archaeological excavation in China.





Left: The Exhibition Hall of the Archaeological Site of Jingzhou City Wall in Hubei province offers a close-up view of history. **Right:** The interior of a rectangular bastion shows various building techniques from different periods in history. PHOTOS BY LIU QING / FOR CHINA DAILY

The bricks of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period are quite distinctive. They were salvaged from aristocratic tombs dating from the Han (206 BC-AD 220) to the Tang dynasties and are carved with images of maids and floral patterns. Historical records note that the ruler of the local kingdom at the time ordered nearby tombs to be excavated for their bricks, which were then used to build the city wall.

By the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the wall served both military and flood-control functions. Its exposed interior reveals a well-preserved brick drainage ditch, built with a carefully calculated slope to channel rainwater away quickly and prevent the wall from becoming waterlogged and collapsing.

Above this layer are blackened bricks and earth left by fires during the war-torn Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). The main body of the wall visible today dates from the Ming Dynasty. Its most distinctive feature is the inscribed bricks, each bearing detailed information about its manufacturing date, place of origin, and the officials responsible for its manufacture. If a brick was found to be of poor quality, responsibility could be traced through the inscription.

"These inscribed bricks formed a rigorous quality traceability system in ancient China," Tian says.

Horse-face No 11 is about 14 meters high, roughly the height of a three-story building. Historically, Jingzhou's location along the Yangtze River made it vulnerable to frequent flooding, with historical records indicating water levels rose by as much as 17 meters. To withstand floods, the city wall was repeatedly raised, reaching over 30 meters at its peak. Therefore, the wall was not only a military barrier but also a lifeline that protected people from floods, Tian says.

The exhibition hall is free to the public and, unlike a traditional museum, has no enclosing walls. It connects seamlessly with the surrounding streets through gentle slopes and steps. People can stop by while walking or cycling, taking in the views while exploring the history.

"It perfectly combines excavation, protection, display and utilization. Here, history becomes tangible in an instant. People can see a thousand years at a glance and observe the construction periods, evolution process and building techniques of the city wall," says Yang Kaiyong, director of Jingzhou Museum.

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LIFE



Translating for the palate



Chef Cheng shares his experiences interpreting cross-cultural cuisine, bringing his expertise to a cooking show as he joins the judging panel, **Li Yingxue** reports.

A piece of aged fish maw is turned slowly over charcoal until its surface takes on the dark shine of lacquer. Fermented black garlic adds depth, while sand ginger cuts through a buttery French sauce, creating a dialogue between chef Vicky Cheng's favorite dried seafood ingredient and French cooking techniques.

In another kitchen, the same ingredients might have been simmered for hours into a restorative Cantonese soup.

At Estuary by Vicky Cheng, which opened at Galaxy Macau in May, dishes are presented through the lens of contemporary French cuisine: controlled fire, carefully constructed sauces and precise tableside service.

The dish offers a concise portrait of its creator. Hong Kong chef Cheng has spent much of his career moving between culinary languages, searching for ways to make unfamiliar ingredients immediately appealing without erasing their origins.

Cheng's career reflects contemporary Chinese cuisine's growing global recognition.

Through his restaurants and his role as a judge on the cooking show *Chef of China*, Cheng has explored how Chinese cuisine can reach wider audiences without losing its identity.

At VEA, a one-Michelin-star restaurant in Hong Kong, Cheng established his "Chinese x French" cuisine. WING, ranked No 2 on the 2026 Asia's 50 Best Restaurants list, became his expression of "Boundaryless Chinese Cuisine". Estuary now completes the trio with what he calls "Indulgent and Nourishing French Gastronomy" — French cooking reconsidered through an Asian palate.

Estuary is not simply a return to Cheng's early French cooking. Named for where rivers meet the sea, it reflects his Hong Kong roots, Canadian upbringing and French training.

Born in Hong Kong and raised in Toronto, Cheng grew up with Chiu Chow (Chaozhou) food and his grandmother's Shanghai dishes. In Canada, however, his daily life became overwhelmingly Western.

"I grew up on a Western palate, but I am Chinese at heart," he says.

Cheng began cooking professionally as a teenager. During his six and a half years working at a Canadian restaurant, he progressed from novice to working across its kitchen stations.

"Since I was young, I was given many opportunities to compete in culinary contests," he says. He was taught "discipline of time" and "organization" — lessons he believes are unique to such high-pressure settings.

Those early experiences later gave Cheng a personal connection to *Chef of China*, where he joined the judging panel. Moving from competitor to judge allowed him, as he puts it, "to be on the other side of things" and "hopefully be able to help the industry as well".

The program exposed him to chefs from across the mainland and Hong Kong, each drawing on different regional styles of Chinese cooking. Their ingredients, knife skills and techniques were "not just inspiring, but also new and fresh", particularly for "somebody who's been cooking Western cuisine most of his life".

What interested him was what the high pressure revealed: "How quickly they adapt and how well they work as a team and also how well they perform as individuals".

As the field narrowed, judging became more difficult. "You're keeping only the best, and it's at a point where it starts to get very difficult to make a decision," Cheng says. "But in the end, it all comes down to taste. You can have the most creative dishes and the most amazing stories, but if there is no substance, you will not generate deliciousness."

In his early 20s, Cheng moved to New York to refine his skills at Daniel Boulud's three-Michelin-starred Restaurant Daniel. The kitchen quickly challenged his confidence.



Above: Chef Vicky Cheng presents some ingredients for his dishes. **Top left:** House preserved pork, clay pot rice with dried velvet shrimp. **Top right:** Botan shrimp with Chiu Chow sauce. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The restaurant served about 300 guests a night while demanding precision. When he arrived at noon, it left too little time to prepare, so Cheng began coming at 11 am, then 10 am, and sometimes as early as 8 am.

"I went to New York, and I had realized that I was nothing," he says.

It is a lesson he has carried with him: no title or accolade removes the need to improve. "I know that even if I am the best today, I may not be tomorrow," he says. After about a year and a half, colleagues recognized his exceptionally orderly station and willingness to help others.

The missing piece

New York sharpened Cheng's French techniques, but also drew him toward Asia. On days off, he searched for dim sum, sushi and kimchi. "I realized that there's an Asian part of me ... that I had yet to discover," he says. "So I made a decision to come back to Hong Kong."

He continued cooking French food, but as he prepared to open VEA in 2015, he realized that a conventional French restaurant no longer fully represented him. Simply adding soy sauce, wasabi or a Chinese mushroom to a Western dish was not enough, either.

Meaningful fusion requires an understanding of how both cuisines think. A chef using mushrooms from Yunnan province should first understand how local people prepare them and why that tradition exists. Only then can it be reinterpreted rather than used as decoration. "That, for me, is true fusion," Cheng says.

His Chinese education was less formal. At Hong Kong markets, Cheng bought unfamiliar produce, asked vendors how they cooked it, and tested the ideas on friends at late-night suppers.

This education shaped VEA and led to the founding of WING, which opened in 2021. The restaurant takes its name from the Chinese character *yong* — pronounced "wing" in Cantonese — in Cheng's name.

In Chinese calligraphy, the character is traditionally used to demonstrate eight fundamental brush techniques, reinforcing his belief that innovation must begin with a strong foundation.

Launching a Chinese restaurant without training in the traditional Chinese kitchen hierarchy was risky, but it encouraged him to develop his own culinary language.

His Western-raised palate helped him identify where international diners might struggle. Sea cucumber, for instance, can be challenging in appearance and texture. At WING, he placed it inside a crispy spring roll.

"Everybody understands spring rolls," Cheng says. "Everybody understands and loves crispy." He hopes this accessible version encourages diners to try traditional preparation.

This idea reflects his broader hopes for Chinese cuisine. "Food is a universal language," Cheng says. He believes it can evolve only when chefs understand what came before: "Without tradition, there is no innovation."

That foundation, rather than rigid regional boundaries, informs WING. Cheng hopes contemporary interpretations can lead international diners toward traditional dishes. "I hope the world will see Chinese cuisine differently because ... it is for me, one of the most important, most interesting, and tasty cuisines in the world," he says.

Balancing act

At Estuary, the direction of translation changes again. The techniques, service and structure are rooted in French cuisine, but the food is reconsidered through the palate Cheng developed in Asia.

Clear broths, fermentation and extracted oils help him balance indulgence with restraint. Cheng is not re-creating the French food he learned decades ago, but reconsidering it through his years of immersion in Chinese culinary culture, one that nourishes through ingredients.

Food critic Xiong Wei, also known as Teddy Xiong, believes Cheng's greatest achievement at Estuary is his balance of abundance and boundaries. "The most outstanding characteristic of his cooking is that it is generous yet light, following a path that combines nourishment with indulgence," Xiong says. "You finish feeling satisfied, but neither greasy nor uncomfortably full."

For Xiong, the fish maw best captures Cheng's cultural fluency. "It perfectly embodies Vicky's idea of bringing together charcoal grilling, the ingenuity of fermentation and the river-and-sea character of the (Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao) Greater Bay Area," he says.

Estuary may mark a return to Cheng's French roots, but it is not the end of his journey. After more than two decades in kitchens around the world, he continues to search for new ways to let different culinary languages speak to one another. Like the meeting waters that gave the restaurant its name, those languages continue to reshape each other.

For Cheng, cooking is not a search for a final answer but an ongoing conversation between cultures.

Contact the writer at liyingxue@chinadaily.com.cn





From left: Oma abalone and South African abalone with abalone sauce; beef brisket, clear broth and green Sichuan pepper.





From left: Mackerel with persimmon and Lapsang Souchong; blue lobster with sour cabbage and chili oil.

From caves to cafes: China's 'cool resources' fan summer tourism

GUIYANG — With summer heatwaves sweeping across China, the country's southwestern karst areas are getting creative, offering unique tourism experiences deep within their cool caves.

Following a guide, tourist Chang Ting ducked into a natural cave in Guizhou province. After trekking about 100 meters along a narrow rocky path, her mobile signal disappeared.

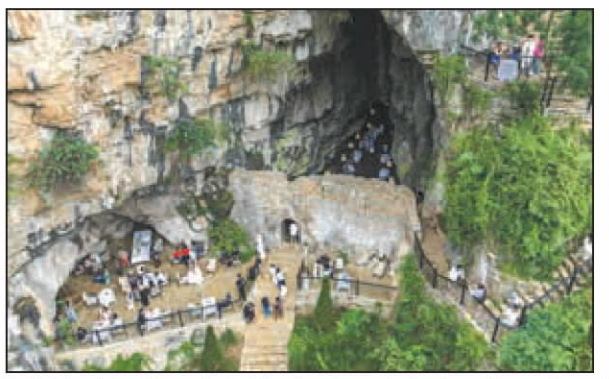
"It felt like stepping back in time, and all the noise faded away," says Chang, from Xi'an, Shaanxi province.

This unique escape has emerged as a new travel fad among young Chinese people during summer vacations. The fresh approach to cave-based sightseeing gives tourists more to explore while boosting summer spending.

Viral videos tagged "Guizhou cave exploration" have gained over 5 million likes on major lifestyle and short-video platforms, with related topics racking up hundreds of millions of views.

Karst landforms cover more than 60 percent of the mountainous province, and a total of 42,800 karst cave entrances have been identified.

Leveraging these resources, Guizhou has developed diverse experiential forms of cave tourism to cater to different types of visitors. Options include outdoor cave adventures with semi-extreme sports, in-depth underground river tours with social media-friendly photo ops, and relaxing cave visits featuring themed dining spaces.





Left: Tourists visit a cafe inside a karst cave in Anshun city, southwest China's Guizhou province, on Aug 8. **Right:** People enjoy the cave cafe's coolness and drinks in the summer. PHOTOS BY CHEN XI / XINHUA

Song Yuanqiao and Zhao Fei, two veteran cave explorers with cave-rescue experience, run an adventure project in Yanzidong, or Sparrow Cave, in Guiding county. Relying on the natural cave passages, they have designed outdoor activities such as zip lines and tightrope bridges.

To turn this niche hobby into a standardized commercial operation, Song and Zhao visited Hungary, Spain, and other countries to learn cave route design, industrial codes and safety management standards.

Song recalls that back in 2018, cave exploration drew little public attention. In 2023, inquiries spiked dramatically as inexperienced tourists began asking about cave routes. "We never imagined it would become so popular," Song says.

A cafe now stands at the cave entrance while thrilling rock-climbing routes stretch deep inside. Since its trial operation in late April, the site has drawn more than 2,000 visitors.

The booming cave tourism trend has brought new job opportunities for young locals. "Sports graduates like me only had jobs as ball coaches before, but now we have more choices," says Lei Yinggui, 23, a cave tour instructor.

The cave exploration trend has also inspired many people to return home and start their own businesses.

Returning from the southern metropolis of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, last year, Peng Wei opened a cave cafe with his former classmates in Xiuwen county. "The longer I was away, the more I missed my hometown's scenery," Peng says.

They left the cave's natural landscape mostly untouched, adding minimal decoration. Now, tourists line up for their unique, waterfall-cooled coffee. The cafe sells up to 600 cups of coffee daily at peak time.

Beyond Guizhou's cave resorts, Heilongjiang province has developed summer forest getaways, and the Xizang autonomous region's plateau area has rolled out high-altitude eco-retreats, translating its distinctive cool-climate resources into sustainable revenue through tourism.

The booming summer tourism aligns with the broader top-level national policy guidelines aimed at boosting consumption.

Last month, China released guidelines to expand consumption for the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), encouraging local governments to enrich distinctive tourism products, such as summer cooling retreats or winter warm-weather getaways.

To balance cave tourism with ecological protection, Guizhou has introduced a new management plan for its karst caves, covering cave classification and filing, ecological red-line setting and full-chain supervision.

"Karst caves are non-renewable geological heritage. Proper resource management is the key to turning underground wonders into local benefits, and we must adhere to development within protection," says Zhang Zaijie, director of the green development strategy research institute at Guizhou University of Finance and Economics.

XINHUA

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CULTURE





Left and center: Scenes from Hong Kong Ballet's *Romeo + Juliet*, which reinterprets Shakespeare's enduring romance within the bustling, cosmopolitan backdrop of 1960s Hong Kong.
Right: Ballet dancer Chun Wai Chan plays the role of Romeo and Hong Kong Ballet's principal dancer Ye Feifei plays Juliet. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

East meets West in HK's *Romeo + Juliet*

Ballet dancer Chun Wai Chan returns to China to play the lead role in Shakespeare's classic tragedy, **Chen Nan** reports.



The iconic love story finds new life in a vibrant 1960s Hong Kong setting, showcasing a fusion of ballet and martial arts.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has been reconsidered and reassembled countless times since it first appeared in print. Its story captures universal truths that transcend time and place, while each new adaptation reveals another facet of this complex play, according to Septime Webre, choreographer and artistic director of Hong Kong Ballet.

The ballet's *Romeo + Juliet* takes that enduring tale and gives it a distinctly local identity, transporting the lovers from Renaissance Verona to the turbulent, cosmopolitan world of 1960s Hong Kong.

On Aug 29 and 30, the production will be staged at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing and will also be performed in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Sept 11 and 12.

In this version, Juliet is the daughter of a tycoon from Shanghai, whose ambitions extend beyond family tradition: he is determined to marry her to a wealthy man in pursuit of greater social advancement. Taipo (Tybalt in the original) is a powerful gang leader from Hong Kong's Kowloon City, who is having an affair with Juliet's mother, a beautiful but cold woman trapped in a loveless marriage.

Against this tangled web of family loyalty, social ambition and forbidden desire, Romeo and Juliet unexpectedly discover the consuming power of love. Their decision to be together becomes an act of defiance, setting them against the people and structures that seek to control their futures.

For Webre, relocating the story is not simply a change of scenery. It is a way of asking how Shakespeare's themes might resonate within another society and another moment in history.

Webre is an internationally recognized ballet director, choreographer, educator and advocate. He joined Hong Kong Ballet as its artistic director in July 2017 after 17 years as artistic director of The Washington Ballet in Washington DC, the United States. Previously, he also served as artistic director of the American Repertory Ballet, based in Princeton, New Jersey, for six years.

"When I first moved to Hong Kong, I knew I wanted to create a ballet that fused Hong Kong and the West. It became a way for me to get to know the city better, to explore its culture and build a world with a distinctly Hong Kong style," he says. "Then *Romeo + Juliet* came along, and the story seemed to lend itself so naturally to that idea. Everything came together very quickly."

The production's Hong Kong identity is reinforced through its visual language. Webre and his creative team drew inspiration from the city's influential cinema from the 1960s through the 1990s, particularly the energetic street scenes and stylized action of Hong Kong films. The stage becomes a bustling, vividly imagined cityscape, filled with neon signs, bamboo scaffolding, noisy Chinese restaurants and crowded markets.

In a rare encounter between kung fu and ballet, martial arts experts trained Hong Kong Ballet dancers extensively in combat and collaborated with Webre to design and choreograph the production's spine-tingling action scenes, infusing modern details into a classic tale of forbidden love.

The costumes similarly reflect Hong Kong's position between the East and the West. Elegant *qipao* (the traditional Chinese dress for women) appear alongside leather jackets, while bold patterns, vivid colors and striking accessories help define the personalities of the characters. The effect is neither a historical reconstruction nor a simple period piece, but a theatrical portrait of a city in transition.

Falling in love with Hong Kong's energy, Webre sees the production as something deeply personal. "This production is a love letter to Hong Kong," he says.

That sense of affection gives *Romeo + Juliet* an emotional dimension beyond its tragic central romance. Through Prokofiev's sweeping score, the physical vocabulary of martial arts and ballet, and the distinctive imagery of Hong Kong, Shakespeare's familiar story becomes a tribute to a city whose identity has long been shaped by encounters between cultures.

For ballet dancer Chun Wai Chan, the invitation to dance Romeo carries an equally personal resonance.

As a principal dancer of New York City Ballet — the first Chinese principal in the company's history — Chan has performed some of the world's most demanding classical roles. Yet when Hong Kong Ballet invited him to join *Romeo + Juliet*, his response was shaped by both artistic curiosity and the opportunity to return closer to home.

"I was very happy when I received the invitation," Chan recalls. He had already seen Hong Kong Ballet perform the production in New York and was immediately drawn to its distinctive interpretation. At the same time, he knew the role would be demanding. He had encountered challenging versions of *Romeo and Juliet* before and initially had to consider whether he could take on another demanding production amid his own international schedule.

Ultimately, the particular character of Hong Kong Ballet's production persuaded him. "I really love this version," he says, adding that the chance to perform it — and to return to his home region — made him excited to accept.

Born in Guangdong province, China, Chan trained at Guangzhou Arts School from 2004 to 2010. A finalist at the 2010 Prix de Lausanne, he earned a full scholarship to Houston Ballet's corps de ballet in 2012 and rising to principal dancer in 2017. Chan joined New York City Ballet as a soloist in August 2021 and was promoted to principal dancer in May 2022.

The significance of his homecoming is not lost on him. Chan has spent much of his professional life overseas and says he rarely gets the opportunity to perform at home. His appearance in Beijing is therefore especially meaningful, even as it comes after a demanding international schedule.

His relationship with Hong Kong Ballet goes back several years. He previously worked with the company in *The Nutcracker* in 2018 and *Swan Lake* in 2019. He remembers the dancers as talented, the repertoire as strong, and the audiences as exceptionally enthusiastic. This time, however, there is another milestone: performing at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, a venue he has never previously visited.

"I'm really looking forward to working together again," he says.

Chan has danced Romeo before, including with Houston Ballet, and will return to the role in other productions in the coming season. But the Romeo created for Hong Kong Ballet is markedly different.

This Romeo is something of a dreamer, Chan says — a young man living partly inside his own imagination, fond of books and romance and somewhat removed from the physical conflicts around him. He may not be naturally suited to fighting or fencing, but loyalty to his friends pushes him into situations beyond his comfort zone.

His romantic idealism also has a particular intensity.

"He is very devoted," Chan says, drawing a connection between Romeo's capacity for love and his own dedication to ballet. "I can really understand why he loves Juliet."

Perhaps the most immediately intriguing element for Chan was the production's incorporation of Chinese martial arts.

Among the details that first caught his attention were the stage design, mahjong scenes and, especially, the fight sequences in which kung fu is integrated into the choreography. The prospect of learning martial arts for the role genuinely excited him.

Chan had taken some kung fu classes before and grew up watching the films of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. As a Chinese dancer who has spent years working within a Western classical tradition, he says he enjoys opportunities to bring aspects of his own cultural background into his performances.

The physical language came relatively naturally. His familiarity with Chinese martial arts imagery gave him an instinctive sense of how the movements should look and feel, even as he worked to adapt them to the discipline and precision of ballet.

His partnership with Hong Kong Ballet principal dancer Ye Feifei, who plays Juliet, is another crucial part of the production.

Their collaboration began in an unexpected way. Ye and members of Hong Kong Ballet traveled to New York two months ago to rehearse with Chan, who was balancing a busy performance schedule. Despite having limited rehearsal time, he joined them and began learning the production's extensive movement material.

The collaboration has particular resonance because Chan and Ye previously worked together in *Swan Lake*. Much has changed since then.

"She has also matured over the years," Chan says. "She has now danced Hong Kong Ballet's *Romeo + Juliet* for six years and has developed an intimate understanding of Juliet that goes beyond technique."

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Imagining the untold story of Zhao Zhuangji through a modern lens




Left: Chinese musical-theater actress Fiona Zhu rehearses for an original one-woman musical *Herstory in History* in London on Aug 3.
Right: Composer Johannes Grosz (left), actress Fiona Zhu (center), and co-director and co-writer Zhang Keyuan in discussion during the rehearsal for the musical. PHOTOS BY JADE CAO / XINHUA

LONDON — In a London rehearsal room, Chinese musical-theater actress Fiona Zhu donned a long, pale costume reminiscent of traditional Chinese opera, taking on the role of an ancient Chinese woman on stage.

The character is inspired by Zhao Zhuangji, a historical figure later associated with Princess Zhao in *The Orphan of Zhao*, one of China's best-known classical dramas.

But Zhu was interested in something beyond the familiar story of sacrifice, loyalty and revenge.

After years of playing different roles, she had noticed that women in historical and theatrical stories were often remembered as wives, mothers or daughters, while less was said about the individuals behind those identities.

Zhao Zhuangji offered one example. Even the name by which she is known today was tied partly to her husband Zhao Shuo and his clan, while her own personal given name has not been clearly preserved.

"Then where is her own name?" Zhu recalled wondering.

That question helped inspire *Herstory in History*, an original one-woman musical set to make its London debut in August before heading to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

The production brings Zhao Zhuangji together with a present-day actress, moving between a historical character and a modern performer trying to understand the different roles she has taken on in her own life.

Herstory in History does not attempt to retell *The Orphan of Zhao* in full or reconstruct Zhao Zhuangji's life as a historical biography, the production team says.

Instead, the creative team takes the gaps around the character as a starting point: what choices might she have faced, and what might be missed when a person is remembered mainly through a few familiar identities?

Zhu says the two women's lives are not meant to be directly compared. The connection lies instead in the experience of taking on identities shaped partly by circumstances and partly by the expectations of others.

Co-director and co-writer Zhang Keyuan says the production is not simply a new version of an old Chinese story, but an attempt to look more closely at the person behind a familiar character.

The same idea of moving between different worlds also shapes the music. German composer Johannes Grosz says his writing is rooted mainly in Western musical traditions. For the production, he worked with the Chinese team to bring traditional Chinese instruments and musical ideas into a chamber score.

One passage uses vocal phrasing inspired by China's Kunqu Opera, while Zhu also consulted performers trained in traditional Chinese opera on singing, costume and movement.

"There is no question of which one is better," Zhu says of the two musical traditions. "If you can bring them together well, it can become something very interesting."

The production is performed in Chinese with English captions. "If it comes from Chinese tradition, why must I use another language to tell it?" Zhu says.

For her, the production is one small attempt to bring Chinese stories and creative approaches into more direct exchange with audiences and theater-makers overseas.

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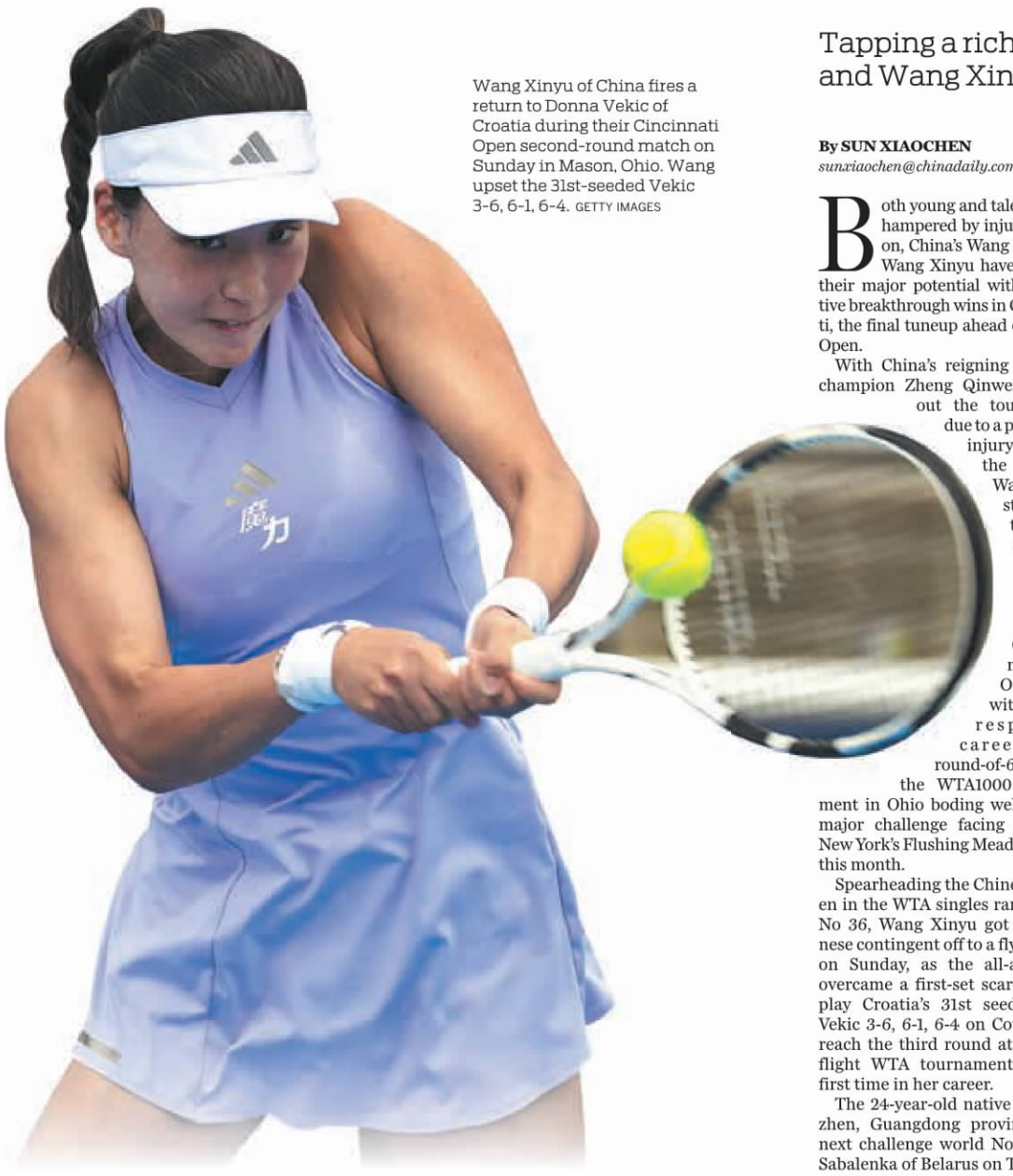
SPORTS

TENNIS

YOUNG GUNS FLY THE FLAG IN CINCY



Wang Xinyu of China fires a return to Donna Vekic of Croatia during their Cincinnati Open second-round match on Sunday in Mason, Ohio. Wang upset the 31st-seeded Vekic 3-6, 6-1, 6-4. GETTY IMAGES

Tapping a rich vein of form ahead of the US Open, Wang Xiyu and Wang Xinyu enjoy breakthrough wins in Cincinnati

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**
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Wang Xiyu in action against Leylah Fernandez of Canada during their Cincinnati Open second-round match on Sunday. GETTY IMAGES

Both young and talented, yet hampered by injuries early on, China's Wang Xiyu and Wang Xinyu have justified their major potential with respective breakthrough wins in Cincinnati, the final tuneup ahead of the US Open.

With China's reigning Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen sitting out the tournament due to a prolonged injury layoff, the in-form Wangs have stepped in to represent the country strongly at this week's Cincinnati Open, with their respective career-first, round-of-64 wins at the WTA1000 tournament in Ohio boding well for the major challenge facing them in New York's Flushing Meadows later this month.

Spearheading the Chinese women in the WTA singles rankings at No 36, Wang Xinyu got the Chinese contingent off to a flying start on Sunday, as the all-arounder overcame a first-set scare to outplay Croatia's 31st seed Donna Vekic 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 on Court 10 to reach the third round at the top-flight WTA tournament for the first time in her career.

The 24-year-old native of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, will next challenge world No 1 Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus on Tuesday.

Riding Wang Xinyu's momentum, the 108th-ranked Wang Xiyu, who battled past two qualifying rounds to make it to the main draw, pulled off an identical comeback win on the same court as the hard-hitting left-hander upset Canada's No 30 seed Leylah Fernandez 3-6, 6-2, 6-2 in a gritty effort to also advance into the round of 32 for the first time.

Their resilient performances, particularly their impressive stamina in the scorching heat over three sets, have provided Chinese women's tennis a much-needed boost amid a testing season for ace Zheng, as lingering injury woes forced the former world No 4 to rest her surgically repaired right elbow ahead of the season's final major.

Wang Xinyu, who also had to pull through a series of injury setbacks early in her career, hailed Sunday's tough test as a perfect tune-up for her battle against the mighty Belarusian, and her sixth main-draw campaign in New York.

> "I am always hoping to measure myself against the No 1, and I will, for sure, prepare to the best of my ability."
>
> **Wang Xinyu,** on playing Aryna Sabalenka in Cincinnati

"It's so exciting that the draw has put me in front of her, because I've wanted to play her again since our previous meeting in Melbourne," Wang Xinyu said of coming up against four-time major winner Sabalenka, who beat her in three sets in the second round of the 2022 Australian Open.

"I am always hoping to measure myself against the No 1, and I will, for sure, prepare to the best of my ability and recover as quickly as I can after this tough match in the heat.

"As difficult as it was, particularly after I lost the first set and got broken first in the second, today's win gave me a lot of encouragement, because I managed to reset myself mentally when I was down and played better, game after game, from there."

Wang Xinyu has reached the round of 16 three times at the majors, her best Grand Slam singles result, while she achieved the highlight of her career in doubles by winning the 2023 French Open trophy alongside Hsieh Su-wei of Chinese Taipei.

"After some ups and downs, I feel like I've found some good form deep into the North American hard-court swing, and, hopefully, it won't be too late," Wang Xinyu said of her expectation for the US Open.

Rising to the elite level of the women's game earlier than her right-handed counterpart, Wang Xiyu, who became China's first girls' major champion at the 2018 US Open, had to wait longer than expected to translate her teen success onto the senior stage, also plagued by multiple physical issues, including right shoulder surgery in October that sidelined her for over half a year.

The 25-year-old former world No 49's improved fitness, and, more importantly, trust in her own body, helped unleash her powerful game facing the agile Fernandez on Sunday, successfully avenging her first-round defeat to the Canadian at the season-opening Hong Kong Open in January.

After struggling with the placement of her shots and dropping the first set, Wang Xiyu regrouped quickly to sharpen her baseline attack, dominating Fernandez with precise and thunderous strikes from both corners to stun the 2021 US Open finalist in a little over two hours.

It served as further encouragement, finding her prime form in time for the US Open, following a deep, round-of-16 run at Roland Garros in May.

"This was a hugely encouraging result for me," said Wang Xiyu, who won her only WTA singles title at the Guangzhou Open in 2023.

"Leylah is a strong opponent who stays consistently within the top 30. So, for me, I just tried to hang in there, be patient and go for every possible chance."

The hard-fought comeback underscores Wang Xiyu's growing adaptability on fast surfaces, a key asset for the upcoming US Open, as well as her improved mental fortitude, which in the past had been criticized by fans following some meltdown losses after falling a set behind.

"I am now just focusing on producing my best effort in every single game, set and match, and progressing one day at a time. Hopefully, I can carry it on," she said.

As well as the right-left singles combo of the two Wangs, Chinese veteran Zhang Shuai was also in action on Sunday, losing out in her singles second-round clash to United States' 28th-seed Ann Li in straight sets.

She'll now switch her focus to the doubles competition in Cincinnati, alongside compatriot Jiang Xinyu, as she looks to build on last Thursday's WTA1000 doubles triumph in Toronto with Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic.



Zhang Shuai (left) of China and Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic pose with the WTA Toronto Open doubles trophy on Aug 13. AFP

EQUESTRIAN

Hua Tian claims record Chinese finish at eventing worlds in Germany

AACHEN, Germany — Alex Hua Tian produced the best World Championship result by a Chinese rider with a 12th-place finish aboard Chicko at the FEI Eventing World Championships in Aachen, Germany, on Sunday.

Hua and the 16-year-old gelding finished on 37.3 penalties, improving significantly over the three disciplines after sitting 37th following the opening dressage competition.

The pair scored 32.5 penalties in dressage before climbing 15 places in the cross-country phase, completing the course without jumping penalties and adding only 4.8 time penalties.

A clear show jumping round on Sunday lifted Hua another 10 places to 12th overall.

"I've had a big grin on my face since about 3:30 this afternoon. I'm so, so happy," Hua told Xinhua while traveling back to Britain.

Hua credited Chicko and the team behind the pair for the result.

"I'm really thankful to the Willis family who own Chicko, to the Chinese Equestrian Association, and most of all I'm just so thankful and proud of my horse," he said.

Hua said Chicko's competitive temperament had been crucial to their success.

"He just knows his job, loves the sport and loves to compete. He has so much heart," Hua said. "To fly the flag for China on this international stage always makes the team and I very proud."

The Aachen result continued a strong summer for Hua and Chicko, who recently won a four-star event at Aston-le-Walls in Britain.

Hua also won a three-star short-format event aboard Manjushri, the horse he plans to ride at this year's Asian Games.

The 36-year-old will head to the Games seeking to defend the individual and team titles he won at Hangzhou 2023.



China's Alex Hua Tian, aboard Chicko, competes at the 2026 FEI World Championships in Aachen, Germany. FEI

"Winning individual and team gold at the Asian Games in Hangzhou in front of a home crowd felt like the right thing at the right time," Hua said. "I was under pressure to win gold there, so winning it was a huge relief."

Chicko will remain in Europe, with Hua instead planning to ride the younger Manjushri, owned by Yi Tianru. Cooley On Ice is his second choice.

"Manjushri is very exciting. His dressage is very strong, which is crucial at the Asian Games level," Hua said.

Manjushri is scheduled to enter quarantine in Aachen on Sept 4 before flying from Liege in Belgium to Tokyo on Sept 14.

"Flying a horse from Europe to Asia is a huge operation," Hua said. "Stable management and the horse's welfare and mental well-being are key. I hope to be as competitive as possible."

China is set to field a partly new eventing team at the Asian Games. Hua said Hangzhou teammate Sun Huadong will return alongside two younger riders.

"It's an exciting stage for Chinese equestrian sport," Hua said. "This will be a great opportunity for them to show their development and composure under pressure."

Beyond the Asian Games, Hua is targeting a fifth Olympic appearance at Los Angeles 2028.

He said individual qualification would become a key focus from 2027, while China would also assess its chances of securing a team place. Hua acknowledged that the team qualification route would be difficult, with Australia and New Zealand among China's regional rivals.

"But regardless, I will aim for individual qualification," he said.

Despite having competed at four World Championships/World Equestrian Games and four Olympic Games, Hua believes he can continue improving.

"I think my career is only just getting started, really," he said. "I now have a world-class team of horses and support network, allowing me to compete consistently at the highest level.

"I hope to continue progressing over the next few Olympic cycles."

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Digital asset
Technology innovation may reshape how gold is traded
BUSINESS, PAGE 9



Energy shock drives clean power push
ASIA FOCUS, PAGE 4



Beautiful progress
Report charts environmental improvement across rural areas
GOING GREEN, PAGE 12

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2026



Philippine sailors (right) harass China Coast Guard personnel aboard a patrol vessel at Ren'ai Reef in the South China Sea on Monday.
LI YAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

China urges the Philippines to halt its provocations

By ZHAO JIA and **JI HAISHENG**

Beijing summoned the ambassador of the Philippines to China on Tuesday and lodged solemn representations over Manila's deliberate provocation at Ren'ai Reef and attack on China Coast Guard law enforcement personnel on Monday.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry, in a statement, described the acts as egregious, noting that the Philippines initiated the provocation and then sought to shift the blame onto China, distorted the facts and maliciously hyped up the incident.

The statement said China Coast Guard operations in waters near the reef were justified and lawful, and the country would take measures to firmly safeguard its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.

Addressing a regular news briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian stressed that Ren'ai Reef is part of China's Nansha Islands and is Chinese territory.

A Philippine military vessel has remained illegally grounded at Ren'ai Reef since May 9, 1999, despite Manila's repeated commitments to remove it.

Lin urged the Philippines to honor its commitments, immediately stop maritime provocations and false narratives, and exercise effective restraint over its frontline personnel.

"Otherwise, the Philippines will bear all consequences arising from its actions," he added.

Lin said that in July 2024, China and the Philippines reached a provisional arrangement on humanitarian resupply missions to the grounded vessel based on China's three-point principled position, adding that China's position remains unchanged.

"If the Philippines were to attempt to build fixed facilities or permanent outpost, China will absolutely not accept it and will resolutely stop it in accordance with the law and regulations," Lin said.

China Coast Guard spokesman Jiang Lue said that on Tuesday morning, China allowed the Philippine side, on humanitarian grounds, to use a boat to transfer the injured sailor to Philippine Coast Guard vessel *No 9702*. The China Coast Guard contacted the Philippine vessel to verify the purpose of the operation and monitored the process throughout, Jiang said.

With Foreign Minister Wang Yi set to attend the China-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Manila on Wednesday, Lin, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, said it is worth noting that whenever China and the Philippines prepare for dialogue or engagement, or whenever a major regional diplomatic event approaches, certain forces invariably seek to stir up trouble over maritime issues.

"As to where the facts and merits of the issue lie and who is pulling the strings behind the scenes, I believe it's plain for all to see. China's policy on neighborhood diplomacy remains consistent and unchanged," he said.

Lin said East Asian cooperation platforms are not appropriate venues for discussing bilateral maritime disputes, calling on the Philippines to fulfill its responsibilities as ASEAN chair by promoting dialogue and cooperation rather than putting its own political interests above regional peace and stability.

He Xianqing, an associate researcher at the National Institute for South China Sea Studies, said that Manila was seeking international attention and sympathy from ASEAN countries by portraying China as a coercive bully on purpose. It also tried to give the illegal and invalid "2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea" greater practical effect and deterrent force — a development that warrants vigilance.

Zhu Feng, a professor at Nanjing University's School of International Studies, said the Philippines had sought backing from the United States and Japan as it escalated tensions with China in the South China Sea for narrow domestic political purposes.

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Online
See more by scanning the code.

XI'S VISION | HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

Push to make AI a resource for all hailed

Nation transforming global industries by promoting affordable, accessible use

By CHENG YU
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China's vision to turn artificial intelligence from an expensive frontier technology into a resource for affordable, widely accessible applications will bring huge benefits to more countries, businesses and ordinary people worldwide, said leading industry experts and company executives.

They made the comments on Tuesday after President Xi Jinping, in his keynote speech on Friday at the 2026 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai, said that AI should be developed "for the positive, for good and for humanity".

"AI development should not be a solo performance by a single country, but a symphony of international cooperation," Xi said.

He called for coordinated advances in the transformation and upgrade of traditional industries, the cultivation and growth of emerging industries, and forward-looking planning for future industries, so that all sectors and businesses can benefit from AI.

Long Yongtu, China's former chief negotiator for its accession to the World Trade Organization, said the rise of AI has become another turning point in the country's economic development.

He said that China's entry into the WTO in 2001 unleashed the vitality of millions of market participants after restrictions on foreign trade rights were relaxed, helping the country grow into the world's largest trader in goods and allowing ordinary people to increase their income through international commerce.

"Now, entering the age of AI heralds a new era of opening-up. AI is triggering a similarly profound transformation by reshaping production relationships, corporate structures and the cost of starting a business in the country," Long said.

Inside
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According to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, China has embraced AI with open arms, with the value of its core AI industries exceeding 1.2 trillion yuan ($177 billion) last year, maintaining annual growth of more than 20 percent for several consecutive years.

Furthermore, the country is seeking to turn AI into real-world applications and a driver of economic growth.

In the first half of this year, the industrial output of AI-related sectors, including integrated circuit manufacturing and in-vehicle intelligent equipment manufacturing, grew more than 30 percent.

Long predicted that more individuals and small, specialized companies that use AI to perform work that previously required much larger organizations will emerge to become new drivers of the economy.

"Success should ultimately be judged not by model rankings or investment valuations, but by whether AI really improves people's lives," he added.

Efforts to push AI beyond chatbots and benchmark rankings into the physical economy include China's "AI Plus" initiative, which seeks to embed AI in manufacturing, finance, healthcare, energy and public services.

*See **AI,** page 3*

Evolution of airspace ecosystem needed now

WORLD WATCH
By Simon Hocquard

Imagine a morning a few years from now: a drone lifts off carrying a life-saving organ for an urgent transplant, another drone delivers a parcel across the city, and above them, an air taxi takes two passengers to the airport. They all share the same slice of sky over the city, and they do so safely.

The question is, who makes sure they stay out of each other's way?

The answer lies not in a single technology, but in the evolution of the entire airspace ecosystem that enables all aircraft to operate safely together.

The low-altitude economy has arrived faster than many anticipated. Delivery drones are already flying in several countries, and large-scale drone operations are emerging in many regions. Electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft, the vehicles many people call air taxis, are close to entering service. The vehicles are here, the demand is real, and much of the technology is proven.

When discussing this future, people often focus on the aircraft. That is understandable as they are new and visible. However, in my view, the aircraft are the easier part. The more difficult challenge is how we can progressively evolve the airspace system to safely accommodate these new operations alongside today's aviation.

The low-altitude economy offers real rewards. These aircraft can ease pressure on congested city roads, deliver urgent medical supplies, and reach communities that are hard to serve today.

*See **Airspace,** page 3*

INSIDE
A road out of middle-income trap
Global Views, page 8



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JIANGMEN TAKES THE ESPRESSO LANE TO SUCCESS

From plantations to percolators, Guangdong city is positioning itself as one-stop coffee hub

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou
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A staff member makes iced Americano at a coffee shop in Jiangmen, Guangdong province, on May 25. WANG RUIPING / XINHUA

The air over Jiangmen, a coastal city in western Guangdong province, has traditionally been filled with the fresh scent of dried tangerine peel, a culinary and medicinal favorite among the Cantonese.

However, for a long time, this has been fused with the aroma of a more Western remedy to ease the trials of modern life — roasting coffee beans.

It is believed that the first coffee beans arrived in a suitcase brought by Chinese expatriates as early as the 1860s, when Jiangmen people who ventured overseas returned from Southeast Asia and North America with their suitcases filled with coffee beans and brewing equipment.

The aroma has lingered over the city since, thanks to the booming coffee industry of the past few decades. Over the years, Jiangmen, the hometown of more than 4 million overseas Chinese, has developed into one of China's major industrial bases for coffee, even though no coffee beans were originally produced there.

While it is estimated that there are now more than 2,000 cafes in Jiangmen, the city stands out amid China's coffee landscape for much more.

Building on its strong manufacturing capabilities and the open-mindedness inherent in the globe-trotting history of its people, the city has developed a comprehensive industrial chain.

China Vibes — FOOD —

The thriving coffee business, from bean trading and intelligent roasting to precision manufacturing, has received strong support.

More than 300 varieties of specialty coffee beans, imported from major producing countries and regions including Brazil, Ethiopia and Colombia, with an annual import value exceeding 30 million yuan ($4.4 million), pass through Jiangmen. The city has also developed over 350 coffee equipment and accessory companies.

According to a white paper released earlier this year by local commerce and industrial authorities, approximately 40 percent of China's stainless steel coffee-making equipment and one in five exported coffee machines are produced in Jiangmen.

Liu Youliang, founder of Guangdong Cino Technology, a leading manufacturer of capsule coffee machines, has seen firsthand the growth of Jiangmen's coffee industry.

When Liu started his coffee machine business, the demand for coffee in commercial settings, such as office buildings and hotels, was rapidly increasing.

At that time, the domestic market for capsule coffee machines was virtually nonexistent. However, such machines were already well-established in international markets.

Starting with imitation and developing the country's first homegrown commercial capsule coffee machine, Liu's company, after 18 years, now holds over 300 patents and exports products to more than 90 countries and regions. "Making coffee machines is not just about creating electrical appliances — fundamentally, it's about brewing great coffee," said Liu.

The company has already established a production base of more than 20,000 square meters in Jiangmen, where over 500,000 capsule coffee machines are developed and produced annually.

According to Liu, investment from the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, due to their geographic proximity, has greatly helped advance the development of Jiangmen's coffee industry.

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INDEPTH

By **LU WANQING** in Hong Kong
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Young world champion Wu Yize trod familiar path to global prominence

Wu Yize holds the championship trophy as his parents wrap a Chinese flag around his shoulders during the awards ceremony after his victory over England's Shaun Murphy in the World Snooker Championship final round at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield in England on May 4. DARREN STAPLES / AFP

Shooting stars — why GBA is China's snooker hub





Left: Wu Yize demonstrates his cue work at a billiards venue during an interview with China Daily in Hong Kong in June. ADAM LAM / CHINA DAILY
Right: Young trainees at the Guangdong branch of the Chinese Billiards and Snooker Association World Snooker Academy take part in one of their daily practice sessions. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

He was just a small boy, "a little taller than the snooker table", and had been handling a cue for a few years — but he already had his life mapped out.

It was more than a decade ago, and Wu Yize was watching the television broadcast of the final of the Snooker World Championship final at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, England.

Thousands of miles away, young Wu was having his own imaginary victory ceremony. "That's what I want," Wu told himself, "I'll stand there too."

In May, Wu's boyhood promise to himself was fulfilled when he won the world championship at the tender age of 22 in the same venue.

The talent pipeline that delivered him from makeshift tables to the pinnacle of the sport has parachuted a generation of Chinese snooker professionals onto the global tour.

The place where young Wu began his full-time pursuit of a snooker career, as well as the national base for professional youth development, is South China's Guangdong province. Its neighboring regions have also played an important role in the sport's development.

Wu spent several years at various training facilities in several Guangdong cities including Dongguan, widely referred to as China's premier "snooker hub".

The official figures don't lie. Over 70 percent of China's professional snooker players have trained in the city at some stage. For aspiring professionals age under 21, that proportion climbs to 90 percent.

Long way to the top

Wu's path to the pinnacle of the sport was a circuitous one that started at his hometown of Lanzhou, a city best known for its beef noodles, in Gansu province.

He began playing snooker at a young age, initially under the guidance of his father, who later sold his business to support his son's career.

The young prodigy was later mentored in several cities in Guangdong. One of his childhood coaches, UK-born Roger Leighton, remembers him as a "funny and cheeky" 11-year-old kid.

"He was always laughing and giggling and he's still a bit like that now," Leighton said in an interview with Metro UK.

"But he's more serious because obviously now he's at the top, at the business end. He's not the complete player yet, but he's getting there."

Wu's childhood memories are of the sheer joy snooker brought him. "I loved it straight away," he said in an interview with China Daily.

"My dad was into it (at that time), and the first time I tried it, I just enjoyed playing. When I first picked up a cue, I could set up properly and hit a ball. I think my dad, back then, thought that I had a bit of a feel for it."

His parents made multiple sacrifices to help his career.

There were "so many things — my dad buying me my first cue, for example; my parents believing in me, supporting me, letting me give up school to go down this path. It wasn't one big thing — it was every single day, building up over time", he explained.

He moved to Sheffield at age 16 with his father. At first it was hard, he conceded.

"Suddenly, being in a new country, a new life, and (with) new challenges, it was tough," Wu said.

"The place we stayed in had no separate bedroom. The living room and kitchen were all one space — the bed was right next to the kitchen. It was tiny, no windows, no ventilation. I shared a bed with my dad."

When asked if the austere living conditions dulled his passion for the sport, Wu replied: "No, not at all. If anything, it helped me. It made me more resilient when things got difficult."

One of the toughest decisions he made was becoming a full-time player when he was a teenager. Wu earned a two-year professional tour card for the 2021–22 and 2022–23 seasons, turning pro at the age of 17 and being named Rookie of the Year in 2022.

Wu told China Daily he discussed the proposition with his parents. "But to be honest, I didn't really have a deep understanding back then (about what going full-time would mean). I was young, I just knew I wanted to play, and I was excited. I didn't think too far ahead about the future. But I did talk to them about it."

"They told me I could only choose one path. And if I chose this, I had to do it properly. They said I needed to think it through and take responsibility for my own life."

Generation next

Wu represents the new young face of the sport, according to Feng Huanhuan, chief executive officer of F-Sports Promotions.

Her company has organized the annual World Grand Prix in Hong Kong since 2025, and opened the Hong Kong Billiard Sports Academy at Hong Kong's Kai Tak Sports Park.

She believes Wu is a player whose character traits and career represent two decades of the maturation of China's professional snooker players.

The trend started with Chinese snooker pioneer Ding Junhui, who sprung to prominence on the world stage in 2005 by winning the China Open at age 18.

The focus of Chinese snooker's youth training system, is no longer a question of quantity, but one concerning "the sustainability of the careers it churns out".

Ding began formal training at 9 years old. Wu — the first world champion born after 2000 — started around age 7. In 2012, at age 8, he had already shared an exhibition stage with Stephen Hendry, the seven-time world champion, in Lanzhou.

Feng first saw Wu compete in 2025, when he was invited to the inaugural Grand Prix as one of the world's top 32 players.

By then, the just-finished HKBSA was open to players for warm-ups, and Wu was the first to step inside. "From dawn to dusk, he practiced, skipping dinner, asking only if he could come again tomorrow," she said.

She said Wu has "a love for the game — raw, sincere", possesses "natural talent", and has "youth, stamina, a strong work ethic, and mental resilience", all essential qualities for a top player. Moreover, he came up the "hard, but, very representative" way.

Huang Zhufeng, president of the Dongguan Billiards & Snooker Association, is well aware of the risks and rewards young players face in turning professional.

He said Wu came to him in the summer of 2019, asking to shoot practice frames against world-class professionals who used Dongguan as a pre-competition training base before heading to major events across the Chinese mainland.

Huang also oversees the CBSA (Chinese Billiards and Snooker Association) World Snooker Academy's Guangdong branch. He estimates that Dongguan has more than 70 long-term training facilities, with over 500 full-time trainees aged 8 to 21.

Tough decisions

Wu remembers the fraught conversations at home when he chose to drop out of middle school to pursue a professional snooker career.

"My parents argued over it," he said, matter-of-factly.

"They wanted me to be certain. They didn't want to saddle me with a difficult life if it didn't work out."

Feng said in the end, very few young players break through to become champions. "Most of these kids will never win a title — so what happens to them?" she said.

She said both parents and the young players themselves need to understand the risks of going pro.

"Outside of the specialized snooker training, I believe there's a lot of room to build better academic support for these players," Feng said.

Huang said that Dongguan is now working to have billiards recognized under the local sports-education integration mechanism.

That designation, if granted, would allow young billiard players to stay enrolled in school while devoting themselves to intensive training — a safety net that most aspiring young professionals in China currently need.

Huang added that a professional snooker career in China today does not necessarily have to result in a world ranking. There are other ways to stay in the sport.

As snooker programs spread into schools, former trainees can study for a state-issued social sports instructor certificate and teach in classrooms. Or they can go through the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association's coaching tiers or the CBSA's certification process and run a local billiards club.

"There's a real shortage of grassroots coaches and referees in Chinese billiards," Huang said. In Dongguan, he noted, a coach at a typical billiard club can expect a monthly income of 15,000 ($2,220) to 20,000 yuan.

Huang's longer-term vision for Chinese snooker balances elite development with a broader push to draw more people to "just play it for fun", bring snooker into more schools as a regular activity, and establish a contest pyramid that gives both the hobbyists and professionals a rung to reach.

Southern strengths

Within China's multi-pronged approach to snooker development, Huang is confident that the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area will remain at its core.

What sets the region apart, he said, is not only its head start in the sport but its concentration of training resources thanks to the ever-greater cross-border movement of people, investment, and expertise.

Vincent Law Wing-chung, who chairs the Billiard Sports Council of Hong Kong China, shares that perspective, and said GBA cities are complementary across player and coach exchanges, training, event hosting, equipment manufacturing, and commercial strategy.

Hong Kong is the region's essential link to the international snooker circuit, but the mainland's well-appointed youth training infrastructure has also increasingly rebounded to the city's benefit, he said.

In 2024, seven-time world champion Ronnie O'Sullivan and top English player Judd Trump both secured Hong Kong residency. By June 2025, former world champion Neil Robertson had also announced he had done the same.

Law disclosed that more top players are currently pursuing Hong Kong residency.

Huang said Dongguan's expertise in the sport and well-equipped venues have made it a premier destination for visiting snooker teams. Hong Kong players, he noted, have been joined in Dongguan by those from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Germany, Belgium, Thailand, and elsewhere.

Hong Kong is well-suited for high-end, smaller-scale international tournaments, Law said, whereas larger ones are already being hosted by mainland cities.

In May, the Dongguan Changping Snooker Center opened and hosted the World Women's Snooker Championship. In June, the Dongguan Humen Convention and Exhibition Center staged the World Team Snooker Championship, the sport's premier global amateur team event. A Chinese team made history by clinching the title for the first time.

Huang said the GBA also plays a key role in the global billiard equipment trade.

While equipment manufacturers are centered in Jiangxi province's Yushan and Hebei province's Bazhou — the commercial gateway to markets worldwide is in Guangdong and Hong Kong, funneling products to markets worldwide.

According to the China Customs, Dongguan exported 22.07 million yuan of billiards equipment in the first three months of 2026, up 29.7 percent from the same quarter the year before.

Recent data from the CBSA showed that there are 245 million people actively playing cue sports in China and over 200,000 venues, with 550,000 enterprises feeding into the ecosystem.

"Billiards is now the sport with the highest degree of marketization in China," said Feng.



A young trainee at the Guangdong branch of the CBSA World Snooker Academy takes part in one of his daily practice sessions. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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TOP NEWS

China sets records with new self-unloading vessel

By **ZHAO LEI** in Yangzhou, Jiangsu
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China State Shipbuilding Corp, the world's largest listed shipbuilder in terms of production capacity, delivered on Tuesday a self-unloading bulk carrier custom-built for a landmark project off the coast of Guinea in West Africa, noting that the vessel sets several records in its class.

The *Wontanara*, built by CSSC Chengxi Shipyard for global mining giant Rio Tinto and boasting a cargo capacity of 41,800 metric tons, has achieved three industrial milestones. It is the world's largest deadweight shallow-water transshipment self-unloader, the fastest self-unloading vessel ever made and the world's first self-unloader with bidirectional sailing capability in its tonnage class.

A self-unloader — also known as a self-discharger — is a ship capable of unloading its cargo using onboard equipment, without relying on shore-based cranes, mechanical grabs or conveyor systems.

The *Wontanara*, which was delivered at the shipyard's Yangzhou facility in Jiangsu province, measures 215 meters in length, 42 meters in beam width and 14.5 meters in molded depth, and has a cargo hold capacity of 29,000 cubic meters.

The vessel, powered by a full diesel-electric propulsion system, completed a 12-day trial in the East China Sea between late June and early July.

The CSSC said in a statement that the ship's delivery marks a major step in China's transition from a follower to a global leader in the high-end self-unloading transshipment vessel sector.

Zhang Xinlong, general manager of CSSC Chengxi Shipyard, said that Rio Tinto has ordered five such self-dischargers, with the *Wontanara* being the first. "The vessel's construction started in May last year, and the 14-month delivery cycle has underscored Chengxi's robust research and manufacturing strength," he said, noting that the model features a high level of automation with a small crew. "For example, steering maneuvers can be executed by a single operator using several control levers."

The second self-discharger is expected to be delivered in October, and all five are scheduled for handover by next summer, Zhang added.

The five vessels will operate off the coast of Guinea, serving as the main transshipment equipment for the Simandou iron ore project. They will shuttle ore from shallow-water terminals to large ocean-going bulk carriers anchored in deep waters.

Jiang Minghua, chief designer of the *Wontanara*, said it is equipped with two independent lifting systems with a combined unloading rate of 12,000 tons per hour.

Before its debut, the world's fastest self-discharger — a vessel converted by CSSC Chengxi Shipyard — had an unloading capacity of about 7,000 tons per hour.

According to Jiang, 41,800 tons of iron ore would fill almost 700 standard railway freight cars, stretching more than 7 kilometers, and yet, the vessel can unload a full cargo in under 3.5 hours.

"Working in rotation, the five ships can complete full transshipment and loading for a 200,000-ton ocean-going bulk carrier within 24 hours, minimizing anchorage time for large transportation vessels and effectively increasing mine output," he said.

To date, the shipyard has repaired, converted and built nearly 100 self-dischargers, giving it the world's most comprehensive product portfolio and the largest global market share in the sector.

Online
See more by scanning the code.



The *Wontanara*, a world-class self-unloading vessel built by China State Shipbuilding Corp Chengxi Shipyard, is seen during its sea trial. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Narcotics control



Staff members sort confiscated narcotics and precursor chemicals for destruction on Tuesday on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. According to the country's Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sar Sokha, 5.62 metric tons of illegal drugs and precursor chemicals with an estimated value of $500 million were destroyed during the operation. HENG SINITH / AP

Policy boost lifts hopes of A-share market rebound

Buybacks by major firms and more equity investment by insurers bolster confidence

By **SHI JING** in Shanghai
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China's long-term economic and technological trajectory remains intact despite recent market volatility, and expectations of stronger policy support are boosting investor confidence and improving the outlook for a rebound in the A-share market, analysts said.

Confidence has also been reinforced by coordinated market-support actions. A number of centrally administered State-owned enterprises have unveiled share buyback or stake-increase plans in recent days. At the same time, leading insurers have announced plans to increase equity investments in technology, advanced manufacturing and other strategic sectors, adding to expectations of stronger long-term capital inflows.

On Tuesday, the market responded positively to the recent developments. After sliding nearly 6 percent since the beginning of July, the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index rose 1.79 percent, with technology shares leading the recovery. The ChiNext Index in Shenzhen surged 7.05 percent and the STAR 50 Index in Shanghai jumped 10.73 percent.

Wu Qing, chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, underscored that efforts will be made to secure market stability.

Addressing a symposium with investors on Monday, Wu said that a comprehensive set of measures, including risk surveillance, countercyclical regulation, quality enhancement of listed companies, rigorous law enforcement and introduction of medium- and long-term capital into the market, will be deployed to resolutely prevent any major market swings.

Between Sunday and Monday, multiple State-owned enterprises, including Aluminum Corp of China, SDIC Power and China National Coal Group Corp, announced buyback or stake-increase plans.

Since the beginning of July, nearly 300 companies have completed share repurchases totaling more than 15 billion yuan ($2.2 billion), while major shareholders of nearly 120 listed companies recorded net increases in their stakes.

Industry giants are leading the buyback wave. Consumer electronics makers Midea, TCL and Haier together repurchased nearly 4.9 billion yuan worth of shares. Tech heavyweights such as ZTE and iSoftStone have also implemented their buyback plans.

Meanwhile, two State-owned capital platforms — China Reform Holdings and China Chengtong Holdings — increased their holding of A shares and will continue to buy more by using their own funds and a central bank lending facility, providing strong liquidity support to the market.

According to Tian Lihui, a professor of finance at Nankai University, the recent market swings, which are irrational short-term sell-offs, have resulted in a deviation between price and fundamentals. The buybacks will anchor core-asset pricing, stabilize overall market expectations and help direct the capital to technology innovation in the long run, he said.

Song Xuetao, chief economist at Sinolink Securities, explained that this round of global stock market jitters has been triggered by overseas market volatility. The recent decline in A shares is thus a result of overseas risk contagion and trading-level disturbances.

"China's growth logic and industrial development trend remain unchanged," he said.

Xun Yugen, chief economist at Guosen Securities, said that the recent A-share market volatility is an adjustment amid a bullish trend. It is by no means an end to a stock market bull run, he added.

According to Liu Chenming, chief strategist at GF Securities, positive factors are accumulating in the A-share market, including the inflow of incremental capital from exchange-traded funds, improving profitability of companies proved by their interim results, and the upward momentum in emerging industries.

During the trading week ending Friday, the net capital inflow into broad-based ETFs totaled 152.5 billion yuan, the third-highest amount since the latest bull run started in September 2024.

About 1,700 A-share companies have released interim earnings previews so far, with 43 percent delivering positive results. The positive rate is significantly higher among tech-focused companies, with 88 percent of STAR Market companies and 79 percent of ChiNext-listed ones reporting positive results. Artificial intelligence-related sectors and resources led the gains, market tracker Wind Information said.

Tao Chuan, chief economist at Guolian Minsheng Securities, said the steady stream of positive AI developments, best represented by the World AI Conference held in Shanghai and the standout performance of the recently released Kimi K3 model, confirms that the country's tech sector is rapidly realizing its high-growth trajectory.

The underlying narrative of China's economic recovery and the ascent of its tech sector remains intact, paving the way for market stabilization, a potential rebound and continued structural opportunities among A shares, he said.

Major insurers such as Ping An, the People's Insurance Company of China, China Pacific Insurance Co and New China Life announced on Monday their plans to increase equity investments in tech, advanced manufacturing and value assets.

Meng Lei, UBS Securities China equity strategist, reaffirmed that technology and AI will remain the core investment themes for the rest of 2026. Apart from strong earnings growth, the sectors will be supported by marginal net inflows from ETFs, active mutual funds, margin financing and private equity, he said.

AI: Industrial depth to help lower costs overseas

From page 1

President Xi also said in his speech that China should facilitate technological innovation, industrial development and "scenario-based application of AI".

Huo Fupeng, director of the innovation-driven development center of the National Development and Reform Commission, said that "China is leveraging its complete industrial system, enormous range of application scenarios and super-sized market to accelerate AI's deployment across thousands of industries".

"Its dense industrial supply chains and vast domestic market give developers an environment in which technologies can be tested, refined and deployed at scale," he said.

Data from Counterpoint Research showed that approximately 16,000 humanoid robots were deployed globally in 2025, with China accounting for more than 80 percent of them.

At the World AI Conference, Chinese robotics company PrimeBOT unveiled a new, transformable robot that is capable of switching between quadruped and humanoid forms.

Tian Hua, CEO of leading materials maker Swancor Advanced Materials Co and head of PrimeBOT, said: "The robotics supply chain comprises more than 1,600 components. At least 1,000 companies are capable of building a robot globally, but only a handful can manufacture 10,000 robots at consistent quality and scale."

"That's China's advantage — transforming personal robots from custom-built machines into mass-produced consumer products," he said. "We are also confident of making such robots really affordable for ordinary people."

Such industrial depth could also help lower the cost of AI products for overseas users. While global attention has focused on Western technology companies competing for lucrative enterprise contracts in the United States and the Middle East, Chinese companies are promoting open-source products across developing countries.

Alex Zhavoronkov, founder and CEO of AI-driven drug discovery company Insilico Medicine, said China's emphasis on open-source development will amplify those gains internationally.

"China is already leading the world in the open-source model," he said.

"The Chinese approach and its AI policies are paving the way for the entire industry, and everyone on the planet will benefit."

Cafes: Jiangmen integrates tradition into coffee drinks

From page 1

"Brands from Hong Kong and Macao have brought not only capital, technology and an international perspective, but also the first cohort of professional talent," he said.

According to Liang Fan, world latte art champion and a promoter of Jiangmen coffee culture, the city does not shy away from tradition.

"Almost every coffee shop has its own signature drink. They usually incorporate traditional ingredients in a modern way," said Liang.

Now, in a bold move, Jiangmen is exploring the possibility of producing its own coffee from scratch.

The local government plan revealed that coffee plantations have been established on nearby Tianlu Mountain, where more than 90,000 coffee plants have been cultivated as part of a trial.

How about locally produced beans, brewed in locally made machines and served by a local barista? For caffeine-loving tourists, Jiangmen would be the perfect place to enjoy a great cup of coffee.

Airspace: Shared digital information emphasized

From page 1

But those benefits are possible only if the flights are safe. And safety at this scale is a question of the system, not of a single aircraft.

Let me explain. Today's airspace was designed for a different kind of flying. It relies on flight rules written decades ago and on air traffic controllers speaking directly to pilots. That approach has kept aviation safe and works well for a modest number of crewed aircraft moving in predictable ways.

Low-altitude flying is different. Drones, air taxis and increasingly automated aircraft vary widely in speed, size and operational capability, and they are expected in far greater numbers. A city might see thousands of low-altitude flights in a day. To safely accommodate this unprecedented scale and complexity, the traditional framework must be augmented by advanced digital tools and automated oversight mechanisms.

So, what needs to change? I would highlight three shifts.

First, we need to move from voice and radar toward shared digital information. When every operator has the same trusted, real-time picture of the sky, coordination becomes easier, and much of it can be automated. Controllers will move from steering each flight to overseeing the system and intervening where human judgment adds the greatest value.

Second, the airspace itself needs to be managed more flexibly. For decades, we relied on fixed rules and boundaries. A digital system can adapt in real time to each aircraft's capabilities, how busy the sky is, and the level of risk involved. This allows the airspace to accommodate more traffic while maintaining the highest levels of safety. Putting safety first does not mean clinging to older systems. It means embracing new solutions that effectively improve safety while enabling innovation.

Third, this transformation must be global and gradual. An aircraft should not stop working the moment it crosses a border. If every country develops its own rules, technologies and operating concepts independently, operators will face a fragmented, more complex, more expensive and ultimately less safe system.

Global standards need to be agreed upon and then implemented locally at a pace that reflects each region's operational needs and level of maturity. Shared standards are what make any network work; roads and the internet are no different. This is precisely the kind of challenge where countries can learn from one another, including the rapid progress now being made across the Asia-Pacific region.

None of this is theory, and no one is doing it alone. The International Civil Aviation Organization is leading the development of the global framework for advanced air mobility, providing the common vision needed for states and the industry to evolve together. The industry is contributing through the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation's Complete Air Traffic System Global Council, which brings together more than 80 organizations to help shape the evolution of air traffic management.

Our CATS Concept of Operations describes how today's airspace can progressively evolve toward future skies — a seamless, increasingly digital, collaborative and automated ecosystem in which crewed and uncrewed aircraft operate safely together. Alongside the CONOPS, the CATS Global Council is developing practical guidance on automation, safety, change management, advanced air mobility and implementation support to help turn this vision into reality.

This is where I am optimistic. The ambition is there, the expertise is there, and the solutions are within reach. But technology alone will not deliver this future. Success will also depend on collaboration, thoughtful regulation, operational innovation and the people who will manage this transformation.

A lot of work lies ahead, but our industry can do it — and do it well. When we picture the low-altitude economy, let us not stop at the aircraft. The drones and the air taxis will continue to improve. Whether they become a safe and trusted part of everyday life will be determined by the airspace ecosystem beneath them. At CANSO, that is exactly what we are helping to build: the foundations for Future Skies, where every airspace user can operate safely, efficiently and sustainably. Get that right, and the sky becomes a safe new layer of transport for everyone.

The author is the former chair of the Network Management Board on behalf of the European Commission and is now the president and CEO of the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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ASIAFOCUS

Editor's note:

In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.



Wind turbines stand atop hills in southern Laos on Nov 17. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ENERGY WAKE-UP CALL

SE Asia needs bold steps to boost power generation, cut fuel imports: IEA

A regional electricity grid, nuclear power and ramping up renewables and electric vehicles are among the ways Southeast Asia could boost energy security while also meeting rising energy demand, the head of the International Energy Agency said in June.

The energy crisis triggered by the war in Iran has highlighted just how exposed Southeast Asia is to costly energy imports and the need for urgent, bold steps to shield the region from future shocks, IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol told The Straits Times.

The region is at an inflection point and what it decides now on energy policies will have a profound impact not only on its future but the rest of the world, Birol said on the eve of the release of the IEA's Southeast Asia Energy Outlook 2026 report.

The region remains heavily dependent on fossil fuels, the burning of which is driving climate change and causing more extreme weather, such as storms and floods, that threaten key infrastructure, including power plants, the report says.

"Southeast Asia is at the forefront of the impact of the current energy crisis," Birol said. "I think countries are now putting energy security very high on the agenda, and they are looking at domestic sources of energy generation as much as possible.

"In my view, the biggest winners here will be renewables and nuclear power, and also electric cars because of different factors, but including the cost advantage and the unparalleled energy security benefits."

And an ASEAN Power Grid, long planned but yet to be achieved, would build cross-border electricity interconnections, help balance supply and demand, integrate renewable resources, and lower costs for participating countries, Birol said.

"In my view, this is a no-brainer. There are some political challenges to overcome, and I believe the current crisis will help overcome these political difficulties. And my recent discussions with the government leaders in the region have made me hopeful in this respect," he added.

Challenges include harmonizing power trading across 11 different grids in each of the 11 ASEAN nations, establishing agreements allowing connections with other nations and overcoming technical barriers, such as transmission/distribution voltages and operating standards.

If achieved, a regional grid could help propel economic growth in a region that is home to nearly 700 million people and one of the world's fastest-growing economic areas. The region is set to account for 20 percent of the growth in the world's energy demand over the next decade, ranking second only to India.

But as the region grows, so do its fuel import bill and vulnerability to energy shocks. The Middle East accounts for 60 percent of the region's crude oil imports, and almost half of the oil products that are refined or consumed in Southeast Asia come from Middle East crude oil, the IEA said.

The region has also become increasingly dependent on liquefied natural gas imports, while coal remains central for power generation in most countries in the region.



A data center is seen under construction in Johor, Malaysia, in 2024. VINCENT THIAN / AP



Workers install solar modules in Purwakarta, West Java, Indonesia, on April 17, 2025. MAST IRHAM / EPA

> "Southeast Asia is at the forefront of the impact of the current energy crisis ... I think countries are now putting energy security very high on the agenda, and they are looking at domestic sources of energy generation as much as possible."
>
> **Fatih Birol,** executive director of International Energy Agency

$600 billion

Southeast Asia will need over the next decade to build power plants and to expand and modernize the grid, according to IEA.

That means Southeast Asia remains exposed to future shocks, underscoring the need to diversify fuel sources and focus on domestic energy.

The region's energy import bill is projected to reach $160 billion this year, a record high, and is likely to keep on increasing, potentially rising to $400 billion, or 5 percent of the region's economy, by midcentury based on current policies, the IEA forecasts.

Policies prioritizing cleaner sources of energy, electrification of transport, energy efficiency and grid investments could reduce this risk, the agency said.

Key driver

A key driver of the region's hunger for energy is rising electricity demand, which is growing twice as fast as overall energy use. In the next 10 years, the region will add the equivalent of Japan's total power generation, Birol said.

Demand in the region is coming from the rapid uptake of electric vehicles — one in five new cars is an EV — data centers, industrial and urban expansion, and air conditioners. The number of residential air conditioners in the region is set to triple by 2035.

Birol said the region will need about $600 billion over the next decade to build power plants and to expand and modernize the grid, underscoring an immense financing challenge ahead.

Transmission and distribution networks need to more than double in length by 2050 to keep pace with rising demand and to cope with the addition of more wind and solar energy, the report notes. Investment in grids and storage, such as battery storage, needs to ramp up from $13 billion in 2026 to $50 billion in 2050.

About $27 billion will be needed by 2040 to realize planned cross-border interconnections under the ASEAN Power Grid.

The agency notes that nuclear could become a key growth area for power generation by midcentury. Nuclear deployment could meet almost 10 percent of electricity demand growth by 2050 if announced government targets are achieved. But this will depend on accelerating deployment and reining in long construction lead times and costs.

Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines have announced plans to commission nuclear reactors, with the first units scheduled to come online after 2030. Singapore is carefully investigating if nuclear energy is suitable for the country and is working with the International Atomic Energy Agency on a detailed review starting in 2027.

Increasing electrification of transport, homes and industry is also a key area for the region's governments to focus on. Boosting renewable energy investment, battery storage and regional grid interconnections can cut fuel import bills while boosting regional resilience, the IEA said.

Renewable energy capacity is projected to nearly triple by 2035 under current policy settings or grow fivefold if announced targets are achieved.

Solar deployment has already increased this year: The Philippines became the second-largest destination for Chinese solar exports in the first quarter of 2026, with imports around three times higher than in 2025.

Birol expressed optimism about more rapid change in the region, attributing it to the impact of the Iran war.

He pointed to the rapid changes that occurred in Europe because of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Before the conflict, Russia supplied about 40 percent of Europe's energy. Now, it is a fraction of that.

He said wind and solar installations in Europe have increased by a factor of three and nuclear power is now back on the energy agenda of many European countries.

"I expect this will be the same in Asia, especially in Southeast Asia," he said.

THE STRAITS TIMES, SINGAPORE

South Korea begins soccer reform after World Cup fallout

SEOUL — The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of South Korea launched the K-Football Innovation Committee in early July, appointing former national team player and current member of FIFA's standing committee Park Ji-sung and (South) Korean Sport & Olympic Committee, or KSOC, President Ryu Seung-min as its cochairs.

Holding its inaugural meeting in Seoul in early July, the K-Football Innovation Committee was attended by 10 members.

This list included Culture Minister Chae Hwi-young, Vice-Minister Kim Dae-hyun, Secretary General of the (South) Korean Professional Football League Cho Yeon-sang, and several former soccer players among others.

Culture Minister Chae, who had initially been expected to serve as cochair, said he would step aside and appoint Ryu in his place to ensure the committee's independence from the government.

"With Ryu and Park, the K-Football Innovation Committee would encourage football figures and sports expertise to lead the conversation while the government provides support from behind to build the future of (South) Korean football," said Chae.

The committee comes in response to widespread criticism of the (South) Korea Football Association after South Korea's 34th-place finish at the World Cup.

South Korea opened Group A with a 2-1 win over the Czech Republic but then lost 1-0 to Mexico and 1-0 to South Africa, finishing third and failing to qualify for the round of 32 as one of the eight best third-placed teams.

The expanded 48-team tournament had raised expectations that South Korea would reach the knockout stage, with local media labeling the squad a "golden generation" headlined by former Tottenham Hotspur forward Son Heung-min, Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Lee Kang-in and Bayern Munich defender Kim Min-jae.

The South Africa defeat became the flash point, and team coach Hong Myung-bo was criticized for leaving Son out of the starting lineup, bringing him on at half-time with the score at 0-0.

He later said he had planned to use him when South Africa tired, but that he would do things differently had he known how the match would turn out.

Following South Korea's exit at the World Cup, President Lee Jae-myung said on June 28 on the X platform that he was "utterly baffled" by the elimination, blaming it on personnel decisions.

He said factionalism or loyalty had been prioritized over competence, and asked the sports ministry to investigate and propose measures to prevent a recurrence.

Hong resigned shortly after South Korea was eliminated from the World Cup, saying the responsibility rests with him.

Fans booed Hong at the airport when the team arrived in Seoul on June 29, while applauding the players. Some held banners saying: "South Korean football is dead."

'Time for change'

The culture minister said that a committee comprising prominent figures from the sports community will be established to examine the causes of South Korea's disappointing performance.

Park said the result showed that it was time for change.

"(South) Korean football has had its ups and downs, but always did its best. The recent World Cup games proved that things have to change," he said.

"I am grateful to be a part of the first steps to a positive change. I am a former soccer player, and for that I have the responsibility as a footballer to see how the innovations should be made, not only from a player's perspective, but also by considering if our discussed solutions are applicable," he added.

> "The recent World Cup games proved that things have to change ... I am a former soccer player, and for that I have the responsibility as a footballer to see how the innovations should be made."
>
> **Park Ji-sung,** member of the FIFA Men's Football Stakeholders Committee and a former South Korean soccer player

Another cochair Ryu stressed that neither his involvement nor the KSOC's would affect personnel issues or how the national team operates.

"My role is to seek ways for (South) Korean sports to move forward. The committee will listen to what the sports experts have to share so that the public can applaud and encourage (South) Korea Football Association and the players," he said.

The committee will serve on a temporary basis until a new executive board of KFA is established.

The committee was officially launched hours after Chung Mong-gyu, national football chief, stepped down after 13 and a half years at the helm.

Chung had announced in May that he would resign after the FIFA World Cup, but did not specify when he would leave.

Chung appears to have brought forward his resignation following South Korea's earlier-than-expected group-stage exit from the World Cup and its aftermath, including head coach Hong's resignation.

THE KOREA HERALD — AGENCIES

Farmers' fury



Nepal's farmers dump tomatoes in the street of Kathmandu on July 15. The farmers expressed dissatisfaction with the government's agricultural policies, accusing the government of failing to provide adequate subsidies and ensure fair prices for agricultural products. NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

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WORLD

Stiff resistance



Demonstrators clash with police in Bologna, Italy, on Monday. The crowd gathered to protest the death of Abderrahim Fakir, a Moroccan-born local business owner who died on Sunday following a police restraint during an attempted arrest for damaging a vehicle. MICHELE LAPINI / REUTERS

Hegseth: war in Iran has cost $37.5 b

Senators question accuracy of casualty numbers, citing need for transparency

By SHI GUANG
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At a Senate budget hearing on Tuesday, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth estimated that the war with Iran has cost $37.5 billion.

During a hearing of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Capitol Hill, Hegseth said the $37.5 billion was not only for the cost of military equipment used, and included expenses such as meals.

The hearing was to consider a request for supplemental funding of around $67 billion for the war, which Hegseth said was an "urgent, necessary injection of resources", as well as $1.5 trillion for next year's military budget.

"Without these funds, we face critical shortfalls," Hegseth testified.

Democratic Senator Patty Murphy warned of "another forever war".

"This war is now spiraling out of control again," Murray said, adding that US President Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed that "a deal is near, and the war will be over soon. But now, he's asking for $70 billion more — and for us to just trust him it'll all work out fine."

Trump said on Tuesday that Iran "desperately" wants ceasefire talks, though the US has not cut back on daily attacks.

"We're not finished," Trump told reporters at the White House. "We're not leaving."

Trump said the US could soon hit Pickaxe Mountain, a hardened underground facility where it is believed Iran has moved the centrifuges required to make nuclear fuel, as well as its stockpiles of enriched uranium.

In a post on Tuesday, Trump compared the deaths of 17 US military personnel so far in Iran — and the zero deaths of US troops in the operation to illegally seize Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro — with fatalities in previous US wars: 2,000 in Afghanistan, 4,600 in Iraq, 58,220 in Vietnam and 36,574 in Korea.

However, some senators have questioned the casualty numbers in Iran, arguing the administration is not being transparent, and is hiding behind the claim of "operational security".

"The ceasefire collapsed. The war is escalating. American troops are paying the price. Iran knew it attacked our bases. The Pentagon knew our troops were wounded. The only people kept in the dark were the American people," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer.

Democratic Senator Tim Kane said the administration needs to provide better answers for the military deaths and the president's threats to widen the war, despite Congress voting to limits his powers in the Middle East.

"You better have a really good answer for that question. And as of right now, this war of choice that Donald Trump started, he cannot answer that question. Congress has definitively declared — both houses — that this war is illegal. Only we, in the Constitution, have that power. The president is ignoring us, even though that declaration was made by two Republican majority houses," Kaine said.

Brent oil futures settled above $90 on Tuesday, its first close above that threshold since June 11.

Hegseth said the US had been helping guide ships through the Strait of Hormuz, claiming they had "been in control of moving traffic" for some time.

"We pushed almost, I believe, between 400 and 500 million barrels of oil under the nose of Iran over the course of Project Freedom," Hegseth told the committee.

Trump also dismissed the threat by Houthi forces in Yemen to block transit in the Red Sea, which Saudi Arabia has been using as a partial alternative route to ship oil.

"If there is something like that, we'll just have to take care of business," Trump told reporters at the White House on Tuesday.

Fresh 50% US tariffs mount pressure on Canada

By YANG GAO in Toronto
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The latest US tariffs on certain Canadian goods are being viewed by experts as both a negotiating tactic and a shift in the US administration's legal strategy for pressuring Canada.

US President Donald Trump on Monday announced a new 50 percent tariff on certain Canadian goods, including wine, hockey sticks and cement.

The White House said the move was intended to address what it described as discriminatory Canadian trade policies, including restrictions on US alcohol sales, dairy supply management and automobile import quotas.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney condemned the move, calling it "the latest in a series of unilateral US trade actions" that began with Washington imposing tariffs "in direct violation" of the agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico.

"Canada stands ready to engage intensively to address outstanding issues with the US to the mutual benefit of our citizens," Carney said in a statement.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford urged Ottawa to respond forcefully.

Trade experts said the latest measures reflect both a shift in the legal tools employed by the Trump administration and a broader effort to increase pressure on Canada amid stalled trade negotiations.

Dave Townsend, a partner in Dorsey & Whitney LLP's International Trade Group, said the administration's latest action differs from earlier tariff measures.

"Today, the Trump administration announced tariffs on nearly $20 billion worth of annual imports from Canada under a different legal authority, Section 338. The tariffs would take effect 30 days from now. Why now against Canada?" Townsend said.

He said the timing appears closely linked to ongoing negotiations between Washington and Ottawa.

"The new potential tariffs on goods from Canada appear to be because Canada has thus far not agreed to a framework trade agreement with the United States.

"Thus, the higher tariffs for goods from Canada appear to be aimed at encouraging an agreement between Canada and the United States, or in retaliation for the failure to reach such an agreement, or both," Townsend said. He said the latest measures could further strain trade relations.

Cycle of escalation

"The question now is whether the two sides can reach such an agreement or whether a cycle of escalation and retaliation takes hold between the two countries," he said.

Ronald Stagg, a history professor at Toronto Metropolitan University, said the administration's latest move also marks a significant change in the legal basis for imposing tariffs.

"Having run into problems with duties imposed under 1974 and 1962 trade acts, Trump has now reached back to the 1930 act, which resulted in the deepening of the Great Depression, as other countries retaliated by raising tariffs," Stagg told China Daily.

Stagg said the announcement appeared to catch many in Canada by surprise.

"This seems to have come as a surprise to the Canadian government, and the media, which were focused on Trump's musings on the imposition of tariffs or other financial penalties on Canada for allowing smoke from wildfires to enter the United States," he said.

Only days before announcing the new tariffs, the Trump administration threatened additional financial penalties against Canada over wildfire smoke drifting across the border, accusing Canada of failing to properly manage its forests.

Stagg said the latest actions reflect a broader pattern in Trump's approach.

Looking ahead, Stagg said Canada's response will be critical.

"The question now is, will Canada retaliate, or will the Canadian government complain, but try not to poke the bear," he said.

Beijing hits back at Tokyo over drill

By JI HAISHENG
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China on Tuesday rejected Japan's claims about Chinese warships operating in waters near Okinotori during a joint exercise with Russia, saying the activities in the high seas are fully consistent with international law and global practice.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian made the remarks at a news conference in response to reports that Japan had lodged a protest alleging Chinese vessels entered "Japan's exclusive economic zone" during the drill, calling Tokyo's concerns groundless.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Okinotori is a rock rather than an island, and thus unfit to claim an exclusive economic zone or continental shelf, Lin said. "Japan's claim of an exclusive economic zone around Okinotori violates international law," he said.

Lin accused Japan of smearing other countries' legitimate and lawful operations, and peddling the so-called external threat as attempts to find excuses for accelerating remilitarization and challenging the postwar international order.

The international community must stay on high alert and jointly push back on this dangerous pursuit, he added.



'Whale-done' rescue

Rescue workers maneuver a sling through the water to transport a beluga whale at the shuttered Marineland theme park in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada, on Monday. This operation marks the beginning of a complex mission to relocate nearly three dozen whales from the park, which closed late last year, to new homes in the United States. CARLOS OSORIO / AP

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Hopes, doubts and demands as Burnham takes power



Xing Yi
Reporter's log

FIRST PERSON VIEW

By the time I arrived at Downing Street on Monday morning, the narrow street was already packed with journalists, photographers and broadcasters awaiting the transfer of power from Keir Starmer to Andy Burnham, the United Kingdom's seventh prime minister in a decade.

I had arrived three hours before Burnham's scheduled speech, but I was too late. A security guard told me every media position had been allocated last week. We were not getting in.

Outside the gates, the crowd continued to swell. Journalists without accreditation lingered in hope, protesters unfurled banners, and passersby paused for a glimpse of the new prime minister.

Then a question struck me: everyone inside would hear Burnham's speech, but who was listening to the people outside?

We turned our attention to the crowd, speaking not with politicians or officials, but with ordinary people who had come to witness Britain's latest change of leadership.

A retired landscape architect said he was there to campaign for the UK to rejoin the European Union.

"Because of Brexit, we've lost between 6 and 8 percent of GDP," he said. "We've got a new prime minister who has said he'd like us to rejoin the EU. We can persuade him to get on with it."

An artist displaying a satirical painting lamented the frequent leadership changes.

"I've seen many prime ministers, and it doesn't matter what they were doing — their policies need stability," he said. "Every one or two years we get a new prime minister, and that's not a good sign.

"The country is in a mess — socially, economically and politically — and is going downward. Someone has to stop that," he added.

Nearby, campaigners staged a symbolic performance. Wearing a cartoon mask of Burnham, one member used a long-handled brush to sweep the street as part of the "Clean Up Westminster" campaign.

The group's leader said they wanted to reduce the influence of money in politics.

"We are here to encourage the new prime minister to keep his promise to limit how much money any individual or organization can give to a political party," he said, referring to a recent investigation into an undisclosed $6.7 million donation linked to the leader of Reform UK.

Later, I met a couple from Suffolk, where Reform UK secured a major victory in May's local elections.

"We hope (Burnham) does a good job, but he's not elected," they said, adding that the change of Labour Party leader lacked a direct mandate from voters.

Their main concerns were immigration, the cost-of-living crisis and poverty. "We need a general election so people can have their say on whom they want as their prime minister," they said.

"So if there were a general election, would you vote for him?" I asked.

"No," the husband replied, before repeating, "No."

Afterward, I met another couple from Ashton-in-Makerfield, where Burnham won last month's by-election, securing the parliamentary seat that paved the way to No 10 Downing Street. Burnham defeated the second-placed Reform UK candidate by about 9,000 votes.

The wife said they had interacted with Burnham during the campaign because "he was there nearly every day".

"He's very humble, very down-to-earth, and he's very much for ordinary working-class people," she said. "He wants to improve social housing and things like that.

"We've got a lot of hopes for him."

In the end, I never made it inside Downing Street that morning.

But perhaps the story was only half told if it focused solely on the new prime minister's speech in front of the famous black door. The other half unfolded outside — in the hopes, frustrations, doubts and demands of ordinary Britons.

The author is a correspondent at China Daily Europe based in London.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Meeting presents Manila with opportunity to step in line with other ASEAN members

Manila has committed its latest provocative act in the South China Sea, just ahead of the China-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Manila on Wednesday, which Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is scheduled to attend.

Among Manila's many provocations, confrontations in the South China Sea between illegally intruding Philippine vessels and China Coast Guard boats carrying out enforcement operations have become a routine occurrence. Each dangerous encounter at sea exacerbates tensions and further strains bilateral relations.

What happened on Monday in waters near China's Ren'ai Reef is just one of many such perilous encounters. According to a CCG statement, two rubber boats from the Philippine ship BRP *Sierra Madre*, which Manila grounded on China's Ren'ai Reef in 1999 and has refused to remove ever since, rapidly approached a CCG patrol boat, which was conducting routine patrols, and rammed it, despite repeatedly being given clear warnings.

Philippine personnel also maliciously struck Chinese law enforcement officers with oars, poles and other tools during the incident. Despite the fact that the Philippine side initiated the provocation, in a bid to mislead the international community, Manila had the nerve to play the victim.

It is only natural that Manila's reckless words and deeds should be censured by Beijing. The head of the Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs urgently summoned the Philippine ambassador to China on Tuesday, lodging solemn representations over the Philippines' deliberate provocation at Ren'ai Reef and its attack on CCG law enforcement personnel.

China values its relations with the Philippines, but Manila should not mistake China's goodwill and restraint for weakness or unlimited tolerance.

China's relations with the other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have remained generally stable. But due to Manila's constant provocative antics in the South China Sea, the same cannot be said of ties between China and the Philippines.

As the rotating chair of ASEAN this year, Manila should play a more constructive role in promoting peace and stability in the region, rather than inviting wolves into the house. Its tactic of enlisting the support of external forces and trying to ignite the cold ashes of the so-called "South China Sea arbitration award" does a disservice to regional efforts to maintain peace in the waters. Beijing has made it clear that the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea must never be linked to the illegal "arbitral award".

It serves no country's interest if stability and cooperation in the region are undermined by feuds.

Instead of exacerbating tensions in the region, the Philippines should leverage its position to facilitate dialogue and cooperation. It should shoulder its responsibilities and act as a promoter and coordinator of regional peace, focusing on constructive engagement rather than provocation. The goal should be to foster an environment conducive to negotiations and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

As China and ASEAN are striving for an early conclusion of negotiations on the COC, the Philippines should prioritize the task, ensuring it reflects the collective interests of ASEAN and China, and not the agendas of external powers.

It is hoped that the China-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting will send a message that prioritizes peace and stability over conflict and division. By fostering a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect, China and ASEAN can work together to turn the South China Sea into a sea of peace, friendship and cooperation.

China looks forward to the Manila meeting expanding consensus on development and cooperation, making new progress in jointly fostering a peaceful, safe and secure, prosperous, beautiful and amicable home, and striving to forge a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

Stable China-UK relations benefit both sides

On Monday afternoon, Andy Burnham, the United Kingdom's seventh prime minister since 2016, stood outside No 10 Downing Street and said: "Let us make this the moment when Britain starts to believe again, the moment we bring back hope."

It was a good line that millions of UK people will be looking to him to deliver on. But "hope", as every UK leader has learned to their cost, is a currency that devalues fast when the fiscal arithmetic refuses to cooperate.

The new prime minister inherits a country facing domestic challenges, with many residents struggling with high living costs. Burnham has ruled out raising income tax, VAT or national insurance. Yet he has promised the largest public housing program in decades, reindustrialization and the return of utilities to public control.

The math does not add up.

Against this backdrop, deepening economic engagement with China is a necessity. Burnham's predecessor, Keir Starmer, stabilized relations with Beijing. And Starmer's January visit to China — the first by a UK prime minister in eight years — sustained the momentum of a suite of dialogue mechanisms that had lain dormant for too long.

The China-UK Joint Economic and Trade Commission is back, meeting for its 15th session in London this month. The Economic and Financial Dialogue, suspended for six years, produced nearly 70 policy outcomes when it resumed in Beijing last year. A new Financial Working Group has been established. The Joint Commission Meeting on Science and Technology has identified climate, health and agriculture as shared priorities.

This is the institutional architecture that Burnham can now work with. His own career record in Manchester gives him an advantage: he has seen Chinese investment work. During his mayoralty, Chinese companies poured over £6 billion ($8.07 billion) into Greater Manchester, backing regeneration projects that created jobs and revived communities.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang extended his congratulations on Monday, expressing readiness to strengthen engagement, deepen mutual trust, expand exchanges and cooperation, and advance the long-term and stable comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries.

Li also noted that stronger dialogue and cooperation would not only advance the development of both nations but inject stability into global peace as well. It is clear China is prepared to work with the Burnham government for the two countries' common interests.

Yet the shadow of British Steel looms large at the moment. The nationalization of the Scunthorpe plant — seized from China's Jingye Group just days before Burnham took office — is a flagrant violation of the UK's contractual obligations.

Burnham must deal with this with prudence. He should bear the bigger picture in mind, as the potential for bilateral cooperation is too great to be jeopardized by the dispute. The bilateral trade in goods reached $103.7 billion in 2025, while the two countries' services trade exceeds $30 billion and has huge untapped potential. The UK is the world's second-largest services exporter; China is the second-largest services importer. A China-UK services trade agreement — which both sides have committed to exploring — could be transformative.

As UK Business and Trade Secretary Peter Kyle said at the July "Export to China" event in London: "Both sides can enhance understanding through dialogue, join hands in cooperation, and maintain stable economic and trade relations benefiting both peoples."

Burnham needs China if he is to deliver his flagship promises. Promoting the UK's green transition, advanced manufacturing, life sciences and electric vehicles — all require investment that a cash-strapped UK Treasury cannot provide alone. Chinese capital can help re-industrialize the north and the Midlands, exactly the left-behind communities Burnham has pledged to serve.

The China hawks in Westminster will not disappear. But the lesson of Starmer is that a prime minister who fails to deliver growth loses his party's confidence. Starmer was undone not by a single crisis but by a cumulative sense that he had no solution. Burnham's "Manchesterism" — his commitment to shifting power from Westminster, expanding public control and promoting regional development — was forged in a city that benefited tremendously from Chinese engagement. The UK will benefit if he can now apply that cooperative pragmatism on a national scale.

The mechanisms are in place. The will in Beijing is clear. Burnham's own instincts are sensible. The question is whether he can resist the gravitational pull of geopolitical pressures long enough and resolve differences through consultations to make it work.

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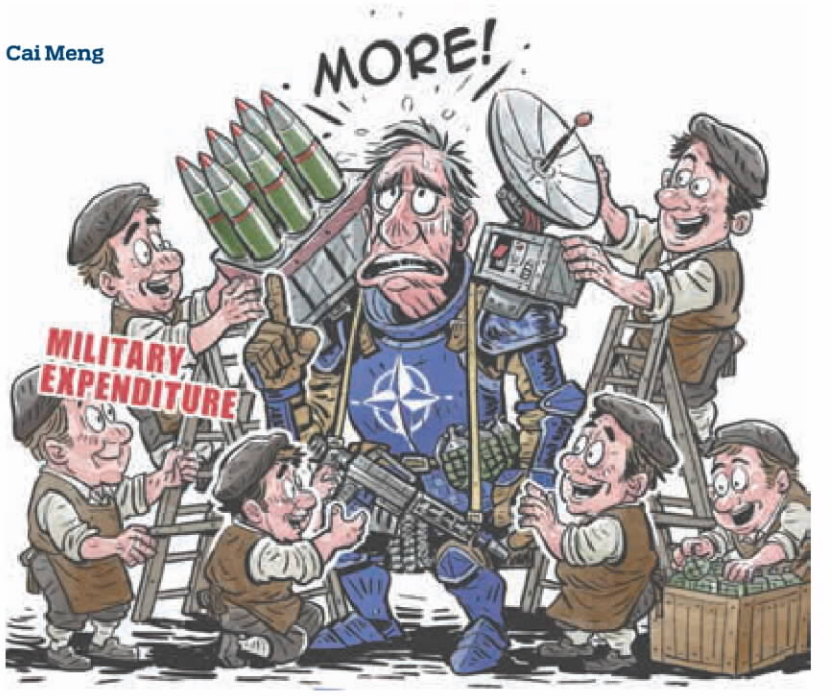

Opinion Line

Economy's structural divergence calls for targeted support policies

China's high-tech and manufacturing sectors are expanding at high speed. For those who measure national prowess in teraflops and gigawatts of computing power, the latest industrial data are remarkable. The country's intelligent computing capacity reached 2,185 eflops as of June; and its integrated circuit exports — a sector targeted by US restrictions — have skyrocketed by 88.7 percent year-on-year in the first half of the year. It also accounts for over half of the world's humanoid robot models.

It can be seen that China's economy operated within a proper range in the first half of the year. And efforts will be stepped up to secure the steady development of employment, businesses and markets, and to meet expectations.

Although the official unemployment rate for the 16-24 age bracket has fallen for three consecutive months, it still lingered at 14.9 percent last month, with students excluded.

China has set a target of a surveyed urban unemployment rate of around 5.5 percent in 2026 and aims to create over 12 million new urban jobs within the year.

What the country is experiencing is a "scissors effect" of structural divergence. Artificial intelligence, as the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology notes, is being integrated into every facet of the economy. But the replacement of human labor is outpacing the creation of new, viable occupations in some sectors, where the "substitution effect" is winning the race against the "compensation effect".

Consider the numbers from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security. While AI-related job openings in fields such as humanoid robotics have quadrupled, nearly half of these positions explicitly require a master's degree or higher. China faces a talent gap in AI-related fields, yet millions of rural migrant workers have to adapt to labor market changes caused by automation in traditional manufacturing. This is a skills chasm, which affects consumption as well. If the average worker lacks the digital literacy to compete in a machine-driven economy, how can they fuel domestic demand?

The legacy of the property boom also continues to weigh on consumption. For more than a decade, soaring home prices encouraged many households to exhaust their savings and take on substantial debt, effectively spending tomorrow's income yesterday. As property values have softened, that consumption has proved difficult to recover.

Governments can encourage spending, but they cannot manufacture purchasing power. Consumption ultimately rests on income.

What is required is expanding lifelong learning systems accessible to factory workers, as well as stronger support for the low-income group in public services and social security. In the process, tax revenues generated by the tech boom should be recycled into robust social safety nets and targeted income support. There is no escaping the fact that a "ballast" economy is only as stable as the purchasing power of its consumers.

Redefining the nature of work is equally urgent. The "algorithmic control" exerted by the platform economy has left millions in the gig economy without adequate social security. If these workers are to be true participants in the AI era, they need the same protections as those in traditional employment.

The AI era demands a renewed commitment to social fairness and economic justice. Through continued reform, China can prevent a two-tiered society from forming: a highly educated elite designing and managing intelligent machines, and a growing commons left to compete for whatever work automation leaves behind.

Without an effective recalibration of how we invest in human capital and distribute national income, the "scissors" will only cut deeper. The real ballast for any economy is jobs. The technological miracle the world is experiencing will ultimately be judged not by its teraflops, but by whether it lifts all boats through inclusive development.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

OPC ecosystem can help promote entrepreneurship

Editor's note: *Enabled by the rapid development of artificial intelligence, one-person companies, or OPCs, are thriving in China, offering a new model of employment. Yao Jianhua, deputy dean of the School of Journalism at Fudan University, spoke to Oriental Outlook on the strengths of China's OPC sector and the challenges it faces. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Contrary to what many people think, an OPC can involve more than one person. Depending on local policies across different cities in China, an OPC can have up to 20 employees in it.

The most important feature of an OPC is its approach to business. It is a smart model that is built on AI and involves collaboration between software and hardware.

The core competitive edge of an OPC lies in its founders' deep understanding of users' needs and market demands.

The OPCs which are able to identify unmet demands and leverage their technological capabilities to meet these demands are more likely to succeed in the competition.

Cities across China have established OPC communities to support the development of this new business model. Typical examples include the Zero Cube community in the Lingang Special Area in Shanghai, the ZGC AI North Latitude Hub in Beijing, and the Dagongfang AI hardware OPC hub in Bao'an district, Shenzhen.

These communities serve as platforms for OPC entrepreneurs to build connections, convert social networks into commercial resources and engage in flexible collaboration.

However, a lack of sufficient application scenarios remains a prominent challenge for the growth of OPCs. Some cities treat the local OPC community merely as a coworking space and a tool to attract investment, without offering enough opportunities for companies to deploy their products in the real world.

Also, although AI technology has lowered the threshold for individuals to start a business, OPC founders are predominantly young talents with specialized technical expertise, high academic credentials and work experience in tech firms or research institutions. A large number of ordinary workers still lack proficiency in AI tools and awareness of digital entrepreneurship. This might lead to the digital divide and imbalanced development, undermining the inclusive innovation that OPCs aim to promote.

Other challenges include heightened operational and financial risks for OPC founders who run their companies all by themselves, and security loopholes caused by the use of AI agents.

The government and the market should work together to promote the sound development of OPCs. Local authorities could formulate special policies aligned with the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), and roll out measures tailored to local industrial strengths.

They should refine rules for OPC governance and address regulatory loopholes, improve financial services to ease OPC founders' burdens, and build cross-regional public computing power platforms to provide low-cost and inclusive computing resources.

OPC communities should also focus on local industries and resources and upgrade their services. They should not only provide workspace and computing power for OPCs, but also offer other services, including matching demand with supply and promoting industrial collaboration.

To prevent the digital divide, local authorities should cooperate with tech enterprises, universities and industry associations to offer customized AI training courses to different groups of people, thus lowering the barriers to digital entrepreneurship.

Regulators should adopt an inclusive and prudent governance approach, using tools such as regulatory sandboxes to allow for experimentation and learning in OPC operations.

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VIEWS

Xu Ying and Zhang Weishi

The right flight path for the low-altitude economy

Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province, has begun drawing roads in the sky. Its new "Sky Road Map" — the first of its kind in China — charts hundreds of flight corridors and thousands of landing points across the city, creating a digital blueprint for a future in which drones, air taxis and other low-altitude aircraft become part of everyday urban life.

But the real challenge is not mapping routes; it is governing a crowded sky. As millions of low-altitude aircraft take flight, China will need a dynamic governance system that manages airspace across space and time, coordinates multiple agencies in real time and treats the sky as critical urban infrastructure. Otherwise, the low-altitude economy could add a new layer of disorder to already strained cities.

Drones, electric air taxis and other low-flying aircraft are seen as part of the country's next wave of industrial growth and infrastructure development. However, growth without structure is unsustainable.

To ensure orderly growth, the governance framework should adopt a "risk-based" or "benefit-assessed" approach that prioritizes public safety and disaster relief. The recent flood relief operations in Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region illustrate the value of low-altitude aircraft in emergency situations. Rules for commercial logistics, environmental monitoring and other market-oriented applications can be developed in an extended framework. By differentiating governance according to public value and economic needs, cities can safeguard critical functions without stifling innovation.

China's urban development has hit an inflection point. Traditional two-dimensional, labor-intensive governance models are reaching their limits. A shrinking front line workforce and tighter fiscal budgets demand a more precise, resilient approach.

The growth of low-altitude airspace — generally up to 1,000 meters above the ground — is pushing Chinese cities beyond traditional ground-based management.

Urban authorities must now manage not only roads, buildings and people on the ground, but also where aircraft fly, when they fly and how their movements interact with life on the ground. This emerging model is described as "spatiotemporal governance" because it adds both physical elevation and time to the traditional map of urban management. More importantly, it marks a shift from reacting to problems after they occur to anticipating and preventing risks through coordinated data-driven governance.

The future of low-altitude governance will not be built one drone at a time. Current "point-based" models, which treat drone operations as isolated deployments, are not suitable for the scale of modern urban complexity.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Therefore, China is moving toward a sophisticated spatiotemporal grid-based model that integrates three foundational pillars to manage the low-altitude space.

The first pillar is digital intelligence. Real-name registration, flight reporting and identification systems help authorities determine who is flying where and for what purpose. When those data are combined with weather information, air-traffic rules and 3D maps of the city, regulators can assess risks in real time rather than after an incident occurs.

The second is zoning. Instead of relying on blanket no-fly bans, cities are beginning to classify low-altitude airspace by aircraft type, mission, population density and infrastructure risk. High-risk areas can be tightly controlled, while designated corridors remain open for lower-risk commercial and public services. Fixed routes and approved takeoff-and-landing nodes will turn low-altitude airspace into a planned transportation network.

The third pillar is coordination. Drones do not stop at city borders, and neither can regulation. Aviation authorities, emergency responders and public security departments need shared platforms and shared rules. When flight routes are connected with weather and safety data, risks can be spotted before takeoff. As drone services expand across neighboring cities, common standards for identity checks, data sharing and approvals will be essential to keep flights moving safely across municipal boundaries.

Across China, early experiments are already showing what a coordinated low-altitude network can achieve. On the technical front, integrating multi-source big data is enabling the creation of digital twins that allow officials to visualize and simulate urban life in real time. For instance, in Pingtan, Fujian province, autonomous inspection systems like "Cloud Xiaosheng" are transforming how municipal infrastructure is monitored.

These initiatives signal a broader shift toward anticipatory urban governance. By replacing post-event response with pre-event planning, cities can overcome three persistent challenges: insufficient synergy, fragmented integration, and uneven public service coverage.

The real test of China's urban governance is not whether drones can fill the sky, but whether cities can govern that sky with the same coherence and efficiency that they govern the streets below.

That will require more than advanced aircraft. It will require stronger legal frameworks, deeper institutional coordination and sustained investment in digital infrastructure and innovation.

For decades, China's cities were shaped primarily by horizontal expansion. The next stage will be defined by how effectively they manage activity across space and time, integrating the air above the city with the systems that operate on the ground. If that transition succeeds, the low-altitude economy will become part of a broader shift toward safer, more resilient and more intelligent urban life.

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



Zhou Shuchun

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Yen's fall microcosm of mature economy in structural decline

Despite a recent bounce, the yen remains pinned below the psychologically critical 160 mark against the dollar — a level long viewed by the market as a last line of defense.

Once an undisputed safe-haven currency, the yen is now one of the world's worst-performing major currencies. Its relentless slide lays bare the fragility of Japan's political and economic foundations, exposing a jarring case of policy schizophrenia.

Officials continue to tout a narrative of "moderate recovery" for Japan's economy. Supporting this optimism is the fact that while the yen languishes at 40-year lows, the Nikkei has surged to heights not seen since the late-1980s bubble era. Politicians are quick to frame this as a sign that Japan is finally shaking off its "lost decades."

Yet the stark divergence between stocks and the currency reveals deep internal contradictions. To a significant extent, the plunging yen has engineered an imported bull run. The Nikkei 225, dominated by exporters like Toyota, Sony, and SoftBank, benefits directly as a weaker yen inflates the value of repatriated overseas earnings. However, this disconnect from the tepid underlying economy has investors on edge; what passes for a "recovery" feels more like a disjointed solo dance.

The contrast becomes even starker beyond the equity market. With Japan heavily reliant on imports for energy, raw materials and food, the currency crash has unleashed a tide of imported inflation. Consumer prices have breached the 2 percent policy target for four straight years, while the Engel coefficient (the proportion of food expenditure in total consumption expenditure) for households hit 29.4 percent in the third quarter of 2025 — its highest level since 1981.

A currency's persistent plunge signifies a collective downgrade of the country's potential — a massive vote of no confidence.

While listed multinationals celebrate inflated paper profits, the vast majority of smaller firms are being squeezed to death, burdened by rising operating costs. According to one survey, corporate bankruptcies attributable to yen depreciation rose by 32.3 percent year-on-year in the first half of this year. Meanwhile, despite union-led nominal wage hikes of 5 percent over two years, real wages have declined for four consecutive years, failing to keep pace with inflation.

As foreign tourists and property buyers snap up bargains in what has become Asia's biggest "discount store", domestic purchasing power is evaporating.

As Robin Brooks of the Brookings Institution noted in May, measured by the real effective exchange rate (REER), the yen has fallen below even the Turkish lira, largely considered one of the world's weakest currencies. Bank for International Settlements data show the yen's REER has collapsed from a 1995 peak of 193.95 to just 67.73 — a two-thirds wipeout of its value.

On the surface, the primary driver appears to be the yawning 300-basis-point gap between US and Japanese interest rates, which serves to fuel a low-risk carry trade bonanza: borrowing low-interest yen and buying high-interest dollar assets, thereby creating a lasting siphon effect of shorting the yen. But Tokyo's repeated interventions — including a record 11.73 trillion yen ($73.6 billion) spent in just one month to buy the yen in the market and hiking the benchmark rate to its highest level since 1995 — have failed to stem the tide.

Clearly, this is no longer just about interest rate differentials; it is a symptom of deep structural malaise. At the heart of the crisis is a catastrophic policy mix: the financial authorities press the brakes with rate hikes, while Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi slams the accelerator with reckless fiscal abandon. Ignoring a debt-to-GDP ratio of 240 percent, her administration is doubling down on massive stimulus and defense spending. This fiscal profligacy has spooked the bond market, sending the 10-year benchmark government bond yield soaring to a three-decade high of 2.9 percent.

The resulting surge in borrowing costs for the government, corporations, and households is choking off the real economy.

This places Japan's economy squarely in the grip of what economists call an "Impossible Trinity": expansionary fiscal policy demands low rates, low rates crush the currency, a weak currency forces tightening, and tightening strangles the very fiscal expansion it seeks to enable. Takaichi's political gamble is proving to be a ruinous wager on the future of the Japanese economy.

Today, the yen's decline is a microcosm of a mature economy in structural free fall. Investors are shorting the yen, betting on the persistence of Japan's woes: a shrinking population, unsustainable debt, hollowing out of industry, the fading dominance of its once-mighty manufacturing sector, and in particular, the worsening geopolitical environment. The shift from perennial trade surplus to chronic deficit further erodes the currency's intrinsic worth.

While Takaichi clings to her "weak yen is good" dogma, markets understand the truth: a sovereign's exchange rate is the ultimate barometer of national competitiveness. A currency's persistent plunge signifies a collective downgrade of the country's potential — a massive vote of no confidence. How, or even if, Japan rescues its currency will not only determine its own economic fate but also reverberate across the global financial system.

Nancy Snow

Emerging technologies need public trust

Global Lens

The global race for emerging technologies is often described in terms of innovation capacity, computing power, research funding and national competitiveness. Governments and industries speak of artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum systems, robotics, and semiconductors as strategic assets that will shape the future balance of economic and geopolitical power. All of that is true. But there is another dimension of technological competition that receives far less attention: the struggle for public trust, social legitimacy and persuasive communication.

Emerging technologies do not exist in laboratories alone. They exist within societies. Their success depends not only on scientific breakthroughs, but also on whether people understand them, trust them and believe they serve human progress.

In the 21st century, technology leadership is also a form of narrative leadership.

Artificial intelligence offers a clear example. Around the world, AI generates competing emotions at the same time: excitement, fear, fascination, anxiety, optimism, and distrust. Some see AI as a path toward scientific advancement and greater productivity. Others fear job displacement, surveillance, misinformation and loss of human control.

Therefore, the challenge before governments, universities, companies and media institutions is not simply technological development. It is explaining the same to the public. Who explains the future matters.

Throughout modern history, societies have embraced transformative technologies because of compelling public narratives. Railroads symbolized national development. Space exploration represented human ambition and scientific possibility. The internet was promoted as a democratizing force capable of connecting humanity across borders. Today's emerging technologies require similar forms of public understanding and social legitimacy.

Yet public conversations about technology are increasingly fragmented. Online ecosystems amplify fear, outrage, conspiracy theories and emotional polarization faster than institutions can respond, just as misinformation often spreads more rapidly than scientific clarification. Public mood itself has become a strategic battleground. I have described this phenomenon elsewhere as "mood trafficking" — the shaping of emotional climates through narratives, images, and information systems. In the digital era, whoever shapes public mood often shapes public perception.

This is especially important because emerging technologies increasingly touch every aspect of human life. Artificial intelligence influences education, labor markets, healthcare, finance, media, and military planning. Biotechnology raises ethical questions surrounding genetics and human identity. Quantum systems may transform cybersecurity and communication infrastructures.

These developments are social transformations. As a result, scientists and engineers alone cannot carry the burden of technological transition. Public communication, education, diplomacy, and cultural understanding must also play central roles.

Universities have an important responsibility here. Institutions of higher learning such as Tsinghua University in China, where I've taught several times, should not only produce technical expertise, but also help societies understand the broader human implications of innovation. This requires dialogue across disciplines, bringing together engineers, social scientists, communication scholars, ethicists, policymakers, and international partners.

Technology policy itself must become more human-centered.

In many countries, governments are now recognizing that technological influence extends beyond economics and security. Innovation also shapes national image, international reputation, and soft power. Countries increasingly compete not only over which technologies they invent, but also over which vision of the future they present to the world.

This is particularly true in Asia, where technological modernization is often linked to broader national narratives of development, stability, education, and long-term planning. Across the region, emerging technologies are becoming symbols of national aspiration and civilizational confidence.

At the same time, all societies face similar questions. How can innovation remain people-centered? How can technological progress strengthen social trust rather than deepening polarization? How can countries encourage innovation while preserving human dignity and public accountability? These questions cannot be answered through engineering alone.

The future of emerging technologies will depend not only on who develops the most advanced systems, but also on who can best communicate their meaning, legitimacy, and human purpose.

Technology is never only about machines. It is also about building and maintaining public trust.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

MAFA KWANISAI MAFA

Resonant praxis

105-year legacy of CPC offers operational and governance wisdom the Global South can embrace

As the Communist Party of China marks its 105th anniversary, its odyssey furnishes the Global South with profound, actionable governance lessons.

For generations, developing nations across Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia have adopted Western political and economic templates wholesale, only to remain mired in institutional fragility, systemic graft, erratic policy continuity and entrenched underdevelopment. Set against this stark global reality, China's transformative developmental ascent stands as a time-honed benchmark worthy of in-depth, rigorous scrutiny.



China's landmark achievements speak with unassailable clarity. Since the launch of reform and opening-up in 1978, about 800 million Chinese people have been lifted out of extreme poverty, accounting for over 70 percent of global poverty reduction. China has sustained relentless breakthroughs in infrastructure construction and technological innovation, contributing about 30 percent to global annual economic growth year after year and cementing its stature as an irreplaceable engine for shared global prosperity.

What constitutes the bedrock of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation? Analysts across many regions share one answer: the CPC serves as the unshakable anchor of China's national governance. Far beyond delivering steady, long-horizon political leadership, the Party has erected a comprehensive self-renewal framework anchored in the 14 foundational principles of Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building. These principles encompass upholding the Party's unified leadership, enforcing rigorous internal discipline, strengthening ideological cultivation, institutionalizing anti-corruption campaigns, improving cadre capacity building and establishing full-spectrum accountability mechanisms. Most critically, the CPC rejects superficial, temporary rectification drives. Instead, it institutionalizes organizational self-reform of the Party as an enduring, iterative mission.

Five core, adaptable governance tenets carry universal resonance for many Global South countries.

First, proactive institutional self-renewal. Any state apparatus will inevitably stagnate and atrophy should it grow complacent or sever its organic bond with the people it is meant to serve. The CPC's multi-layered internal supervision architecture and targeted rectification mechanisms nip structural flaws in the bud, stopping minor frictions from metastasizing into crippling systemic crises. This timeless logic is equally applicable to national government, academia, public service bodies and civil society organizations across the developing world.

Second, standardized discipline and enforceable accountability. Many emerging economies are hamstrung by fragmented public administration, endemic corruption and disjointed national policy rollouts. Decades of China's on-the-ground governance practice validate an immutable truth: clearly delineated institutional mandates, unified statutory rules and cross-tier oversight exponentially elevate administrative efficiency. Every sovereign nation must forge institutional frameworks rooted in its unique constitutional heritage and indigenous political traditions, yet a universal axiom endures: high-caliber governance demands visionary, competent leadership paired with robust institutional guardrails.

Third, merit-centric civil service development. The recruitment and evaluation of public officials hinge on three pillars: professional proficiency, unwavering public service ethos and unimpeachable personal integrity. Sustained leadership training and upskilling initiatives empower state workforces to navigate intertwined economic and social complexities with poise.

Fourth, multi-generational strategic planning. Short-sighted, election-cycle-bound policies can never catalyze structural national transformation. China's sequential five-year medium-term development blueprints and overarching national visions that transcend successive administrations unlock sustained progress in poverty eradication, industrial upgrading, indigenous technological breakthroughs and cross-continental infrastructure ventures. For African economies striving to break free from crippling commodity dependency, this model of uninterrupted long-range planning holds considerable practical value.

Fifth, people-centered founding mission. Self-reform, strict accountability, merit-based official training, long-term planning and institutionalized governance all serve one central goal: protecting ordinary people's fundamental interests and delivering tangible improvements to daily livelihoods at the grassroots level.

All the remarkable accomplishments of China stem from the CPC's core tenet of seeking happiness for the people and rejuvenation for the nation. Through ever-shifting domestic and international landscapes, every CPC member keeps this mission foremost in mind. The CPC firmly rejects bureaucratic estrangement from the ordinary people and prioritizes people's interests above all else, with this people-centered conviction serving as the spiritual anchor guiding all governance work. Every poverty relief program, infrastructure project and public service upgrade is oriented toward satisfying people's yearning for a better life, demonstrating that people-rooted governance delivers inclusive, sustainable growth unattainable by elite-focused systems.



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For Global South countries plagued by elite capture and neglected public demands, embedding a people-first mindset into institutional design offers an effective remedy for unequal development.

These principles resonate deeply across Africa. The continent is blessed with abundant untapped mineral and agricultural resources, the globe's youngest demographic cohort and boundless latent economic potential — yet deep-rooted institutional bottlenecks stifle broad-based, equitable advancement. A vital caveat bears emphasis: Drawing insights from China's developmental journey does not equate to blind replication of its entire system. Rather, developing nations may distill adaptable institutional principles while fully honoring their distinct historical trajectories, indigenous governance customs and constitutional order.

China has emerged as a steadfast development partner for Africa, delivering tangible progress via infrastructure, industrial, agricultural, medical and vocational cooperation. Over recent decades, Chinese enterprises have built or upgraded over 10,000 kilometers of railways, nearly 100,000 km of highways, 1,000 bridges, almost 100 ports and 66,000 km of power transmission lines across the continent, alongside thousands of hospitals, schools and training hubs. Zimbabwe's multi-sector cooperation with China covering mining, energy, manufacturing, agriculture and health exemplifies this mutually beneficial partnership, while exchanges enable two-way policy learning between African and Chinese officials, experts and professionals.

Today, the Global South confronts a tangled web of transboundary crises: accelerating climate breakdown, mounting sovereign debt burdens, intensifying technological rivalry, pervasive global food insecurity, mass youth unemployment and shifting geopolitical power equilibriums. Resolving these layered, interconnected challenges requires governments armed with forward-thinking strategic foresight, the capacity to execute policies across political cycles and enduring public trust. The CPC's century-long journey of self-reform and more than seven decades of state governance furnish a well-documented, real-world paradigm for developing countries to craft localized solutions to shared developmental tribulations.

Africa's long-term developmental destiny will ultimately be sculpted by African peoples and indigenous African leadership. Even so, rigorous comparative research into proven successful developmental pathways yields tangible, transformative on-the-ground outcomes. The CPC's 105-year legacy crystallizes an immutable truth: Resilient, high-performance state institutions are forged incrementally through unwavering discipline, sustained capacity cultivation, ironclad accountability, adaptive institutional reform and people-centered conviction. As Global South countries carve out their own sovereign paths to modernization, the CPC's century of self-improvement and decades of governance practice will remain an indispensable touchstone for scholarly inquiry, high-level policy deliberation and thoughtful localized adaptation for generations to come.

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QIN XIAO AND WU WENFENG

A road out of middle-income trap

China's all-round advancement paves its way toward high-income status

On July 1, the World Bank updated its global income classifications for fiscal year 2027, setting the high-income threshold at $14,375 based on gross national income per capita, calculated using the Atlas method. With a GNI per capita of $14,230, China remains in the upper-middle-income category, just $145 below the threshold. The question facing China is no longer whether it can reach high-income status, but how — and more importantly, whether — it can avoid the stagnation that has trapped so many economies.



Qin Xiao



Wu Wenfeng

The odds are sobering. Since 1990, only 34 middle-income economies have managed to shift to high-income status. The rest remained trapped in what economists describe as the "middle-income trap" — a stage where economies lose their advantage in low-cost manufacturing but have not yet developed the technological capabilities needed to rival advanced economies. Escaping this trap requires more than capital accumulation; it demands a fundamental transition from imitation to innovation.

The Republic of Korea's economic transformation provides a valuable reference. In 1960, its GNI per capita was roughly $1,200; by 2024, it had soared to $33,000. The World Development Report 2024 summarized the country's success through a "3i strategy": investment, infusion, and, most crucially, innovation. Samsung's evolution — from its early trading business in noodles and groceries in the 1930s to a television manufacturer in the 1970s, and eventually to a leading global manufacturer of consumer electronics and semiconductors — mirrors the country's broader shift from a technology adopter to a frontier innovator. The lesson is clear: technology adoption is a bridge, but indigenous innovation is the destination.

China is now traversing a similar bridge, but with a scale that makes its economic transformation unprecedented.

Three structural advantages give China a solid foundation for breaking through the middle-income barrier.

First, China has built one of the world's largest innovation ecosystems. In 2025, China's research and development expenditure reached 3.93 trillion yuan ($580.67 billion), equivalent to 2.8 percent of its GDP — up from 0.57 percent in 1995. In September 2025, the World Intellectual Property Organization ranked China 10th globally in its Global Innovation Index, first among all upper-middle-income economies. China leads the world in patent filings and hosts 24 of the world's top 100 innovation clusters, with Shenzhen-Hong Kong-Guangzhou topping the global rankings.

These achievements are increasingly reflected in industrial competitiveness. In 2025, it was estimated that China produced nearly 75 percent of the world's electric vehicles. Companies such as CATL and BYD have become major players in the global battery and EV markets. This represents more than low-cost assembly; it reflects high-value engineering capabilities, supply chain integration and continuous technological improvement.

Second, China is converting its demographic dividend into a talent dividend. In 2025, a record 12.22 million students graduated from Chinese universities, including over 5 million with degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. New entrants to the workforce now receive an average of 14 years of education. Roughly half of the world's top AI researchers are now trained in Chinese universities. This large pool of engineers and researchers provides the foundation for companies such as Huawei to continue investing in areas including 5G, AI and chip design despite external pressures. Innovation at the frontier is fundamentally a human-capital game. China is now producing that human capital at a scale no other country can match.



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Third, China's enormous domestic market provides a unique testing ground for innovation. With a population of 1.4 billion, China can commercialize new technologies faster than other countries. When BYD rolls out a new battery, it has a domestic market larger than the European Union in which to refine it. When ByteDance deploys new AI features, it can reach hundreds of millions of users in weeks. This "scale-to-learn" advantage creates a self-reinforcing cycle: larger user bases generate more data, improved data enhances products and better products attract more users.

However, these advantages alone do not guarantee success. History shows that moving from middle-income to high-income status remains a difficult transition. China faces unique challenges that the ROK, and many other economies before it, never had to confront.

First, unparalleled scale and complexity. With 1.4 billion people, China must navigate a landscape where world-leading innovation clusters such as Shenzhen and Shanghai coexist with inland provinces still moving through later stages of industrialization. Coordinating resources across such vast geographic, economic, and developmental diversity is a governance challenge without precedent.

Second, strong geopolitical headwinds. China's transition toward high-income status is taking place amid profound changes in the global economy. Rising geopolitical tensions, tighter restrictions on advanced semiconductors, AI chips and other cutting-edge technologies, and increasing fragmentation in global supply chains have made technological upgrading more difficult. China is therefore pursuing innovation under external conditions markedly different from those faced by many economies during earlier periods of industrialization.

Third, deep regional disparities. China's east-west gap, urban-rural divide, and uneven distribution of human capital mean that innovation in coastal clusters cannot automatically spread across such a diverse economy. Building an integrated national innovation system requires sustained efforts to narrow these internal divides.

Yet it is precisely because of these constraints that China's innovation achievements carry unique global significance. Having overcome obstacles of scale, geopolitical isolation and internal divergence, China's technological breakthroughs are now generating global public goods. In biotechnology, BGI Genomics has driven down gene sequencing costs by orders of magnitude, making precision medicine accessible across the developing world. In quantum computing, the University of Science and Technology of China has achieved milestones that accelerate global research collaboration. In commercial spaceflight, companies such as i-Space and Galactic Energy are developing reusable rockets that promise to lower satellite launch costs for nations previously priced out of the space economy. These reflect frontier research and deep engineering capabilities at a scale no other nation can match.

What truly distinguishes China is its deliberate choice to share these advances rather than hoard them. At the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai, China reaffirmed its commitment to open-source innovation and announced a series of measures to strengthen AI capacity in developing countries, ensuring the Global South is not left behind in the AI revolution. This was a statement of principle by a responsible major power: technological progress must serve all of humanity, not just a privileged few.

China backed this pledge with concrete action. It committed to training 5,000 AI professionals from developing countries over five years, investing in local capacity rather than extracting talent. It proposed a global AI governance framework emphasizing data sovereignty and ethical standards, offering an inclusive alternative to Western-centric models that often marginalize emerging economies. Platforms such as Baidu's PaddlePaddle and Alibaba's ModelScope are lowering technical barriers by giving developers access to AI frameworks, models and development tools, creating more opportunities for developers in emerging markets to participate in the global AI ecosystem.

By placing inclusive development at the heart of its innovation strategy, China is demonstrating that rising powers can — and should — shoulder global responsibility for shared prosperity.

It demonstrates how demographic mass can be converted into deep pools of human capital, how innovation ecosystems can be nurtured across multiple tiers of cities, and how technological leadership can be wielded as a global public good rather than a zero-sum competitive weapon. As many nations continue their own development journeys, China's transition toward a high-income economy may provide a valuable reference for overcoming structural challenges and pursuing shared prosperity.

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Opportunity 2.0 helping stimulate FDI

Foreign-invested firms in country behind 7.39t yuan in H1 two-way trade

By **ZHONG NAN**
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"China Opportunity 2.0" is emerging as a new driver of the country's efforts to attract investment from around the world as foreign firms deepen their commitment to the Chinese market and expand long-term capital inflows, said business executives.

China Opportunity 2.0 refers to a new phase of China's development characterized by higher-standard opening-up, technological innovation and high-quality growth.

For foreign enterprises, it spans opportunities ranging from rapid infrastructure development to breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and advanced manufacturing, they said.

Noting that China Opportunity 2.0 is reflected in the country's vast market, rapid industrial upgrades, deep talent pool and innovation ecosystem, Chen Pu, chief Asia officer of Syensqo, said the Belgian chemical manufacturer believes that continuous improvements in China's industrial ecosystem — including stronger supply chains, enhanced manufacturing capabilities and faster development across entire value chains — are creating new business opportunities.

In response, Syensqo has expanded its footprint in China with five manufacturing sites and a major research and innovation center in Shanghai, the group's third-largest worldwide.

Stefan Floeck, ABB's division president of IEC Low Voltage Motors, said China will remain central to the Swedish-Swiss tech company's global motor business as the country's industrial upgrading and green transition continue to drive demand for more energy-efficient equipment.

"To capture these opportunities, we will continue investing in local research and development, manufacturing and supply chains to better serve Chinese customers while reinforcing China as an innovation hub and export base within the company's global network," said Floeck.

ABB's low-voltage motor business has invested more than 150 million yuan ($22.12 million) in recent years to upgrade its Shanghai manufacturing base, including R&D testing laboratories and production lines. Its domestic supply chain also supports exports from China to markets worldwide.

Against this backdrop, foreign-invested businesses in China generated 7.39 trillion yuan in imports and exports in the first half, up 17.1 percent year-on-year, marking the ninth consecutive quarter of growth, said the General Administration of Customs.

Pushing back against the so-called "China Shock 2.0" narrative — which portrays China's development as a disruption to the global economy — Zhao Ping, head of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade's academy, said foreign firms are expanding their presence in China because the country's integrated industrial ecosystem remains difficult for any other economy to replicate.

China further strengthened its efforts to attract foreign investment in June by unveiling a 15-point action plan featuring measures to expand market access, facilitate investment, strengthen promotion and services, and improve foreign capital management to stabilize and upgrade foreign investment.

The plan prioritizes expanding market access in services, finance and pharmaceuticals, among other sectors, while streamlining processes for cross-border mergers and acquisitions, data flows and domestic reinvestment by foreign firms.

That confidence is also reflected in foreign direct investment data. FDI in China's high-tech sector expanded 19.4 percent year-on-year to 130.14 billion yuan in the first five months. The sector accounted for 39.8 percent of the nation's total FDI, up 9.4 percentage points from the same period last year, said the Ministry of Commerce.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, foreign-invested companies in China generated 262.7 trillion yuan in operating revenue and 21.4 trillion yuan in profits, with both indicators recording average annual growth of around 5 percent. They employed more than 30 million people on average each year during this period, the ministry added.

Reaching out to children



Employees from Sichuan Poly Property Services visit children in Yangma town in Jianyang, Sichuan province, whose parents have left to work in cities, delivering science-themed books and showing the children they care about them. DONG ZIWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Intelligent computing capacity grows

China's intelligent computing capacity reached 2,185 EFLOPS by the end of June this year, reflecting the country's rapid expansion of artificial intelligence infrastructure, official data showed. The overall utilization rate of computing facilities nationwide stood at 71.4 percent, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Export of integrated circuits expands

Strong global demand for artificial intelligence has boosted China's integrated circuit exports, with the export value of integrated circuit products denominated in yuan increasing 88.7 percent year-on-year in the first half of the year, official data showed.

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An employee arranges gold products at a jewelry shop in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province.
WANG CHUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Gold preparing to enter digital era

By **HU YUMENG** and **MA JINGNA** in Lanzhou

Gold may soon become as easy to use as money in a digital wallet, as younger investors embrace technology and financial markets reshape one of the world's oldest safe-haven assets.

That is the vision of David Tait, chief executive officer of the World Gold Council, who believes digital innovation will change not only how people invest in gold, but also how the precious metal functions within the global financial system. He made the remarks during an international gold conference held recently in Lanzhou, Gansu province.

Gansu, home to China's second-largest gold reserves, generated about 180 billion yuan ($26.6 billion) in industrial output in its gold sector last year.

The province is seeking to move beyond resource extraction toward higher-value development. "We will leverage this conference as an opportunity to deepen the integration of resource advantages, enterprise strengths and market vitality, and accelerate the high-end, intelligent, green and secure development of the gold industry," Governor Ren Zhenhe said at the opening ceremony.

Beyond advancing the industry's high-quality development, Tait believes the next major transformation will come from the market itself.

"The biggest transformation is not only where gold is mined, but how it is owned, traded and used," he said. "The most important thing will be the ability to use a digital form of gold in everybody's wallet."

He believes digitalization will make gold easier to buy, trade and use as collateral, allowing a broader range of institutional investors, including pension funds, insurers and asset managers, to incorporate gold into diversified portfolios.

To support that transition, the WGC is advancing its Gold247 initiative, which aims to connect the physical gold market with digital financial infrastructure. The initiative includes a global database for responsibly sourced gold and a "gold-as-a-service" platform designed to simplify the launch and adoption of digital gold products.

Tait expects younger investors to become one of the biggest drivers of that transformation.

As wealth is passed from older to younger generations, he said, tech-savvy consumers are increasingly comfortable managing investments through smartphones rather than buying traditional gold bars or jewelry.

"They just click and buy. That's the future," he said.

Although physical bars and coins will remain an important part of the market, trusted digital products backed by physical gold are likely to become increasingly attractive because they are easier to access, trade and integrate into broader investment portfolios.

Tait also believes China is well positioned to play a larger role in shaping the global gold market.

He described the Shanghai Gold Exchange as a model with international relevance and said closer coordination between Shanghai and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region could strengthen global gold trading and custody services while supporting the internationalization of China's gold market.

That vision was echoed throughout the conference. Industry leaders called for closer cooperation in mineral exploration, technological innovation, green development and financial services, while expanding Belt and Road partnerships to build a more resilient, sustainable and internationally connected gold industry.

As the industry enters the digital era, Tait believes China's growing influence, from market infrastructure to responsible sourcing, will help shape the next phase of global gold development.

Wu Yuexuan contributed to this story.

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Compliance in spotlight after EC fine

By **LI JIAYING** in Beijing and **ZHANG ZHOUXIANG** in Brussels

The European Commission's record fine against AliExpress highlights the rising need for compliance for Chinese cross-border e-commerce companies, prompting industry experts to call for stronger product certification, brand protection and localized operations in Europe.

Their comments came as Alibaba-owned cross-border e-commerce platform AliExpress said on Monday that it disagreed with the EC's decision to impose a record 550 million euros ($628.1 million) fine after the regulator accused it of failing to adequately address the sale of illegal, unsafe and counterfeit products.

"We disagree with the decision and the disproportionate fine," AliExpress said, adding that the penalty did not fully reflect its established compliance framework or the significant improvements it had proactively introduced.

The company said it was carefully reviewing the decision and considering all available options.

The move is in response to the EC's earlier financial penalty, saying that AliExpress had breached its obligations under the Digital Services Act, or DSA, by failing to properly assess the risks linked to illegal, unsafe and counterfeit products on its platform and take effective measures to reduce their spread.

Against this backdrop, Jiang Han, a senior researcher at market consultancy Pangoal, said Chinese merchants selling overseas should immediately rebuild their product compliance systems and treat compliance as a minimum requirement for remaining in the market.

Specifically, merchants should review key qualifications, including CE certification and energy-efficiency labels, ensure testing reports are issued by certified institutions and maintain complete, traceable brand-authorization records to prevent infringement risks, Jiang said.

"Under intense regulatory pressure, compliance is no longer an advantage; it is the only ticket to the European market," he said.

The analyst added that sellers should also accelerate localization and brand building while reshaping their cost and profit models as responsive moves.

"Over the longer term, sellers must move away from price-based competition, raise product value and brand premiums to absorb compliance costs, and shift from merely entering overseas markets to establishing a lasting local presence," Jiang said.

The penalty is the largest imposed since the DSA took full effect and marks the EC's third known fine under the law. The regulator previously fined social media platform X 120 million euros and Chinese cross-border e-commerce platform Temu 200 million euros.

In an exclusive statement to China Daily, the China Chamber of Commerce to the EU said it took note of the European Commission's decision concerning AliExpress under the Digital Services Act.

"We respect the EU's right to regulate its digital market, but we are concerned that enforcement measures should be conducted in a fair, transparent, and proportionate manner, with full consideration given to companies' compliance efforts and legitimate rights.

"CCCEU hopes the European Commission will ensure that DSA enforcement provides legal certainty and a predictable business environment for all market participants, including Chinese companies operating in Europe."

Jian Junbo, deputy director of the Center for China-Europe Relations at Fudan University's Institute of International Studies, said the case highlights the European Union's increasingly stringent approach to digital regulation.

The bloc has made the DSA an important regulatory tool for major digital platforms, Jian said, adding that the fine represents not only a financial penalty, but also a signal that compliance costs in the European market are likely to continue rising. At the same time, Jian questioned whether such intensive regulation ultimately benefits innovation. While strict enforcement may improve oversight, he said it could also increase compliance burdens for both foreign and European technology companies, potentially affecting their long-term growth and capacity to innovate.

AliExpress has been ordered to submit a corrective action plan by Oct 20. The EC will assess the proposed measures after receiving the plan, while continued non-compliance could expose the platform to further penalties.

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Shanghai banks on emerging sectors

By **SHI JING** in Shanghai
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Shanghai's forward-looking development in emerging technologies and industrial resilience built up over time have helped the city achieve strong economic growth in the first half, which is especially notable amid rising market complexities and a changing global landscape, said experts.

Shanghai's GDP hit 2.79 trillion yuan ($412 billion) in the first half, up 5.6 percent year-on-year at constant prices, said the municipal statistics bureau on Monday.

This growth rate is not only higher than the national average, but also exceeds the municipality's annual GDP growth in 2024 and 2025, which came at 5 percent and 5.4 percent, respectively.

Zeng Gang, chief expert and director of the Shanghai Institution for Finance & Development, described Shanghai's first-half economic performance as "rock-solid" both in terms of quality and efficiency. It was not just one sector driving the numbers, but rather the combined result of industrial upgrading, investment growth and a surge in foreign trade, Zeng said.

Shanghai is well-positioned to achieve its full-year growth target amid the ongoing optimization of its economic structure and the accelerated transformation from old to new growth engines, he added.

Shanghai's higher level of opening-up, its success in getting foreign firms to set up regional headquarters, alongside its rich innovation resources and precise economic stimulus packages have been translated into the city's higher innovation efficiency and stronger economic resilience, said Zhan Yubo, deputy director for the Institute of Economics at Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

While the added value of primary and secondary industry sectors rose by 0.9 percent and 4.7 percent, respectively, the tertiary sector surged 5.9 percent from a year earlier, further consolidating its role as a major economic driver for Shanghai.

Robust growth of the modern services sector encompassing finance, information transmission, software, information technology, leasing and business services carried the tertiary sector's added value to over 2.2 trillion yuan. Under closer scrutiny, the information transmission, software and information technology services sector spiked 9.1 percent year-on-year, mainly driven by the strong growth in sub-sectors such as artificial intelligence, integrated circuit design and platform enterprises.

The World AI Conference held in Shanghai from Friday to Monday served as solid proof, with the exhibition area reaching a record high of over 100,000 square meters.

In 2025, the industrial value of AI enterprises with a minimum annual sales revenue of 20 million yuan each totaled 600 billion yuan, representing a year-on-year spike of 39.5 percent.

AI has been defined as one of the three pioneering industries in Shanghai, along with integrated circuits and biomedicine. The output value of the three industries grew by 14.5 percent year-on-year in the first six months, with IC and AI manufacturing each reporting an annual growth rate of 20 percent.

The output value of strategic emerging industries grew 7.7 percent year-on-year in the first half. Among these, output value for new energy vehicles spiked by 33.9 percent, new energy by 20.6 percent and high-end equipment by 9.3 percent. Demand for products like satellites, rockets, high-end ships and domestically produced large aircraft remained strong, said the municipal statistics bureau.

All these results can be largely attributed to Shanghai's forward-looking strategies for new quality productive forces. Full-chain breakthroughs in IC and development of large AI models have all sped up in the city, said Ma Haiqian, vice-president of the Shanghai Academy of Development and Reform.

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Q&A WITH CEO

Editor's note: *After the release of China's first-half economic data, China Daily invited chief executives and senior leaders from key multinational companies to share their perspectives on the world's second-largest economy. Their insights go beyond short-term growth, offering a closer look at the evolving "China Opportunity 2.0" narrative amid ongoing debate over the so-called "China Shock 2.0".*

China's dynamic expansion opportunities



Kilian Aviles
Executive vice-president of Dekra Group and head of Asia-Pacific region



Andre Musto
Managing director and general manager of Merck Healthcare China



Willie Tan
CEO of Skechers China, South Korea and Southeast Asia



Joe Bao
President of Kone China

Q1 Many multinational companies in recent years continue to expand their investment and operations in China, suggesting that "China Opportunity 2.0" is increasingly offsetting the "China Shock 2.0" narrative. What developments or evidence best demonstrate that China is creating new opportunities for global businesses rather than posing a "shock"?

AVILES: From Dekra's decades-long on-the-ground presence and continuous investment expansion in China, the so-called "China Shock 2.0" narrative is fundamentally misplaced and decoupled from market realities. What we are witnessing is a fully mature, upgraded "China Opportunity 2.0" that delivers structural, long-term value for global enterprises, far outweighing perceived market risks. The most compelling evidence lies in the industry upgrading and high-value industrial ecosystem iteration taking place across the country. China has evolved into a global hub for high-end manufacturing, new energy, intelligent connected vehicles, digital economy and green low-carbon industries. This industrial upgrade has created entirely new service and cooperation tracks for multinational companies.

MUSTO: For Merck, we view China as an innovation powerhouse, not just a market. The evidence for "China Opportunity 2.0" is compelling. An aging population, a rising burden of chronic diseases, and the government's continued investment in and commitment to healthcare are creating real, long-term demand. What gives us particular confidence is the country's growing role in co-developing global innovation, all pointing to a maturing ecosystem that rewards serious, long-term partners. At Merck, we are proud to be exactly that kind of partner. Our dual-engine strategy combines our internal R&D with external innovation partnerships. Our aim is clear: to deliver more medicines to more patients, faster.

TAN: From Skechers' on-the-ground experience in China, we can clearly feel the tangible new market opportunities brought by China's development. Our brand has rooted itself in the Chinese mainland market for nearly two decades, always following the development philosophy of "In China, For China, With China". We keep increasing long-term fixed-asset investment in the country as a concrete response to China's development dividends. We have invested over 4.2 billion yuan ($621 million) to build our exclusive China logistics center in Taicang, Jiangsu province, expanded local R&D and livestreaming operation bases in Dongguan, Guangdong province, and realized localized production for more than 90 percent of products sold in China. Consumption upgrading focused on health and fitness brought by China's domestic demand expansion has created stable growth space for our comfort-oriented sportswear products. All these practical layouts and operational gains prove the real, long-term value of "China Opportunity 2.0" for Skechers.

BAO: From Kone's perspective, one of the clearest signs is that China is not only a major market, but a critical part of Kone's global manufacturing and innovation network. We operate our largest manufacturing facility in China, together with our largest R&D center outside Finland. Today, China is not only serving its domestic market, but also acting as a key export base, with products shipped to more than 100 countries and regions around the world. Equally important, our supply chain is highly localized and deeply integrated into the Chinese ecosystem, with 99 percent of components sourced locally. This enables us to combine global quality standards with local speed, flexibility and resilience. For a multinational company, that reflects a business environment with real industrial depth and operating efficiency.

Q2 China's economy has demonstrated strong resilience so far this year, supported by resilient exports, solid industrial production and continued strength in high-tech manufacturing. How would you assess China's overall economic performance so far this year? Looking ahead, what do you see as the key drivers supporting China's growth in the second half?

AVILES: Overall, China's economic performance this year has been remarkably resilient, structurally optimized and quality-focused, showing strong anti-risk capability and endogenous growth momentum amid global economic volatility and sluggish external demand. The steady growth of industrial production, robust export performance and outstanding high-tech manufacturing development are not short-term sporadic gains, but concrete results of sustained industrial transformation and policy support. From Dekra's frontline operational view, consistent rising demand for testing and certification services for electric vehicles, energy storage and smart equipment clearly mirrors the vitality of China's emerging industries.

MUSTO: From where we stand as a science and technology company with deep roots in China, the resilience of China's economy this year has been both notable and — frankly — not surprising to those of us who have been here for the long term. China is our second-largest country market worldwide, and we have been here for more than 90 years. The fundamentals driving our confidence in the second half are clear: strong unmet patient need, a policy environment that increasingly rewards innovation, and a local ecosystem that is maturing fast in science, speed, and execution. What excites us most is that China is no longer just a major healthcare market — it is becoming a global innovation engine. China now represents around 30 percent of the global innovative drug research and development pipeline. This is a country that is shaping the future of healthcare, not just consuming it, and Merck intends to grow with it.

TAN: Amid a complex and volatile global environment, China's economy this year has demonstrated strong structural resilience overall. Three core growth drivers will continue to support the economic upturn in the second half. First, the full release of domestic demand potential: policies to expand domestic demand are continuing to boost consumer confidence, and growing health awareness is driving sports consumption — the professional sports segment is also a key area of our focus. Second, new quality productive forces represented by artificial intelligence and digitalization: industrial digitalization, smart supply chains and big-data operations are enhancing overall efficiency. Skechers is fully deploying AI-powered digital systems for refined customer operations. Third, high-standard opening-up: policies that optimize the foreign investment environment continue to attract multinationals to deepen their localization efforts.

BAO: From our perspective, China's economy has continued to show resilience, especially in areas supported by industrial capability, localized supply chains and long-term urban development needs. For companies operating in the real economy, this resilience is reflected not only in macro indicators, but also in the market's ability to sustain production, respond to evolving demand and support efficient delivery. Looking ahead, we see modernization as one of the greatest growth opportunities in China. The country has the world's largest installed base of elevators and escalators, and a growing number of these units is now reaching the stage where modernization is needed. This is creating strong long-term demand for safer, smarter and more energy-efficient solutions.

Q3 China's innovation ecosystem has become an increasingly important engine of growth. How do you assess the contribution of artificial intelligence and other frontier technologies to China's productivity growth, industrial upgrading and long-term economic resilience? More broadly, what significance does China's innovation have for global technological progress and the opportunities available to foreign companies?

AVILES: China's innovation ecosystem, led by AI, digital technology and green frontier technologies, has become the core engine of its long-term economic resilience and industrial upgrading, bringing profound and positive changes to productivity improvement and global technological progress. Domestically, frontier technologies are reshaping China's industrial development logic. AI and digital technologies are empowering traditional manufacturing with intelligent transformation, significantly improving production efficiency, product quality and industrial matching accuracy. In high-end manufacturing, new energy and intelligent transportation fields, technological iteration and scenario verification in China's super-large market have accelerated industrial maturity, promoted the upgrading of industrial standards, and greatly enhanced the overall competitiveness of China's industrial chain.

MUSTO: AI and frontier technologies are reshaping how we accelerate innovation — from drug discovery through clinical development to patient services. China possesses a unique strategic advantage: it combines innovation capability with remarkable speed in real-world execution. China's healthcare industry is advancing at a remarkable pace. China speed is not just a phrase — it is a reminder fueling global innovation through the momentum of China's development. The creativity and talent we see here, together with the continued evolution of the regulatory environment, are inspiring. We believe in the potential of China's innovation ecosystem, and we want to be active participants in it. That means co-developing, co-innovating, and building real partnerships with the companies that are defining the future of medicine in China and globally.

TAN: AI and other frontier digital technologies serve as a core pillar for China's industrial upgrading and long-term economic resilience, driving marked efficiency improvements across the entire manufacturing, retail and logistics value chains. For multinational companies, China's mature AI deployment ecosystems, massive consumer data pools and well-developed supportive industrial chains present a unique testing ground for overseas brands to refine their global digital operating models. Skechers is steadily advancing its digital transformation. At this stage, AI is primarily deployed for the production of graphic and short-video marketing materials as well as routine document processing, substantially shortening content delivery lead times. Intelligent upgrades for supply chain management and consumer operations remain an ongoing area of exploration.

BAO: We see the contribution of AI and frontier technologies most clearly in their practical application. A good example is the new Huanggang Port project — a landmark cross-border transport hub in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. Building on our long-term strategy in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Kone is one of the few companies capable of delivering fully integrated people flow solutions while meeting the distinct regulatory and industry standards of both the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong. For this project, Kone supplied all 184 elevators and escalators, supported by AI-enabled connected services that continuously monitor equipment health and enable predictive maintenance.

Q4 China has placed greater emphasis on expanding domestic demand while pursuing high-standard opening-up. How do you assess these efforts? What new opportunities do they create for multinational companies and global investors?

AVILES: China's drive of expanding domestic demand and advancing high-standard opening-up is highly strategic, targeted and far-sighted. It not only optimizes China's own economic growth structure, but also creates a more open and transparent market environment for global businesses, bringing unprecedented incremental opportunities for multinational investors. The expansion of domestic demand is shifting China's market growth from export-driven to being driven by both domestic and external demand, generating massive high-end market demand. The upgrading of household consumption and the iterative upgrading of industrial investment demand have spawned huge market needs in high-end manufacturing, green environmental protection, digital services, product testing and certification, and intelligent solutions. This allows multinational companies, including Dekra, to deeply participate in the whole industrial chain of local market development, enjoying the dividends of China's consumption upgrade and industrial upgrade.

MUSTO: These efforts reflect China's strategic focus on long-term, sustainable development. High-standard opening-up establishes clear rules, transparent market access and predictable regulatory pathways. Expanding domestic demand is equally critical. China's aging population and rising healthcare spending power mean more patients seeking innovation. That demand is real and growing fast. For multinational companies like Merck, this environment is compelling. We see a market that genuinely welcomes high-quality innovation and is willing to build the infrastructure to support it.

TAN: China's move to expand domestic demand and pursue high-standard opening-up is creating structural opportunities for multinational corporations. The expansion of domestic demand is unlocking the vast potential of the super-sized market, with various consumption-boosting policies raising consumer willingness to spend. Rising demand for health and fitness activities has enabled us to reach more Chinese households with our comfort technology products, offering significant room for brand growth. At the same time, the country's commitment to high-standard opening-up is delivering a fairer, more transparent and predictable business environment, reducing operational uncertainties for foreign companies. For global investors, China offers a unique combination of market scale, innovation capabilities and supply chain integration. We have directly felt the benefits: our direct retail operations continue to grow, and our local partnerships have deepened, reinforcing our confidence in long-term investment.

BAO: From our perspective, these efforts are creating opportunities by expanding demand while also raising expectations for quality, efficiency and service. In our industry, this is especially visible in modernization. As a growing number of China's installed elevators reach the stage where renewal is needed, the opportunity is no longer just about replacing equipment, it is about how to do so with minimal disruption while improving safety, energy efficiency and user experience. As we have said before, the real challenge is not simply replacing equipment. Cities never stop operating, and buildings cannot afford prolonged disruptions. Modernization needs to happen while everyday life continues. That is why execution and delivery models matter as much as technology itself.

Q5 Looking ahead to the second half of the year, what will you be watching most closely as indicators of China's economic resilience, reform progress and long-term growth potential?

AVILES: To evaluate China's economic resilience, reform execution and long-term growth potential in the second half, I will track five core structural indicators closely tied to industrial development trends. First, growth momentum of strategic emerging industries such as new energy storage and intelligent connected vehicles, which shapes China's core industrial competitiveness. Second, implementation progress of high-standard opening-up policies, covering services sector liberalization and cross-border standard mutual recognition, which reflects China's commitment to global collaboration. Third, structural recovery of high-end manufacturing investment and service consumption, the fundamental endogenous growth driver. Fourth, progress in integrating Chinese industry standards with international frameworks. Fifth, tangible results of nationwide digital and carbon-neutral transformation.

MUSTO: Looking at the second half, I'm optimistic about what I'm seeing in China's healthcare transformation. First, the speed of innovation reaching patients continues to accelerate. We're witnessing regulatory frameworks and market dynamics that are enabling faster access. Second, China is building more sophisticated reimbursement frameworks that balance patient access with system sustainability. That's exactly the kind of thoughtful policymaking that supports long-term innovation. Third, China's openness to global partnerships and investment is creating a collaborative ecosystem. The infrastructure for clinical trials, talent attraction and cross-border innovation is maturing rapidly. For Merck, this clarity and progress reinforce our conviction. We're deepening our long-term commitment to China and we want to be active participants in China's healthcare ecosystem.

TAN: In the second half, I will track core indicators across two dimensions to assess economic resilience — reform implementation and long-term growth potential. First, consumption recovery indicators that reflect the resilience of the market foundation: I will monitor foot traffic in national commercial districts and outlet malls, the penetration rate of instant retail nationwide, consumer confidence indices, and sales growth in professional sports and youth-related categories. Only when these segments show steady recovery can we confirm that the domestic demand engine is effectively offsetting external risks. Second, the progress of policy reforms related to opening-up and digital upgrading. This includes the effectiveness of foreign investment support policies, supportive measures for multinational R&D centers, and the pace of industrial digital infrastructure construction.

BAO: One of the things we will watch closely is whether rising demand can continue to be matched by responsive and efficient execution. As China's urban renewal continues to accelerate, consumer needs are becoming increasingly tailored and time-sensitive. In that context, resilience is reflected not only in demand itself, but also in how quickly companies can respond and deliver. That is why supply chain responsiveness is an important indicator for us. Last year, we established a smart logistics and assembly center in Shenzhen to better serve the markets in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. We are already seeing clear improvements in delivery efficiency. We will also continue to watch whether policy support for urban renewal and equipment renewal translates into concrete project execution.

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CHINA

The Party's journey

A visitor explores an exhibition titled *The People and the Monument: Classic Fine Art Works in the National Museum of China Collection* in Beijing on Monday. Open to the public since July 14, the exhibition features 20 revolutionary-themed paintings and 33 sculptures, vividly portraying the enduring bond between the Communist Party of China and the people, and showcasing the Party's journey through revolution and nation-building toward a new era.

DENG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY



China to strengthen integrated transport network by 2030

Infrastructure upgrade and expansion to also accelerate logistics development

By **LUO WANGSHU**
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China plans to put 95 percent of the planned backbone of its national integrated transport network in place by 2030, up from 91 percent at present, as it shifts its focus from rapid network expansion toward better connectivity, efficiency and resilience, officials said at a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday.

During the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), the country will continue improving railway, highway, waterway, civil aviation, postal and express delivery infrastructure while accelerating the development of a more integrated logistics network.

"Building major cross-regional and cross-river corridors is no longer simply about spreading out projects or expanding construction," Vice-Minister of Transport Xu Chengguang said. "It is about optimizing the spatial layout, opening up the arteries of economic circulation and promoting more balanced regional development."

By 2030, China plans to carry out infrastructure renewal and digital transformation across about 80,000 kilometers of its transport network, build or renovate 500,000 km of rural roads and improve intermodal connections at around 1,000 major freight hubs and terminals to make cargo transfers among railways, highways, waterways and airports more efficient.

Major corridor projects will include coastal high-speed railways, upgraded highways along the land borders and coastline, transport links along the Yangtze River and new cross-river, cross-sea and cross-bay connections. Xu said the coastal railway and major border and coastal highways will form a "golden outer ring" linking border regions and the coastline, supporting tourism, regional development and goods transportation.

China will also strengthen the resilience of international supply chains by expanding global shipping routes, improving air cargo links with major overseas hubs and enhancing key logistics facilities, including overseas ports, to provide businesses with more transport options and reduce reliance on any single route or hub.

The railway sector will increasingly shift its focus from expanding the network to improving quality, capacity and integration.

"China has built the world's largest high-speed railway network and an advanced conventional railway network," said Wang Qiming, deputy head of the National Railway Administration.

Over the next five years, railway authorities will continue major construction projects while filling network gaps, easing capacity bottlenecks and improving connections between regions, cities and different modes of transport. Safety, digital technologies, low-carbon operations and more efficient freight services will also be priorities.

Civil aviation authorities said international air cargo will be a key focus during the next five years as demand grows from cross-border e-commerce, advanced manufacturing and other time-sensitive industries.

Han Jun, deputy head of the Civil Aviation Administration of China, said the country will build an air cargo system that is "better connected, diversified, resilient, safe and reliable".

China plans to expand freight links with established and emerging markets, improve coordination between dedicated cargo aircraft and belly cargo capacity on passenger flights and strengthen cargo services at major aviation hubs in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Chengdu.

Airport cargo terminals, aircraft stands and road and rail links will be upgraded to speed up transfers, while electronic waybills, digital logistics platforms and smoother multimodal transport will be promoted. China's air cargo and mail volume exceeded 10 million metric tons for the first time in 2025, including 4.4 million tons on international routes.

The postal and express delivery sector will strengthen a nationwide network of major sorting, warehousing and distribution hubs and improve connections with airports, railway freight terminals and logistics centers.

"Express delivery has become the lifeblood of urban circulation," said Chen Kai, deputy head of the State Post Bureau. By 2030, the sector aims to expand rural delivery coverage, improve international parcel services and digitally upgrade sorting centers, warehouses and cold-chain facilities to better support manufacturing, agriculture, retail and cross-border trade.

Xu said China invested 18.8 trillion yuan ($2.78 trillion) in transport fixed assets during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), the largest investment and fastest network expansion in any five-year period since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The country's comprehensive transport network now exceeds 6 million km, providing the foundation for a new stage focused on improving connectivity, efficiency and resilience rather than expansion alone.

Dog-cloning innovation cheaper, more efficient

By **CHEN MEILING**
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The somatic cell-cloned dog and cat. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A research team in Shaanxi province has developed a new dog-cloning method that addresses a key technical bottleneck facing similar research worldwide, paving the way for a canine cloning system with greater stability, lower costs and improved compliance with animal welfare standards.

About one month after successfully cloning a male dog and a male cat, Wang Yongsheng, a professor at the College of Veterinary Medicine of Northwest A&F University in Yangling, Shaanxi province, said both animals are healthy and have been vaccinated. They are the first somatic cell-cloned cat and dog born in Northwest China.

Wang, who leads the project, said only China, South Korea and the United States have mastered mature dog-cloning technology, but the procedure remains difficult because of a high failure rate.

A major challenge is obtaining sufficient high-quality canine oocytes. Unlike many other animals, female dogs ovulate immature oocytes that must remain in the oviduct for two to three days before maturing. As a result, reliably obtaining mature oocytes suitable for somatic cell nuclear transfer has long limited cloning efficiency.

Conventional methods also rely on dedicated oocyte donor dogs or on collecting oocytes at specific stages of the reproductive cycle, resulting in low success rates, high costs and concerns over animal welfare.

To overcome these problems, Wang's team collects ovarian tissue discarded after routine sterilization surgeries at pet hospitals. Oocytes are isolated from the tissue and cultured in vitro for two to three days until they mature. Their nuclei are then removed and replaced with the nucleus of a somatic cell taken from the dog to be cloned. After an electric pulse fuses and activates the reconstructed embryo, it is transferred into the uterus of a surrogate dog. The entire cloning process takes at least three to four months.

"Ovarian tissues removed during pet sterilization surgeries are normally disposed of as medical waste, but they still contain abundant follicles and oocytes at different developmental stages," Wang said.

"Through standardized collection, transportation, follicle isolation and in vitro maturation, we can transform these discarded tissues into valuable biological resources for scientific research and technological development."

The team is able to collect dozens of ovaries every day, providing a stable source of research materials.

The new approach is expected to reduce the number of dedicated oocyte donor animals by more than 80 percent, lowering research costs while improving the ethical sustainability and public acceptance of cloning, Wang said.

The researchers also developed a new in vitro maturation system that mimics the environment of the canine oviduct. Compared with conventional methods, the maturation rate of canine oocytes increased by 5 to 10 percentage points, the cleavage rate of cloned embryos rose by about 5 percentage points, and blastocyst formation improved steadily. Overall, the production efficiency of early-stage cloned embryos increased by 10 percent to 15 percent.

The team also adopted a minimally invasive embryo-transfer technique, reducing the surgical incision by half to minimize trauma to surrogate dogs.

According to Wang, the technology can produce laboratory dogs and cats with highly consistent genetic backgrounds, reducing experimental variation caused by individual differences. Such animals are valuable for studying neurological diseases, tumors, cardiovascular disorders and inherited metabolic diseases, as well as for evaluating the safety of new pharmaceuticals.

The technology may also meet demand from pet owners wishing to clone deceased companion animals. However, Wang emphasized that cloning does not bring a pet back to life.

"A clone is a new life," he said. Although a cloned animal shares more than 95 percent physical similarity with the original, differences in coat color, markings, health, personality and behavior can still develop because of environmental influences, much like identical twins.

The cloning system was jointly developed by Northwest A&F University, the Laboratory Animal Center of Xi'an Jiaotong University and Yuanchu (Xi'an) Biotechnology.

Young delegates call for stronger Sino-US relations

By **LI HONGYANG**
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Young delegates from China and the United States called for building sincere friendships and deepening mutual learning among civilizations as a foundation for stronger bilateral ties at a youth forum held at Peking University last week.

The "Zhi-Xing China: US-China Youth Dialogue" brought together more than 100 students from institutions including Columbia University, Brown University, Peking University and Beijing Normal University.

Centered on mutual learning among civilizations, science and technology cooperation and sustainable development, the forum aimed to foster greater understanding and collaboration between young people from the two countries.

Zhao Huchen, a Chinese student at Peking University, said: "We understand clearly that the hope of US-China relations lies in the people, and its future rests with the youth.

"In the face of a rapidly evolving transformation unseen in a century and an era where the destinies of humanity are deeply intertwined, we engaged in candid dialogue and met each other halfway. In the name of youth, we call upon the young people of both countries to bravely shoulder the historical mission and join hands to create a better future," he said.

Livia Maria Ilasz, a US student from the University of Rochester, said: "We advocate respect for the diversity of global civilizations and the building of shared values while seeking consensus and preserving differences. We urge deeper people-to-people exchanges between young Chinese and Americans, enabling youth from both sides to understand each other through dialogue and to eliminate prejudice through interaction."

Cian Hanrahan, a US student studying at Peking University, said: "Today, we have been reminded that mutual understanding is not a distant ideal. It happens in the conversations we share with friends from different backgrounds and the words we learn in another language, and in the traditions we take the time to understand."

Yu Yang, deputy secretary-general of the China Education Association for International Exchange, told the forum that over the past two years, more than 32,000 young Americans have visited China under the Young Envoys Scholarship program, which is mainly coordinated by the association.

Their visits have taken them to nearly 200 Chinese cities and involved more than 1,000 Chinese schools and institutions.

"In the current international situation, deepening youth exchanges and mutual understanding between China and the US is of great significance," Yu said.

Fang Fang, vice-president of Peking University, described youth exchanges as "the most dynamic and promising component of US-China relations".

"Peking University will continue to build bridges, provide academic and resource support, and help young people from both countries become inheritors of US-China friendship, pioneers of practical cooperation, and participants in global governance," he said.

Written admissions



Calligraphers craft handwritten admissions letters at Shaanxi Normal University in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, on Tuesday. The university has upheld the tradition of handwritten admission letters for 20 years since 2007. This year, 10 senior calligraphy masters, averaging over 72 years old, participated, with the oldest being 84 and four having contributed for more than a decade. QIAN GUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

All 11 suspects caught in Nanjing's $4m gold heist

By **YANG ZEKUN**
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Police have arrested all 11 suspects and recovered the entire cache of 27 kilograms of gold stolen from a luxury goods store in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, in what authorities described as China's largest gold theft by value.

The 37 stolen gold items were worth more than 27 million yuan ($4 million), Nanjing police said.

The theft occurred in the early hours of May 16 at a store in Jiangning district. Investigators found climbing marks near a second-floor window, although the store's doors remained locked and the keys to the display counters appeared undisturbed.

Police said a suspect surnamed Tong entered the store through the window at about 1 am and went directly to the gold counter. He filled a backpack with gold bars and other items but left nearby watches and other luxury goods untouched.

Investigators later found that several people had repeatedly visited the store to inspect the premises in the month before the theft. They identified another suspect, surnamed Wang, as the alleged organizer.

According to police, Wang had studied the store's layout and surveillance system in advance. On the night of the theft, he allegedly disabled nearly 80 surveillance camera feeds and erased stored footage before flying to Bangkok, Thailand, later that day.

After the theft, Tong left part of the stolen gold in a vehicle arranged by Wang before fleeing south in a ride-hailing vehicle.

Police examined 2,273 vehicles before determining that Tong had boarded a car near a ring expressway at about 5 am on May 16, said Han Ting, head of the criminal investigation brigade of the Jiangning branch of the Nanjing public security bureau.

Tong repeatedly changed his destination during the journey and arrived in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, at about 9 pm on May 17, Han said.

The driver later told police that Tong appeared nervous and barely slept during the more than 2,000-kilometer journey. Unable to pay the fare of more than 7,000 yuan in cash, Tong broke off part of a gold piece and gave it to the driver as payment.

Investigators determined that Tong was heading for Ningming county in Chongzuo, near the China-Vietnam border, in an attempt to leave the country illegally. Nanjing police immediately requested assistance from border authorities in Guangxi.

At about 5:40 am on May 18, officers from the Aidian border police station intercepted a white sedan near a freight yard. Tong was found in the back seat, and police recovered 8.75 kg of gold from him and his backpack.

Meanwhile, Nanjing police activated an international law enforcement cooperation mechanism to pursue Wang. Thai police arrested him in Bangkok on May 23, and he was extradited to Nanjing on May 29. Police recovered another 13.2 kg of gold from his residence.

"The criminal group was highly organized, with clear divisions of responsibility and extensive planning," said Li Dahai, executive deputy director of the Nanjing public security bureau.

Li said investigators worked around the clock for more than half a month. The task force pursued suspects across eight provincial-level regions and conducted cross-border operations through the Lancang-Mekong cooperation mechanism. All 11 suspects were arrested and all of the stolen gold was recovered.

The Nanjing public security bureau recently sent a letter of appreciation to the Chongzuo border management detachment, saying Tong's interception played a crucial role in solving the case.

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



Initiative tasks nation's rural counties with improving infrastructure, expanding green development

Left: Visitors tour Hongshuikou village in Beijing's Mentougou district in June. HOU JIQING/ XINHUA **Right:** A clear river wraps around rural residences in Hecun village of Rongshui, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on July 15. LONG LINZHI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Report reveals blooms of beautiful countryside

By **HOU LIQIANG**
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China has made a solid start in its county-level campaign to build a beautiful countryside, with rural environments improving and green agricultural development advancing steadily, according to a think tank report published on Monday.

The report, titled Progress and Achievements in Building Beautiful Countryside in China, was compiled by the Research Center for Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization, China Daily and China Environment News.

It said that after the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and eight other national government bodies released an implementation plan for promoting the beautiful countryside initiative in early 2025, China has stepped up coordinated efforts to improve rural living environments, promote low-carbon agriculture and strengthen long-term governance mechanisms.

The plan set out four major tasks and 18 measures, with the goal of raising the proportion of counties that have realized the beautiful countryside initiative to 40 percent by 2027 and essentially accomplishing the program by 2035, the report said.

In order to meet the requirements of the initiative, counties must have good public infrastructure such as roads, public lighting and green spaces, sewage and wastewater treatment facilities, and age-friendly renovations.

By 2025, the national rural domestic sewage treatment rate had reached 55 percent, more than double the level at the end of the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) period, it said. More than 5,000 large black and odorous rural water bodies on people's doorstep had been basically eliminated, with the treatment rate exceeding 98 percent.

The report said the campaign had benefited some 9.72 million people across 30 provincial-level regions, 860 counties and more than 4,100 administrative villages. It also noted that remediated water bodies were checked through unannounced inspections, remote sensing and water quality monitoring.

Rural waste collection and disposal systems have also been improved. The report said the proportion of administrative villages covered by systems in which villages collect waste, townships transfer it and counties process it has remained above 90 percent.



Visitors are surrounded by blossoming pear flowers at an orchard in Jinzhou, Hebei province, in April. LIANG ZIDONG / XINHUA

Green agricultural development has gained momentum, it said. The comprehensive utilization rate of livestock and poultry manure reached 80.1 percent in 2025, while the comprehensive utilization rate of crop straw stayed above 88 percent. The disposal rate of agricultural film exceeded 85 percent, helping curb plastic pollution in key farming areas.

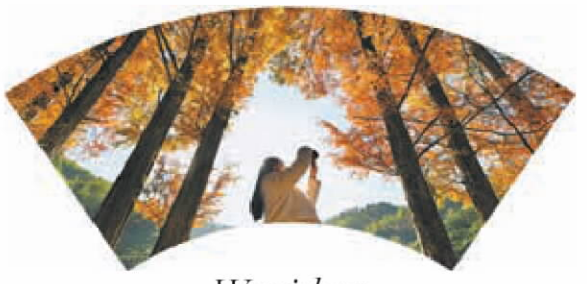
The report also highlighted progress in soil and water conservation. In 2025, China treated 11,500 square kilometers of soil erosion, restored 4,666 erosion gullies in the fertile black soil region of Northeast China and built 634 ecologically clean small watersheds. The national soil and water conservation rate reached 73.09 percent.

County-level implementation has become a key feature of the campaign, the report said. So far, 600 agricultural county-level areas have completed the beautiful countryside initiative, bringing the national completion rate to 20.9 percent. Twenty-three key counties have been selected as pilot areas under the Beautiful China initiative.

The report said public participation and assessment mechanisms are being strengthened. More than 4,000 sites have been evaluated, some 45,000 villagers interviewed and public satisfaction has reached more than 90 percent. Authorities have also handled over 2,300 public complaints through a closed-loop mechanism covering clue collection, data analysis, supervision and rectification.

It said beautiful countryside construction is an important part of China's rural vitalization strategy and Beautiful China initiative, helping shift villages from being merely clean and orderly toward being ecologically livable.

China is set to continue to improve rural environmental governance, promote green and low-carbon agriculture, enhance village appearance and strengthen farmer participation, the report said. The country will also work toward raising the county-level completion rate to 55 percent by the end of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period and basically completing the beautiful countryside initiative by 2035.



Wuyishan

Wuyishan, a county-level city in Fujian province, has turned strengthened ecological protection into a driver of rural vitalization, helping villages near a World Heritage Site and national park move beyond the old dilemma of "living poorly beside rich natural resources".

The city, home to 115 administrative villages and 89,000 rural residents, is the only one in China with both UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage status and a national park. Local authorities have placed conservation first while developing tea, tourism, bamboo and water-related industries.

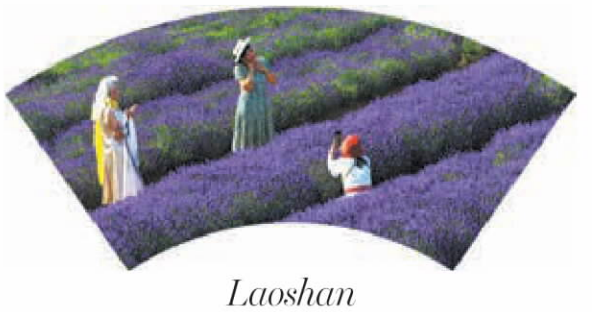
A 4,252-square-kilometer buffer zone has been designated around Wuyishan National Park to protect the core area through differentiated management. The city also spends more than 42 million yuan ($6.2 million) a year on ecological compensation and has invested 66.65 million yuan to buy back 1,200 hectares of commercial forest in key ecological areas.

The proportion of water bodies rated Grade II or better in terms of water quality has remained at 100 percent for the past three years, while the city's forest coverage stands at 80.5 percent and the share of days with good air quality has reached 100 percent. Since 2015, when the national park pilot program began, 44 new species have been recorded.

China has a five-tier quality system for surface water, with Grade I the best. Water at Grade III quality is considered good enough for most aquatic organisms to live in.

Green farming has also expanded. Wuyishan has built 8,840 hectares of eco-friendly tea gardens, accounting for 90 percent of its tea plantations, and sediment loss from tea gardens has fallen by more than 45 percent. Rural sewage treatment rose from 69.1 percent in 2022 to 98.2 percent in 2025.

In 2025, the city received 17.56 million tourist visits and generated 26.21 billion yuan in tourism revenue, while its tea industry chain reached 15 billion yuan in output value.



Laoshan

Laoshan district in Qingdao, Shandong province, has used integrated urban-rural planning to transform once underdeveloped coastal and mountain villages into cleaner, wealthier communities supported by tourism, tea, fruit and modern services.

Thirty years ago, many villages in the district sustained themselves on traditional farming, fishing and quarrying. Infrastructure was weak, and domestic sewage and waste were often discharged without effective treatment. Today, Laoshan has built a model that extends urban public services into rural areas while protecting its mountain and coastal ecology.

The district, with 95.7 kilometers of coastline and a natural coastline retention rate of 73.7 percent, began rural water supply, environmental improvement and road projects in 2005. It launched integrated urban-rural sanitation in 2014 and rural sewage treatment in 2018.

From 2019 to 2025, Laoshan built more than 1,600 km of sewage pipelines, 42 sewage treatment stations and 62 pumping stations, achieving countywide rural sewage treatment. Rural black and odorous water bodies have been cleared, while harmless treatment and classified collection of rural household waste have both reached 100 percent.

The district has also promoted circular agriculture. Since 2010, organic fertilizers and physical pest-control equipment have been distributed to more than 19,000 tea and fruit growers, covering over 2,000 hectares. In the past three years, soil organic matter in farmland rose by 34 percent, while chemical fertilizer and pesticide use fell by 6 percent and 13 percent, respectively.

Green industries have brought visible income gains. In the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, the average collective income of villages reached 8.82 million yuan ($1.3 million), and 80 percent of villages earned more than 1 million yuan. Rural residents' per capita disposable income rose from 31,000 yuan in 2022 to 36,000 yuan in 2025.



Meitan

Meitan county in Guizhou province has built a rural vitalization model centered on tea, turning former barren hills into plantations, production bases into scenic areas, and a traditional agricultural county into one of China's leading tea-growing regions.

The county, which administers 137 villages and communities with a total rural population of 161,300, once faced poor rural living conditions, weak infrastructure and limited sources of income. Through long-term planning, environmental improvement and tea-led industrial upgrading, it has reshaped both its countryside and economy.

Meitan's tea plantation area has expanded from 1,866.7 hectares decades ago to 40,000 hectares today. The industry now benefits 88,000 farming households and more than 351,000 people, and contributes to over half of rural residents' per capita disposable income. In 2025, rural per capita disposable income reached 23,000 yuan ($3,392), 37 percent higher than the Guizhou provincial average.

Environmental improvements have accompanied industrial growth. Rural domestic sewage treatment has reached 100 percent, rural household sanitary toilet coverage exceeds 95 percent, and waste collection facilities cover 94.6 percent of rural areas. Water quality at 82 rural stream monitoring sections is rated at or above Grade III, with no black and odorous water bodies reported.

The county has also preserved regional rural architecture by building more than 100,000 traditional houses in the architectural style of northern Guizhou, improving rural living conditions for over 98 percent of households. It was also among the first in Guizhou to achieve paved-road access for all administrative villages.

Tea has become the core of Meitan's green economy. In 2025, the county produced 80,000 metric tons of tea, with tea output value reaching 6.45 billion yuan and comprehensive tea-related revenue hitting 18.61 billion yuan.

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All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY

Innovation takes root in tradition



A delegate (left) listens to a guide while walking along an elevated viewing walkway at Wild Elephant Valley in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan province, on July 15. ZUO FURONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

By **HE WEIJIA** in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan
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Holding a thumb-sized ear of corn in his hand, Prak Thaveak Amida examined the unusual local crop and asked how it was grown after taking a bite of a purple variety with a fruity flavor.

"This is my second visit to Xishuangbanna, but it's my first time trying this corn. It has a very interesting taste," said Prak, an under-secretary of state at the Cambodian Ministry of Information.

The tasting was one of several activities arranged for participants in the 2026 Global Mayors Dialogue, held from July 14 to 16 in Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province. Across several field-visit routes, participants visited an agricultural facility, residential communities and Wild Elephant Valley, where mayors and other international guests learned about the prefecture's efforts in agricultural innovation, community development and environmental protection.

The corn tasting took place at a waxy corn processing facility operated by Dai Xiansheng Agricultural Development Co., Ltd. Liao Mengmeng, the company's general manager, introduced the thumb-sized corn as a traditional local variety that has long been grown in Xishuangbanna.

Liao explained that the corn's flavor and appearance can change after two or three years of cultivation because of its genetic instability. To improve its consistency, the company has partnered with Huazhong Agricultural University on genetic purification, rejuvenation and crossbreeding.

"Agricultural biotechnology in China is advancing rapidly," Prak said. "This is far more than ordinary corn. It's a newly developed variety."

The group then visited Wanjing Community in Jinghong city, where participants sampled dumplings and played card games with residents. They were also introduced to the neighborhood's shared facilities, which include spaces for dancing, painting, calligraphy and chess, as well as a communal kitchen.

Cai Hui, secretary of the community's general Party branch, told the delegates that, in addition to providing shared spaces, the community also encourages residents to take part in neighborhood governance to help ease the workload of its limited staff. This is particularly important during the peak tourism season from November to April, when people from across China travel to Xishuangbanna to spend the winter in its mild climate.

At Wild Elephant Valley, delegates learned about local efforts to strike a balance between tourism and wildlife conservation.

They walked along an elevated viewing walkway, observing wild Asian elephants and signs of their activity in the rainforest below.

"Elephants belong to the rainforest, so we have given the ground-level habitat back to them," said Xu Ping, a guide at the site.

Masood Khalid, a former Pakistani ambassador to China, said the surroundings offered a vivid example of coexistence between people and wildlife.

"I'm sure that the next time I come to Xishuangbanna, I will see even more improvements," he said.



Gary Dvorchak (left), Edwin Montealegre (center) and Tong Huiqi discuss the role and impact of AI during the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai on July 19, 2026. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

AI's human side comes into focus

International voices highlight how AI is transforming work, creativity and communication while keeping people at the center of progress.

By **MENG WENJIE** and **SHAMIM ZAKARIA**

As Bill Reichert walked through the exhibition halls of the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference, demonstrations of AR glasses offering real-time Chinese-English subtitles caught his attention.

Reichert, a partner at US-based Pegasus Tech Ventures, called the experience a "wow moment". The technology showed him how AI could make it easier for people to communicate across language barriers.

"It's as if I were anywhere else in the world that actually speaks English," he said.

The 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance was held in Shanghai from July 17 to 20 under the theme "AI Partnership for a Brighter Future".

The exhibition brought together more than 1,100 companies, and over 300 AI products made their global debuts.

Reichert was among the international guests attending the conference. Having first visited China around 2012, Reichert has since traveled to places including Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen and Hong Kong. Those experiences have given him a broader perspective on how technology is reshaping innovation and communication worldwide.

"AI is going to flatten the world in terms of anybody, anywhere, being able to connect with anyone in any language. And that's a big deal," he said.

For Edwin Montealegre, a Costa Rican conductor and director of Shanghai Monestel Music Productions, AI has already become part of his creative process.

A graduate of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Montealegre was attending the conference for the second time. He noticed a change in emphasis this year.

> "Before, the focus was on how to use AI. But now, AI is no longer just a device or a tool — it has become part of our everyday lives."
>
> **Edwin Montealegre,** a Costa Rican conductor and director of Shanghai Monestel Music Productions

"Before, the focus was on how to use AI. But now, AI is no longer just a device or a tool — it has become part of our everyday lives," he said.

As a music director, Montealegre is responsible not only for conducting, but also for organizing rehearsals and preparing performance materials. With AI assistance, some administrative tasks that once took days can be completed in hours or even minutes.

"I even use AI to brainstorm ideas," he said. "It gives me more time for artistic inspiration, for connecting with people, and for myself."

While Montealegre emphasized creativity, Tong Huiqi focused on care.

Tong, a clinical psychologist and clinical professor at Stanford School of Medicine, said that while many young people are turning to AI for emotional support, human judgment must remain central.

"AI cannot work independently," she said, adding that humans must ultimately decide what is appropriate, where its limits should be and whether it is helping.

In her clinical work, Tong uses an AI-assisted documentation system during consultations. By reducing the need to take notes throughout a session, the tool helps her give patients her full attention.

> "You can feel that the government is really encouraging young people to understand it, use it and think about how to make it better."
>
> **Rupert Hoogewerf,** chairman and chief researcher of Hurun Report

"My clients actually love it because AI allows me to be 100 percent connected with them rather than jotting down notes," she said.

Her experience illustrates both the value and the limits of the technology. AI can take over a routine task and create more room for human attention, but decisions about care, boundaries and responsibility must remain with people.

The same combination of greater capability and human direction is reshaping entrepreneurship, according to Rupert Hoogewerf, chairman and chief researcher of Hurun Report.

Through the Hurun Uth Series — including its Under25s, Under30s, Under35s and Under40s rankings — Hoogewerf has been following a generation of young entrepreneurs. He said about 800 entrepreneurs were featured across the series this year, with around 30 presenting innovations at the conference in areas including robotics and AI.

"You can feel that the government is really encouraging young people to explore AI, understand it, use it and think about how to make it better," he said.

Hurun's research also shows how rapidly wealth creation is changing in China: 70 percent of the country's billionaires on this year's Hurun Global Rich List were not on the list a decade ago.

"They are the new faces of China — from AI and computer chips to new energy and other emerging industries. They have just come onto the scene," Hoogewerf said.

At the conference, he met entrepreneurs using AI tools to run one-person companies, as well as businesses applying AI in traditional fields such as metals and minerals analysis.

"There is a massive transformation going on," he said. "You can apply AI in lots of different places."

Gary Dvorchak, managing director of The Blueshirt Group Asia, has also seen AI improve efficiency in his industry. He said the technology had reduced costs and sped up work in ways he had not anticipated.

What struck him most at the event, however, was not a particular product. It was the willingness among the exhibitors, entrepreneurs and visitors he encountered to experiment with the technology.

"There's no fear of AI here. Everyone is embracing it and thinking about how they can use it to make life better," he said.

Yet Dvorchak said the activity in the exhibition halls reinforced a more fundamental point. AI could support people's work, but people were still the ones exchanging ideas, asking questions and making decisions.

No matter how advanced the technology becomes, he said, it remains a tool.

"People are more important in the era of AI than they were in the past," he said.

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Yao Fangbin conducts a prescribed burn in the Lesser Khingan Mountains to reduce wildfire risks in 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Ready before the call

From earthquakes to wildfires, China's frontline firefighters work in shifting conditions with speed, judgment, and constant readiness to safeguard people's lives.

By GUO JIATONG
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On July 15, Yao Fangbin was already more than 300 kilometers from his base in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, inspecting rivers and mountain roads with his team in Mudanjiang.

Moisture from the outer bands of Typhoon Bavi, combined with cold air, was forecast to bring heavy and possibly torrential rain to central and eastern Heilongjiang. Before the first rescue call came in, Yao and his fellow firefighters checked evacuation routes, assessed areas at risk of flooding and landslides, and conducted rope and water rescue drills.

"When I first joined the brigade, our work usually began only after disaster struck," Yao said. "Now, our work starts much earlier. We focus on preparedness and disaster prevention, making rescue operations more targeted and effective."

As climate change brings more frequent severe rain, flooding and urban waterlogging across China, fire and rescue teams nationwide are devoting more time to emergency preparedness before disasters occur.

In China, firefighters do far more than put out fires. They also respond to floods, landslides, earthquakes, building collapses, traffic accidents and other emergencies. Depending on their expertise and location, specialized teams may carry out evacuations, search-and-rescue operations, emergency reconnaissance and disaster relief across different regions.

Yao, who has served with the Heilongjiang fire and rescue mobile general brigade for more than two decades, has seen firsthand how the scope of the job has expanded.

In the past, his brigade mainly fought forest fires. Today, its members also tackle summer floods and carry out other rescue missions, while providing emergency support at major attractions and events, including Harbin Ice and Snow World during the winter tourism season.

Anticipating disaster

The shift from reacting to disasters to anticipating them is also evident in Anhui province.

Xue Xuetao, a firefighter with the Hefei fire and rescue mobile brigade, recently led an advance team to Feidong county in Hefei, pre-positioning personnel and emergency communications equipment along the projected path of the approaching typhoon.

Since joining the brigade in 2007, Xue has built up extensive experience responding to disasters across Anhui. In the north, he has tackled recurring floods along the Huaihe River, while in the mountainous south, he has dealt with flash floods, landslides and other hazards triggered by severe rain.

That regional experience has taught him to anticipate how disasters may unfold. Areas such as Huangshan, Xuancheng and Anqing are particularly vulnerable because of their terrain, while northern Anhui faces persistent flood risks along the Huaihe River.

"A deep understanding of local geography is essential during a rescue task, because natural disasters can become life-threatening within minutes," he said.



Right: Xue Xuetao carries out flood-control and emergency rescue operations using communications support equipment in Fuyang, Anhui province, in 2020. **Bottom:** Migmar Tsering (left) leads his team in searching for trapped survivors following the earthquake in Dingri county, Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region, in January 2025. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

One of the missions that left the deepest impression on Xue was the devastating flooding in Huangshan in 2024, when days of unusually heavy rain cut three villages off from the outside world.

"The only road into the villages was a narrow mountain path, with steep slopes on one side and a fast-flowing river on the other," he recalled. "After landslides buried the road, we had to trek across unstable debris while the rain continued. Every step carried the risk of triggering another collapse."

Xue took part in an advance reconnaissance operation, in which highly mobile teams travel by helicopter or off-road vehicle, or proceed on foot to reach disaster areas ahead of larger rescue forces. Such teams are sent in when roads are blocked, communications are disrupted or conditions remain highly dangerous.

When public communications networks fail, they deploy an emergency private radio terminal to transmit live images and data from the scene. This gives headquarters a clearer picture of conditions on the ground and helps guide the next stage of the rescue.

Despite the danger, Xue said hesitation never crossed his mind. "Our only thought was to reach the disaster area as quickly as possible, assess the situation and report back, so the command center could make timely decisions and mobilize additional rescue teams," he said.

Lessons from such missions are shared across the force, becoming practical knowledge passed from veteran firefighters to younger rescuers.

"Our officers and veteran firefighters have taken part in years of frontline rescue work and accumulated invaluable experience. They teach younger firefighters the safest and most effective rescue methods," Yao noted.

Many of those lessons came at a high cost. "Some comrades lost their lives or suffered serious injuries," Yao said. "By passing on their experience, we hope younger rescuers can avoid making the same mistakes."

Passing lessons on

As veteran firefighters share lessons learned in the field, younger rescuers are being asked to master increasingly complex equipment and take on demanding technical and command roles.

Among them is Migmar Tsering, a technical officer with the Shigatse fire and rescue mobile brigade in the Xizang autonomous region. Born in the 2000s, he represents a younger generation preparing to lead rescue operations under extreme pressure.

One of the greatest challenges in responding to a large-scale disaster is the expertise required of commanders, according to Migmar Tsering. They must quickly formulate rescue plans, organize personnel and allocate equipment, often with little time and incomplete information.

"Modern fire and rescue operations involve thousands of pieces of equipment," he said. "Commanders must understand how every type of equipment works, what it can do and how it performs."

"It is a tremendous test of command capability," he added.

Technical knowledge alone, however, is not enough. Migmar Tsering said frontline rescuers must also remain calm as conditions change around them.

During a forest fire, for example, a sudden shift in wind direction can carry embers downhill and cause the flames to spread back uphill toward firefighters.

"Without solid professional skills and psychological resilience, panic can quickly worsen physical exhaustion. In steep mountain terrain, that can be extremely dangerous," he said, adding that prolonged exposure to intense heat can also put firefighters at risk of severe dehydration.

Even after the last survivor is brought to safety, the work is far from over.

During the initial emergency response, firefighters focus on rescuing trapped residents. Once everyone has been evacuated, they may spend another six or seven days searching through debris for personal belongings and helping families recover as much property as possible.

"Floods, forest fires and other major natural disasters are all high-intensity, high-risk missions," he noted. "They demand perseverance, discipline and resilience. Those qualities are essential to carrying out rescue operations safely and effectively."

Despite the hardships, Migmar Tsering said he has never regretted choosing the profession.

"You have to truly love this job," he said. "Our mission is simple: serve the people, stand with them and always put their needs first."

As he became more deeply involved with the team, Migmar Tsering said, he gradually developed a strong sense of belonging and pride in its unity, traditions and achievements.

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Z WEEKLY

Engineer finds art in the air

Once dismissed as children's toys, balloons became Xu Dengyong's path to entrepreneurship, professional recognition and building a new industry.

By **GUI QIAN** and **LIU KUN**





Above: Xu Dengyong checks a balloon installation he created. **Right:** Xu (front) teaches balloon-making techniques to young trainees. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Xu Dengyong, 37, first noticed balloon art on an online variety show in 2013. One of the guests appeared in an outfit made entirely of woven balloons. At the time, Xu was working as an engineer at an electronics factory in Guangdong province, living a stable life.

He never imagined that balloons — which he then saw as little more than "children's toys" — would one day become the foundation of a business earning him more than 1 million yuan ($147,000) a year.

Originally from Nanzhang county, Hubei province, Xu had spent years in manufacturing before changing careers. His factory experience left him with two lasting assets: the ability to endure hardship and a disciplined approach to solving problems — through standardized processes, attention to detail, cost control and safety calculations. These habits would later prove invaluable in the balloon industry.

In 2013, Xu invested his savings of 30,000 yuan to attend a monthlong balloon modeling course in Henan province. After returning home, he opened a balloon decoration shop.

The early days were tough. He handed out flyers on the street and visited wedding planning companies one by one, taking whatever work he could find.

A turning point came in 2015 when he began targeting shopping malls and large commercial events. But potential clients all asked the same question: How long would the balloons last?

Xu had no good answer.

At the time, balloon decoration techniques were still relatively undeveloped. Indoor installations typically lasted no more than a week. For shopping malls investing in displays built from tens of thousands of balloons, that simply wasn't good enough.

Air leakage was the biggest obstacle. Inflating latex balloons stretches the material, reducing its density and allowing air to gradually escape. Unless that problem could be solved, large-scale commercial balloon installations would be difficult to maintain.

Xu approached the challenge like an engineer.

First, he refined the knotting technique to reduce air leakage. Then he began placing one balloon inside another so that the inner balloon would remain intact even if the outer one burst.

His most time-consuming breakthrough came from experimenting along the inner wall of a balloon, slowing air loss without damaging the material.

Later, inspired by car waxing and facial skincare, Xu developed an oil-coating process for the balloon surface, further extending its durability. Today, his balloon installations can last indoors for up to three months, and as long as six months in winter.

These improvements transformed balloons from short-lived decorations into commercially viable products.

A real estate project in Jiangxi province in 2017 brought Xu's company 600,000 yuan in revenue in just half a month. In 2023, a 10-meter-tall balloon cake he designed was commissioned by nearly 30 supermarkets and shopping malls across China.

As his reputation grew, professional recognition followed. In 2019, his work *Divine Beast Longma* — named after the mythical dragon horse — won the large-scale category at the China Balloon Art Competition. Three years later, he received a Top 10 Unique Skills Award at a high-skilled talent competition in Hubei province and was named a "Jingchu Artisan", a provincial honor recognizing outstanding craftspeople.

"Those awards gave me a new level of confidence," he said. "No matter how large the order was or how complex the design, I knew I could handle it."

For Xu, the recognition marked more than a personal achievement. It convinced him that balloon art could be seen as a serious profession rather than a novelty, and it gradually shifted the focus of his work. Rather than concentrating solely on building balloon installations himself, he began spending more time helping others enter the industry.

Since 2024, through a model worker innovation studio supported by the Nanzhang County Federation of Trade Unions, Xu has recorded balloon modeling tutorials and offered free online and in-person training. More than 4,000 people have participated in his courses.

Many wonder why he devotes so much time to teaching people who may one day become his competitors.

"The industry is too fragmented," Xu said. "Unlike makeup or floral design, balloon art has no national vocational qualification and no formal training system. I hope to help the industry grow together so it can gain wider recognition."

His training goes beyond technique. Students also learn how to negotiate with clients, identify new markets, produce promotional videos, write marketing content and use social media to support offline businesses.

Xu believes the future of the craft lies in the hands of young people.

"Those born after 2000 are quick-thinking and highly creative," he said. "Balloon art is, by nature, part of the creative industry, and their fresh thinking can bring more original ideas."

That belief is also guiding the markets he is now exploring. One direction is combining balloon art with local cultural intellectual property (IP), working with governments and cultural institutions to turn landmarks and historic neighborhoods into large-scale balloon installations. Another is expanding into outdoor consumer spaces, including campsites and tourist attractions, where decorative installations are becoming increasingly popular.

More than a decade after watching balloon art on television for the first time, Xu no longer sees balloons as children's toys. Through technical innovation and an engineer's mindset, he has turned them into durable commercial products — while helping build a more professional future for an industry that is still taking shape.

Contact the writers at guiqian@i21st.cn

Global Insights

Ancient Datong echoes humanity's shared spiritual journey

The hum of the high-speed train softened as we pulled into Datong, Shanxi province, leaving behind the bustle of Beijing for a city shaped by layers of history.

Traveling with 20 fellow media students and three coordinators from the Communication University of China, I expected to see temples, grottoes and ancient streets. What I did not expect was a series of cross-cultural revelations, all pointing to one central truth: faith and human creativity transcend geographic boundaries.

Datong, once the capital of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534), is often introduced through its grand historical landmarks. But the first place that stopped me was quieter and more intimate: the Pingcheng Memory Hall.

Unlike large imperial exhibition halls, this small museum preserves the texture of ordinary life: chipped ceramic rice bowls, old vendor signs, woolen coats once worn by coal miners and vintage radio sets.

As a documentary filmmaker, I found myself lingering before a weathered copper hotpot, its dented surface carrying the traces of generations of family dinners.



Balcha Teshome Hailu visits Huayan Temple in Datong, Shanxi province, on June 11, 2026. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Later, in Datong's ancient city area, I saw that same everyday object transformed into art. Hundreds of copper pots were arranged into flowing silhouettes of mountains.

In that moment, I realized that cultural identity does not live only in carved stone or towering pagodas. It also simmers in everyday objects, forged through shared meals and community warmth.

At Huayan Temple, that sense of connection deepened. Its rare Liao Dynasty (916-1125) open-column architecture stretched above me in broad wooden beams, creating a spacious interior without obstructive walls.

Among the 29 intact painted statues, the famed smiling Bodhisattva known as the "Venus of the East" stopped me completely.

Her serene smile felt unexpectedly familiar, reminiscent of the saints painted in Ethiopian Orthodox churches near my childhood home. The intricate wooden brackets jutting from the temple eaves, each carved curve offered to the divine, just as Ethiopian artisans chisel elaborate doorframes and stone murals to honor faith.

Standing there amid drifting sandalwood incense, I understood that spiritual architecture speaks a universal language. Across cultures and civilizations, people pour patience, skill and imagination into timber and stone, giving visible form to what they hold sacred.

The strongest moment of recognition came at the Hanging Temple, also known as Xuankong Temple. Built into the cliffside, with narrow wooden walkways linking small prayer halls, the temple seems to test the boundary between architecture and belief.

As I walked carefully along its elevated passages, I thought of Debre Damo Monastery, the cliff-top Orthodox monastery in northern Ethiopia that sits atop an inaccessible plateau and can be reached only by hauling oneself up a frayed leather rope.

The Hanging Temple and Debre Damo belong to different religions, histories and landscapes, yet they ask believers across continents the same timeless question: how far are you willing to go, and what discomfort are you prepared to endure, to come closer to the sacred?

I paused on a small balcony, watching elderly Chinese pilgrims shuffle slowly across the wooden planks, their hands folded and their faces lit with quiet reverence. I pictured Ethiopian monks climbing that rope to Debre Damo, driven by the same unshakable devotion.

In that moment, I was no longer only a foreign student on a field trip. I felt like a witness to something shared — the human desire to place holiness above the noise of ordinary life.

The Yingxian Wooden Pagoda and Yungang Grottoes added another layer to that reflection.

The thousand-year-old pagoda, built without a single iron nail, reminded me of Ethiopia's Aksum obelisks: monuments created not for speed, but for endurance. The Yungang Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, revealed Buddhist art fused with multi-ethnic culture on a breathtaking scale.

Yet beyond these grand landmarks, present-day Datong remained equally vivid: warm regional food, smooth roads leading from the city to remote heritage sites and residential districts that showed how modern development can grow around ancient history rather than erase it.

We boarded our train back to Beijing as dusk fell, our group far quieter than when we had left. That silence did not come from tiredness alone. Datong had given us too much to absorb at once. Its meaning lies not in a checklist of tourist spots, but in the subtle, powerful connections it draws between distant cultures.

Every carved beam, every cliffside shrine and every humble copper hotpot tells the same story: art, faith and human perseverance are languages no border can divide. Datong's stone and cliffs do not merely speak to China's past — they speak to our shared humanity, visible to anyone willing to pause, look closely and listen.

Written by Balcha Teshome Hailu, an Ethiopian graduate student in the Faculty of Journalism and Communication at Communication University of China.

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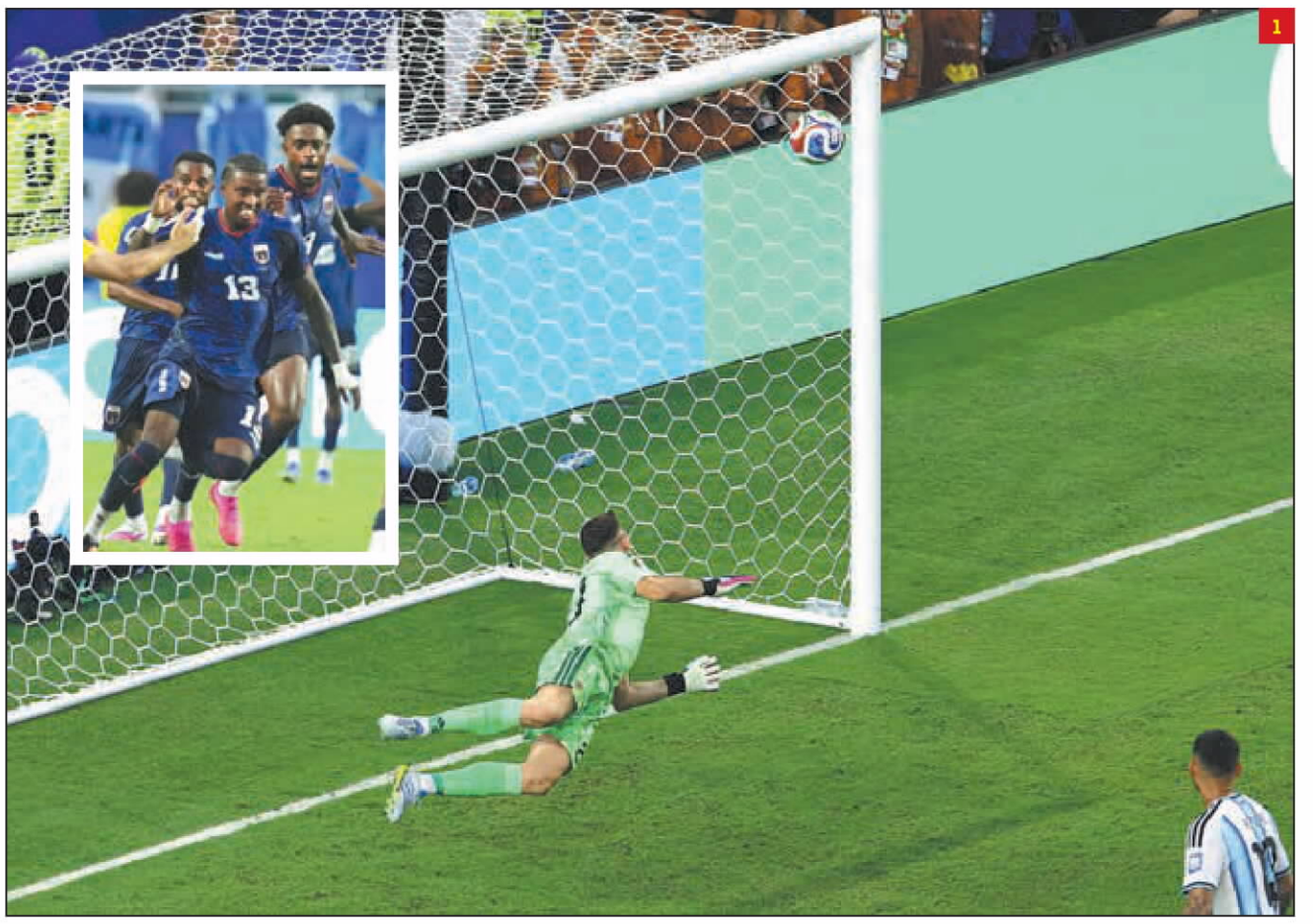
SPORTS

2026 WORLD CUP









BEST MOMENTS OF THE 2026 WORLD CUP

Three countries, 104 games, 39 days and hundreds of memories — here are a few that stand out







With 104 games taking place over 39 days, and across three countries — the United States, Canada and Mexico — the 2026 World Cup produced hundreds of spectacular moments that will live long in the memory.

1. Goal of the tournament

Sidny Lopes Cabral of Cape Verde stunned defending champion Argentina with a tying goal in extra time of their round-of-32 match at Miami Gardens, Florida, on July 3.

The Blue Sharks, who entered the tournament ranked 67th, trailed 2-1 in the 103rd minute, when Cabral received a long pass from Yannick Semedo near the left flank with his left foot. The 23-year-old, who plays in Turkiye for Trabzonspor, cut past Alexis Mac Allister while playing the ball onto his right foot and, from just inside the penalty area, curled a stunning shot past goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez and into the upper corner at the far post for his fourth goal in 14 international appearances.

2. Breakout player

Nineteen-year-old Barcelona defender Pau Cubarsi played every minute of every match, as Spain, winner in 2010, won its second World Cup title. He had 668 successful passes in 690 attempts, a 96.8 percent completion rate that was the second best in the tournament among players with 400 or more attempts, just behind Norway's Sander Berge at 96.9 percent. Cubarsi's total was second only to teammate Rodri's 747. Cubarsi's 750 minutes tied teammate Marc Cucurella and Mac Allister for the tournament high among outfield players. At 19 years, 178 days, he became the seventh youngest to win a World Cup, trailing Pele (17-249) in 1958, Ronaldo (17-298) in 1994, Giuseppe Bergomi (18-174) in 1982, current teammate Lamine Yamal and Antonio Coutinho in 1962 (both 19-6), and Marco Antonio (19-135) in 1970.

3. Worst foul

Qatari midfielder Assim Madibo broke the left tibia and fibula of Canadian midfielder Ismael Kone with a tackle from behind in the 51st minute of a June 18 group-stage match in Vancouver. Madibo received a red card and a five-game suspension. Kone had surgery and Madibo visited him at the hospital.

4. Biggest blunder

Matt Freese had a howler in the United States' 4-1 loss to Belgium in the round of 16 that will long feature on goalkeeper blooper reels. Brandon Mechele played a long ball from deep in his own half. When Belgium's Charles De Ketelaere burst past US defender Chris Richards, Freese came off his line, and, about five yards outside the penalty area, he chested the ball. The 27-year-old, who became the No 1 keeper for the US last year, was about to clear the ball with his left foot, hesitated and tried to pass to his left, only for the ball to deflect off one of De Ketelaere's legs toward midfield. Hans Vanaken scored from about 30 yards, as US captain Tim Ream was left unsuccessfully flailing to try and block the ball.

5. Best fans

Norway's fans charmed fellow spectators and television viewers when they performed the "Viking Row" in stadiums and even in the bleachers above the TKTS booth selling Broadway theater tickets in New York's Times Square. Martin Odegaard and Erling Haaland led the row celebration on the field following wins. Scotland's Tartan Army also left indelible memories, depleting Boston's beer supply and taking in baseball games at Boston's Fenway Park and LoanDepot Park in Miami.

6. Biggest upset

Eliminated in consecutive group stages following its fourth World Cup title in 2014, Germany clinched top spot in its group with wins over Curacao and Cote d'Ivoire before losing its group stage finale against Ecuador. Paraguay, in its first World Cup since 2010, began the tournament ranked 41st and advanced as one of the top third-placed teams, opening with a 4-1 loss to the US, beating Turkiye 1-0 and drawing 0-0 against Australia. When Germany and Paraguay met in the round of 32 on June 29 in Boston, Julio Enciso put Paraguay ahead in the 42nd minute, but Kai Havertz tied the score 12 minutes later. Germany, which began the World Cup ranked No 10, thought it had taken a crucial lead off the head of Jonathan Tah in the 102nd minute, but it was overturned by VAR because of a foul by Waldemar Anton on Paraguay keeper Orlando Gill. Germany had won all four of its previous World Cup penalty shootouts, succeeding on 17 of 18 kicks — including 15 in a row. Havertz's opening spotkick was saved by Gill, who also batted away Nick Woltemade's effort three shots later. Tah skied Germany's sixth kick over the crossbar, leaving it all to do for Jose Canale, who beat Manuel Neuer. Paraguay won the shootout 4-3, only to go on and lose 1-0 to France in the round of 16.

7. Best photo

Raul Jimenez scored Mexico's second goal in its tournament-opening 2-0 win over South Africa on June 11. An image from Associated Press photographer Natacha Pisarenko captured the joy of a player who scored on a header, six years after his career was nearly ended when he fractured his skull in a clash of heads with Arsenal's David Luiz while playing in a Premier League match for Wolverhampton.

AP

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2026



President Xi Jinping hosts a welcoming ceremony for President of Ecuador Daniel Roy-Gilchrist Noboa Azin in Beijing on Tuesday. Noboa is on a state visit to China until Sunday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Xi calls for deepening cooperation with Ecuador

By **MO JINGXI**
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President Xi Jinping called on China and Ecuador to better align their development strategies, advance Belt and Road cooperation and deepen collaboration in fields ranging from energy and infrastructure to green development and artificial intelligence, during talks with visiting Ecuadorian President Daniel Roy-Gilchrist Noboa Azin in Beijing on Tuesday.

Noboa arrived in Beijing on Sunday for a state visit that will run through Aug 23. It is his first state visit to China and his second trip to the country as president.

Following the talks, the two heads of state witnessed the signing of cooperation documents covering green industries, economic and trade cooperation, the digital economy and people's livelihoods.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the China-Ecuador comprehensive strategic partnership, which was established during Xi's state visit to Ecuador in November 2016.

Xi said China has always viewed its relations with the Latin American country from a strategic and long-term perspective, regardless of changes in the international landscape.

"China is ready to work with Ecuador to take bilateral relations to new heights and deliver greater benefits to the two peoples," he said.

Xi called on the two countries to consolidate political mutual trust and continue to understand and support each other on issues involving their respective core interests and major concerns.

China respects and supports Ecuador in pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions and is willing to strengthen exchanges between the two countries' governments, legislatures and political parties and share experience in governance as both countries pursue their respective paths toward modernization, he said.

Economic and trade ties between China and Ecuador have expanded steadily since their free trade agreement took effect on May 1, 2024. In the first half of this year, bilateral trade value reached $9.831 billion, up 20.1 percent year-on-year. China remained the largest destination for Ecuador's non-oil exports.

"This reflects both the benefits generated by the bilateral free trade agreement and the potential of China's superlarge market," Xi said.

He urged the two sides to further unlock the agreement's potential, so that more businesses and consumers could benefit.

China is also willing to work with Ecuador in healthcare, poverty reduction, and disaster prevention and mitigation in support of Ecuador's national development, Xi said. He also called for stronger exchanges in education, culture, youth and sports and between local governments, along with steps to facilitate travel and deepen friendship between the two peoples.

Noboa said China is an important partner and friend of Ecuador and that bilateral relations have entered a new stage, delivering tangible benefits to both peoples.

He said Ecuador is ready to deepen political mutual trust with China, support China in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and respect its position on the Taiwan question.

Ecuador is willing to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation with China in trade, finance, mining, renewable energy, science and technology, and culture, Noboa said. The country also seeks to expand its exports to China and welcomes more Chinese companies to invest and operate in Ecuador, contributing to improvements in people's livelihoods and the country's development, he added.

The two leaders also exchanged views on developments in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Xi said China has always maintained that the status of the Latin American and Caribbean region as a zone of peace should not be shaken.

The course of development and revitalization of Latin American and Caribbean countries should not be disrupted, and the right of countries in the region to independently choose their cooperation partners should not be interfered with, he said.

China supports Latin American countries in upholding independence and self-reliance, pursuing foreign cooperation based on their national interests, and safeguarding regional peace and stability, Xi added.

Noboa said Ecuador values China's position and role and is ready to remain a good friend of China on the other side of the Pacific.

Humanizing the future of robotics

WORLD WATCH
By Carlos Magariños

During my visit to the 2024 World Manufacturing Convention in Hefei, East China's Anhui province, I felt as though I had stepped into a scene from a science fiction movie. Before me, a 1.8-meter-tall humanoid robot weighing 60 kilograms was using its 38 degrees of freedom — or 38 independent ways to move or rotate — to fold clothes, open bottles, pour water and wash dishes with remarkable precision.

Since then, the race to develop more advanced robots has only gained momentum.

Improvements in actuators and sensors now allow humanoid robots to walk, run and perform increasingly complex tasks. At the same time, advances in artificial intelligence are rapidly enhancing their ability to interpret surroundings, interact with people and adapt to changing situations.

Applications now extend far beyond the factory floor. Humanoid robots are now finding roles in agriculture, customer service and healthcare, as well as in assisting older people, patients and persons with disabilities.

However, humanoids are only part of a much broader transformation.

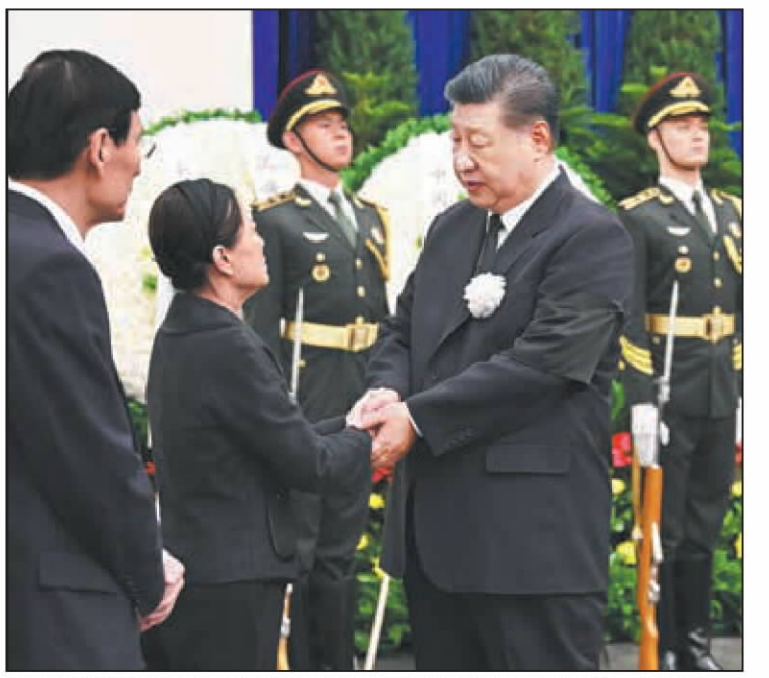
Collaborative robots, or cobots, work alongside people, augmenting human capabilities in factories, laboratories and hospitals. Swarm robotics enables multiple robots to coordinate on tasks such as searching for and rescuing survivors, inspecting infrastructure or exploring hazardous environments.

This new generation of robots is pushing the boundaries of possibilities. But perhaps the more important question is not what robots will eventually be capable of, but what we want them to do.

As the father of a young man with an intellectual disability caused by a rare genetic condition, I have seen firsthand the extraordinary contributions of robotics and intelligent technologies to everyday life. They can help organize routines, facilitate communication, improve safety and enhance personal autonomy. For many families, these are not abstract possibilities, but tangible improvements in daily life.

This experience has also taught me an important distinction that no technological advance should blur: assistance and care are not the same thing. Machines can perform tasks with ever greater efficiency, but care requires recognition, responsibility, patience, empathy and affection. Those qualities arise essentially from human relationships, rather than from algorithms.

See ***Robots,*** *page 3*



President Xi Jinping extends his condolences to a family member of Zhu Rongji on Tuesday at the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

Zhu Rongji's remains cremated in Beijing

Senior Party and State leaders pay their last respects to former premier

By **CAO DESHENG**
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The remains of former Chinese premier Zhu Rongji were cremated in Beijing on Tuesday.

President Xi Jinping and other senior Party and State leaders, including Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, Li Xi and Han Zheng, bade farewell to Zhu at the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in the morning.

Amid solemn music, they walked slowly toward Zhu's remains and stood in silent tribute. They then paid their final respects with three bows and shook hands with Zhu's family members. Former Chinese leader Hu Jintao sent a wreath to express his condolences over Zhu's passing.

Zhu died of illness on Aug 12 in Beijing at the age of 98. He had served as a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the 14th and 15th Central Committees of the Communist Party of China.

To mourn his death, national flags flew at half-staff on Tuesday at Tian'anmen Square, Xinhuamen, the Great Hall of the People and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs office in Beijing, in seats of CPC committees and governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, at land ports, seaports and airports, and at Chinese embassies and consulates.

Zhu was extolled in an official obituary as an excellent Party member, a time-tested and loyal communist fighter, and an outstanding proletarian revolutionist, statesman and leader of the Party and the State.

Zhu, who was born in October 1928 in Changsha, Hunan province, joined the CPC in October 1949.

During his tenure as vice-premier and premier of the State Council, China's Cabinet, between 1991 and 2003, the country was in a critical period of transition — from a planned economy to a socialist market economy.

Under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Jiang Zemin at its core, Zhu organized and implemented a series of major reforms, promoting the establishment of the basic framework for a socialist market economy.

Zhu spearheaded reform of the fiscal and taxation systems, actively promoted the reform of the financial system, carried out the reform of State-owned enterprises, and pushed for the establishment of a unified, regulated and comprehensive framework for the social security system.

He oversaw the completion of the arduous negotiations for China's accession to the World Trade Organization and advanced the country's opening-up in both scope and depth.

Zhu also advanced China's housing reform, gradually replacing the allocation of housing to employees with monetary housing benefits.

He had deep affection for the people, and emphasized that government officials should always bear in mind that they are public servants, have the courage to speak the truth and refrain from seeking special privileges.

Zhu's life was a revolutionary, fighting and glorious one, the obituary said, adding that his death is a great loss to the Party and the State.

XI'AN EATERY SERVES UP A UNIQUE TASTE OF THE CITY

Open-ended, pan-fried and steamed, these special *guotie* are part of a neighborhood tradition stretching back eight decades

By **LI YINGXUE**
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China Vibes — FOOD —

The sizzling sound of an iron pan and the aroma of freshly fried dough drew Ukrainian travel blogger Oleksii Lisianskyi to a small restaurant in Xi'an, Shaanxi province.

There, he discovered *guotie* — open-ended, pan-fried dumplings with juicy fillings. What stayed with him was not only the taste, but also the story behind the dish. "It looks similar to dumplings. The bottom is crispy, while the filling is flavorful," Lisianskyi said.

The dumplings he enjoyed at Hairong Guotie are part of a family tradition dating back nearly eight decades. Listed as an intangible cultural heritage item in Xi'an's Beilin district in 2022, the technique for making the signature *guotie* offers a glimpse into how an everyday dish can preserve neighborhood memories, sustain a family legacy and find new life among younger and international audiences.

Much of the appeal lies in the contrast of textures. The underside is crisp and golden, while the upper layer remains soft and tender. Inside, the filling is moist and flavorful.

See ***Dumplings,*** *page 3*

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INDEPTH

Shangri-La's mushrooming reputation

Highly-prized forest delicacy links mountain communities to tourism opportunities, Asian market

By **YANG FEIYUE** and **LI YINGQING**
in Diqing, Yunnan

Ngawang Duchin moved slowly through the forest in Shangri-La, Yunnan province, scanning the ground beneath towering pine trees.

In Jidi village, Diqing Tibetan autonomous prefecture, pine needles carpeted the forest floor and chestnut trees lined the mountain slopes at an altitude of 3,300 meters. Summer mist drifted across the ridges.

To an untrained eye, there was little difference between one patch of forest floor and another. But since July, 38-year-old Ngawang has been searching for signs of what was hidden beneath it. The Tibetan villager suddenly stopped, crouched down and brushed away a thin layer of pine needles.

"The ground is slightly raised here. When it bulges like this, there is usually something underneath," he said.

He carefully loosened the soil and a small brown mushroom slowly emerged, its cap still partly closed and covered with traces of forest earth.

The fungus was matsutake, known in China as *songrong* — a delicacy grown in the mountain forests of Yunnan and popular in high-end restaurants across Asia.

For visitors accompanying Ngawang, seeing one of the world's most-prized mushrooms being foraged in the wild was a magical experience.









Anticlockwise from top: Tourists, guided by a local villager, search for matsutake mushrooms in Jidi village, Diqing Tibetan autonomous prefecture, in Yunnan province; villagers sort matsutake mushrooms in Jidi; traders take photos of packed matsutake from Jidi at a local trading market. PHOTOS BY GAO YONGWEI / XINHUA Freshly picked mushrooms from mountains in Diqing are displayed in July. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Seasonal treat

This summer, similar scenes played out across countless mountain slopes in Yunnan, a province known as the kingdom of wild mushrooms. With the rainy season arriving between June and September, forests across the region have been yielding their underground treasures. More than 900 species of wild edible mushrooms grow here — accounting for about 36 percent of the world's known varieties and more than 90 percent of China's total, according to the Kunming Institute of Botany of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The secret lies in Yunnan's dramatic geographical variance. Altitudes range from just 76 meters to nearly 6,740 meters, creating a vertical climate where temperatures, humidity and sunlight vary sharply from valleys to ridges. This remarkable diversity of habitats gives mushrooms their own corners of the forest to grow, but matsutake stands above the rest.

Diqing prefecture — home to Shangri-La — produces more than 65 percent of the province's matsutake, according to the Fourth Shangri-La Matsutake Forum held in July, making it the undisputed heart of China's matsutake industry. Here, wild mushrooms have supported mountain communities for generations.

Unlike ordinary agricultural products, matsutake cannot simply be planted and harvested. It depends on a delicate relationship with its natural environment.

The fungus grows together with certain trees, forming underground networks around their roots. Through this partnership, the mushroom helps trees absorb water and nutrients, while receiving energy produced by the trees through photosynthesis.

It can take five or six years before a matsutake fruiting body — the part people eat — appears above ground.

And once it emerges, the clock begins ticking. Within about 48 hours, its freshness starts to decline.

This combination of rarity, seasonality and dependence on the forest has made matsutake one of nature's most sought-after delicacies.

The mushroom has been appreciated in China for centuries. Its name, literally meaning "pine deer-antler mushroom", refers to the way young mushrooms resemble antlers and the fact that they often grow in pine forests. References to matsutake appeared in ancient Chinese texts, and the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) pharmacologist Li Shizhen included it in his *Compendium of Materia Medica*.

In Japan, where matsutake has been treasured for more than 1,300 years, it remains closely associated with autumn and the aroma of forests. *Honcho Shokkan*, a book of Japanese food published in the 1690s, described it as "the foremost mushroom" and it has continued to influence Japanese cuisine.

Ngawang said good matsutake usually grows where small chestnut trees and pine trees meet. "When the mushroom is still young, you cannot see it. You have to understand the forest," he said.

For many tourists this summer, entering Jidi's forests provided a major insight. Ngawang taught them to look for subtle changes such as disturbed pine needles, tiny cracks in the soil and slight differences in the landscape.

"It is not always covered by moss. Sometimes it is just bare earth opening slightly," he told one group.

The visitors followed his instructions carefully. After successfully foraging for a while, the visitors sat down to taste the morning's discovery.

Ngawang took out traditional Tibetan butter, or *suyou*, and melted it on a heated stone. He placed thin slices of fresh matsutake on top. "Just fry it like this. Two minutes," he said. "Or you can eat it raw with wasabi."

Return of the Jidi

Ngawang was born in Jidi, and like many young people from mountain villages, he left home in search of a better life.

At 18, he joined the army and served for eight years. After returning to civilian life, he moved to Lijiang, another popular tourism destination in Yunnan, where he ran businesses including a homestay, hiking club, restaurant and tea house, and gained experience in tourism.

But after the COVID-19 pandemic, he began thinking more seriously about returning to his hometown. By then, Jidi had already developed a reputation for matsutake.

Every summer, when the rainy season arrived, villagers entered the mountains to collect the mushrooms. The harvest lasted only two to three months, but the income from this short period supported families throughout the year.

Ngawang wondered whether the forest could offer visitors something beyond a scenic view.

"People come to Shangri-La to see mountains and nature. But they do not always know the stories behind them," he said.

After spending several years exploring different opportunities, he leased one of the village's four designated mushroom-picking areas, paying 5,000 yuan ($690) a month during the three-month harvest season.

His idea was to cooperate with hotels in downtown Shangri-La, bring visitors into the mountains and allow them to witness how the mushrooms are harvested and sent to dining tables.

"I know the mountain and can at least make sure people are safe," he added.

For visitors, his greatest asset was knowing where mushrooms were likely to appear, when they should be picked, and which ones should be left behind. "Do not pick mushrooms smaller than 3 centimeters," he told one group.

The advice was not merely traditional wisdom. It reflected scientific understanding of the mushroom's life cycle.

Sun Dafeng, director of the Kunming edible fungi research institute under the All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives, explained that immature matsutake does not have fully developed reproductive structures.

"If they are picked too early, they cannot release spores effectively," Sun said. "That affects future growth."

In Diqing, regulations prohibit harvesting immature mushrooms and encourage practices that allow the fungal root network to recover.

Tsering Norbu, director of the Jidi village committee, said the mushroom industry accounts for a major share of the local economy.

"Seventy to 80 percent of the village's GDP comes from matsutake," he said.

For more than 300 households, the summer harvest season influences almost every aspect of their life. "When the mushrooms grow well, villagers have more confidence about the future," Tsering said.

Jidi has established four designated mushroom-picking areas with clear rules on harvesting hours and seasonal protections. Villagers adopt a "harvest and fallow" approach, part of what experts call a joint conservation and breeding expansion model.

Sun compares this approach to rehabilitating farmland.

"The forest also needs recovery time," he said. "The underground fungal system is living. If the environment is damaged, production will eventually decline."

In Jidi, more than 267 hectares of matsutake-producing forest have been protected and expanded through measures including designated harvesting zones and seasonal restrictions.



A vendor displays fresh matsutake at a market in Kunming, Yunnan, in September. YANG ZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

This approach has helped stabilize annual output at around 300 metric tons.

Preparing for sales

The mushrooms' commercial value must be hastily maximized when villagers lift them from the soil. From the moment they are picked, the clock starts ticking to get them to dining tables in time.

At the Shangri-La matsutake trading center, about 30 kilometers from Jidi village, workers sort, pack and dispatch the fragile harvest.

Inside the market, the atmosphere is frantic. Phones ring constantly and buyers inspect the quality of the mushrooms under bright lights. The fungi are separated by hand, according to size, appearance and freshness before being sent to destinations hundreds or even thousands of kilometers away.

At the center of the trading hall stands a large model airplane — a reminder that these mushrooms, once collected mainly for local consumption, have become part of a global food network.

Fresh matsutake is highly perishable, making transportation a challenge.

During the peak harvest season in July and August, dealers handle dozens of kilograms each day. Mushrooms are packed with ice and moved quickly through cold-chain logistics to preserve their texture and aroma.

Some major buyers travel to Shangri-La in search of the highest-quality mushrooms.

Trucks transport matsutake to Kunming, the provincial capital, in the morning to larger distribution networks and for export. Flights from Diqing Shangri-La Airport connect with major domestic markets, including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Guangdong province and Chongqing.

But expansion of the market has brought new challenges.

For generations, matsutake buyers relied on experience to judge quality and developed their own standards based on size, appearance and aroma. As demand increased, however, the industry needed clearer standards.

"Matsutake is different from ordinary agricultural products," said Jia Xiao, a researcher at the Research Center for Rural Economy of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. "Because it cannot be cultivated on a large scale, protecting the natural environment where it grows is the foundation of the industry."

A global appetite

At the forum, local officials and experts highlighted the growing recognition of Shangri-La matsutake as a regional agricultural brand.

According to data released at the forum, its brand value had reached 4.41 billion yuan, but experts said its reputation could not be measured by numbers alone.

Earlier this year, Shangri-La introduced new grading standards for matsutake, classifying mushrooms on a five-level scale.

The grading system considers factors including length, integrity, maturity, color, cleanliness and aroma. Among them, aroma remains the most difficult to measure.

"Matsutake's fragrance comes from a combination of volatile compounds," Sun Dafeng explained. "Technology can detect these compounds, but it cannot fully describe the human experience of smelling something fresh, earthy and connected to the forest."

Experts believe standardized grading and traceability systems can help consumers better understand the mushrooms they purchase. Each batch of matsutake can now be tracked through digital records showing its origin and processing information.

The international market for Shangri-La matsutake has continued to grow.

According to Diqing prefecture authorities, the region exported 55 metric tons of matsutake in 2025, generating 15.66 million yuan in foreign exchange.

The 2026 export season began on July 4, when a 14-kilogram shipment cleared customs at Kunming Changshui International Airport and was transported overseas within 24 hours of being picked, according to Kunming Customs.

Logistics companies have also expanded services to meet international demand.

At the forum, SF Express introduced new delivery solutions connecting matsutake-producing areas in Shangri-La, Kunming and Lijiang with overseas markets including Osaka in Japan, Seoul in South Korea and Singapore.

The company said its services could shorten door-to-port delivery time to about 28 hours and support exports via more than 50 international routes.

"To succeed in high-end global markets, Shangri-La matsutake needs more than quality and logistics," Sun said. "It needs sustainable harvesting, reliable standards, traceability and a story that reflects where it comes from."

For Ngawang, the future of matsutake is about helping more people understand the mushroom's history and essence.

"I hope the whole village can do this together," he said. "I bring the guests, and they experience it themselves. There is no need for a big investment."

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TOP NEWS

Robots: Innovation should translate into well-being

From page 1

Therefore, the purpose of robotics in care should not be to replace human relationships, but to augment human capabilities, allowing caregivers, families and professionals to devote more time to the distinctly human dimensions of care.

As a development practitioner, I have learned that this principle extends far beyond healthcare and caregiving. I made this point recently at the Web Summit Rio: The greatest challenge posed by a new technology is not merely to develop it, but to transform technological progress into development.

International experience shows that countries do not prosper simply because they acquire advanced technologies. They progress when they build the institutions, human capabilities and productive structures needed to translate innovation into productivity, opportunity and greater well-being.

Similarly, robotics becomes a tool for development only when integrated with education, skills development, entrepreneurship, industrial capabilities, infrastructure and sound public policies that accompany technological change.

This is also one of the key lessons from China's remarkable advances in robotics.

What impressed me the most during my visit to Hefei was not only the sophistication of the machines, but also the ecosystem surrounding them — universities, research centers, manufacturers, digital infrastructure, supply chains and industrial policies evolving together. Robotics did not appear as an isolated technological achievement, but as part of a broader strategy for productive modernization.

This is an important lesson for developing countries.

The goal should not simply be to buy robots or imitate those leading the technological race. Instead, it should be to develop the capabilities needed for robotics to increase productivity, expand opportunities and promote more inclusive and sustainable development.

The same principle applies whether robots operate in factories, farms, hospitals or homes.

An industrial robot should not be judged simply by the number of workers it can replace, but by its ability to make production safer, more productive and more competitive. An agricultural robot should not be valued merely for automating harvesting, but for enabling us to produce more food with fewer resources and less environmental impact. And an assistive robot should not be considered successful because it mimics human interaction, but because it empowers a person with a disability to gain autonomy, allows an older person to live more independently, or enables a caregiver to devote more time to genuinely human care.

Robotics, perhaps more than many other emerging technologies, reminds us that innovation should never be an end in itself. Its true value lies in the human possibilities it creates.

Ultimately, the measure of technological progress will not be what robots can do, but what human beings can achieve because of them.

The author is former director-general of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), former state secretary for industry of Argentina, and now a board member of several Latin American companies. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Dumplings: Legacy grows with new fillings, stores

From page 1

The family's restaurants prepare all fillings fresh each day, which include shrimps, mushrooms and leafy greens, as well as wild vegetables with eggs. The signature beef-and-yellow chives *guotie* features freshly cut beef with 80 percent lean meat and 20 percent fat.

According to Xuan Jianjun, the current owner and operator of the Hairong Guotie, the yellow chives are sourced from a designated growing area in Ankang, Shaanxi.

Each *guotie* weighs about 26 grams — approximately 9 grams of dough and 17 grams of filling. Bone broth is used to scald part of the flour and season the filling, giving the dumpling a richer taste.

Its preparation reflects the traditional Chinese balance of water and fire. The *guotie* are first lightly fried in oil. Once the bases begin to color, a mixture of flour, starch and water is poured into the pan. The pan is then covered, so that the dumplings can steam before more oil is added for a final crisping. The family describes the ideal appearance as a "golden back and fish belly".

Unlike many southern-style pan-fried dumplings, the northern-style *guotie* made through the Xuan family's technique leaves both ends open. Each dumpling curves as it cooks, helping to lock in the juices, while the thick cast-iron pan distributes heat evenly.

The family tradition began in 1947, when Xuan Hairong, the grandfather of current owner Xuan Jianjun, and his wife, Wang Guilan, settled in Xi'an. With three earthen rooms and an iron pan, they began selling *guotie* and sweet fermented-rice soup to the locals. They became known for generous fillings, carefully prepared dough and warm hospitality. When neighbors faced difficulties, the couple offered extra food without asking for payment.

After Xuan Hairong died in 1962, the passing down of the technique was interrupted. As Xuan Jianjun grew up, he was deeply influenced by his grandmother, Wang, and her dedication to the craft. In 1989, he decided to revive the technique and continue family tradition.

Wang, now 105, still visits the restaurant when her health allows, checking the food and reminding younger family members to preserve the original flavors. Her principle is simple: Run the restaurant honestly and make food with a clear conscience.

For Xuan Jianjun, preserving the craft goes hand in hand with innovation. The family has introduced crayfish *guotie* and explored seasonal fillings inspired by the traditional Chinese practice of eating according to the 24 solar terms.

The family now runs 12 franchised restaurants and eight directly managed ones in Xi'an and its neighboring areas. "We hope to build a century-old family business and pass the craft down from one generation to the next," Xuan Jianjun said.



The photo shows *guotie* at Hairong Guotie, whose dumpling-making technique has been listed as an intangible cultural heritage item in Xi'an's Beilin district since 2022. HAO YANGBIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Aid shipment



Earthquake relief supplies provided by the Chinese government are loaded onto a cargo plane bound for Colombia at Beijing Capital International Airport in Beijing on Monday night. The supplies included power generators, mobile water purification devices, disinfection machines, solar-powered lighting equipment, tents and blankets. The chartered flight was scheduled to arrive in Bogota, the capital of Colombia, on Tuesday. The recent magnitude 7.4 earthquake in Colombia killed hundreds of people. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Unitree raises mega debut hopes

First A-share listing by a humanoid maker offers key valuation benchmark for investors

By CHENG YU
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Expectations are running high for Chinese humanoid robot maker Unitree Robotics' debut on Shanghai's STAR Market on Wednesday, after its record-breaking initial public offering was oversubscribed more than 8,000 times by retail investors, with some institutions predicting a potentially explosive first-day jump.

Industry experts said that Unitree's IPO has become more than a company-specific event. According to them, it is a defining moment for China's fast-growing humanoid robot industry, which is setting a key valuation benchmark for global investors in the sector.

Investors were already placing their bets on Tuesday. Although the broader market came under pressure, a group of stocks of companies in the humanoid robot sector jumped in early trading.

Swancor, a leading new materials manufacturer that expanded into the field of humanoid robots, closed at 188.97 yuan ($28.03), up 10.26 percent, while Leaderdrive, a precision robotic component maker, edged up about 5 percent to 380.8 yuan.

Unitree sold about 40.45 million shares at 150.80 yuan apiece, raising roughly 6.1 billion yuan. Retail demand exceeded the shares available by more than 8,000 times, a record for Shanghai's tech-focused STAR Market.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, described Unitree's IPO as a defining moment for the humanoid robot sector. "For years, investment in the sector has been driven by competing technology road maps and expectations of long-term growth. The IPO will allow investors to compare robot makers more directly on their technology, product maturity, commercialization and path to profitability.

"As the first humanoid robot company to list on China's A-share market, Unitree has established a valuation anchor for the humanoid robot sector both for China and the world, gradually shifting the sector from thematic investment to industrial pricing," he said.

The IPO offer also values Unitree at about 60.99 billion yuan, representing 35.89 times its 2025 sales value and 219.23 times its earnings, far above an average price-to-earnings ratio of about 38.56 times for China's general equipment manufacturing sector.

Xu Guangtan, chief analyst for the machinery sector at China Securities, said that Unitree's offer price and estimated valuation far exceeded previous market expectations and could help reshape how investors value humanoid robot manufacturers.

"Chinese companies are simultaneously strengthening robots' AI 'brains', motion-control cerebellums and physical bodies while pushing toward industrial and commercial applications," Xu said.

On Monday, Unitree unveiled another high-speed robot capable of running at up to 12.66 meters per second and jumping two meters from a standing position. The company said it had produced and delivered about 18,000 bipedal humanoid robots across different models till the end of July.

Tian Lihui, a finance professor at Nankai University, said, "Whether Unitree can grow into that valuation will depend heavily on whether orders from factories and other industrial customers begin to scale."

Just a day before Unitree's debut, Precilasers, a Chinese laser maker, also made its STAR Market debut and surged more than 500 percent in early trading. At its intraday peak, an investor who secured one standard IPO allocation could have been sitting on gains of more than 550,000 yuan.

"The arrival of a group of hard-tech companies including memory-chip maker ChangXin Memory Technologies and Unitree on public markets also pointed to a broader change in how Chinese investors value technology companies. Greater weight has been placed on technological barriers, domestic substitution and future commercial potential rather than current earnings alone," Tian said.

Trends reshape how youth see China

By ZOU SHUO
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A wave of social media trends is reshaping how China is being viewed by younger audiences around the world, as foreign tourists bypass traditional news outlets to share unfiltered experiences of daily life across the country.

Under hashtags such as ChinaTravel, ChinaShopping, ChinaCool and Chinamaxxing, young creators on TikTok, YouTube and Instagram are documenting immersive visits to Chinese cities. The trends reflect a broader shift toward firsthand cultural exploration among travelers from Generation Z, who were born between the mid-to-late 1990s and the early 2010s.

The term Chinamaxxing blends China with the Gen Z internet slang "maxxing", a word meaning to fully embrace and optimize a certain culture's lifestyle. It gained traction globally after online creators shared clips featuring everyday Chinese lifestyle habits such as drinking warm water, practicing *baduanjin* — a traditional Chinese aerobic exercise, wearing traditional outfits and watching Chinese short dramas.

ChinaTravel documents immersive city trips beyond iconic landmarks. ChinaShopping highlights booming purchases of *guochao* (China chic) electronics, beauty goods and daily consumer products. ChinaCool carries dual meanings — both refreshing summer getaways in China's mountainous regions and admiration for its sleek digital infrastructure, convenient public transportation and vibrant urban culture.

Deng Ning, a professor and vice-dean at Beijing International Studies University's School of Tourism Sciences, said that there is a fundamental difference between inbound travelers today and those in earlier eras.

Decades ago, foreign tourists came to China with the notion of seeing an "ancient Eastern nation" and merely visited symbolic landmarks such as the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, Deng said, adding that today's Chinamaxxing phenomenon represents a filter-free revolution powered by social media algorithms.

"Foreign visitors no longer chase the scenic spots we assume they want to see; they dive into tangible and modern local life — wandering through wet markets, buying bubble tea with mobile QR codes and watching square dances in community parks," Deng said.

"China has transformed from an object to be interpreted by outsiders into a subject experienced, discussed and redefined through real personal encounters," he added.

When foreign tourists develop a favorable impression of China from simple experiences such as scanning QR codes to pay, sipping bubble tea or encountering small acts of kindness on the subway, this "grassroots soft power" proves to be far more persuasive than any official promotional video, he said.

Chen Hong, director of the Institute of Area Studies at East China Normal University's School of Foreign Languages, said that Western mainstream media and political elites monopolized narratives about China for a long time, reducing the country to one-dimensional labels such as "security threat" or "geopolitical rivalry".

Now, the trending hashtags center on China's daily routines, urban spaces, consumption habits and social dynamics rather than political headlines, Chen said. "While the 'China threat' narrative has not vanished, its once-exclusive interpretive power is being steadily diluted by authentic travel experiences."

He added that distrust of traditional mainstream media and discontent with their own societies' high living costs, social fragmentation and loneliness are fueling curiosity about China among Western members of Gen Z.

Peer-generated tourist content delivers powerful authenticity. Even occasional mild complaints from visitors make their positive observations far more persuasive, a unique advantage no official campaign can replicate, he said.

The most compelling China stories are those told by international visitors themselves after they experience immersive stays in the country, Chen added.

Gina Lynn Dijkstra, 19, a Leiden University undergraduate from the Netherlands, said Western propaganda had fostered in her some biased preconceptions before she arrived in Beijing in late July.

"Paradoxically, I felt more free in China than ever in Europe. Beijing ensured freedom to go out at night, and freedom to safely visit public places like lush parks and bustling spots in the city at all times," Dijkstra said.

She was deeply moved by the sincere kindness shown by strangers and volunteers, and quoted a line from *The Analects of Confucius* to sum up her journey: "Is it not a pleasure to have friends coming from afar?" Though unfamiliar with the Chinamaxxing online trend, she has nevertheless taken a new daily habit home: wandering city streets with bubble tea and snacks as a casual way to socialize.

Roxy Ye, 20, who is also from the Netherlands and has Chinese family roots, said she visited Beijing as a tourist for the first time earlier this month. She was stunned by the city's unmatched sense of security.

"I took a taxi alone at 1 am to Tian'anmen Square to see the flag-raising ceremony. I did not hesitate to get into a taxi by myself in the middle of the night. Looking back, I realized that I probably would not have done the same thing even in my hometown in the Netherlands," Ye said.

She has seen Chinamaxxing clips online, yet reminded audiences not to rely only on short-video snippets. "They often focus on certain aesthetic or trendy aspects of China, while there is obviously much more to the country than what can be shown in short social media videos," Ye added.

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Sharing cultures, building connections

Sister cities in China and Germany strive together to keep old houses alive and promote urban development

By **HOU CHENCHEN** in Beijing, **ZHANG ZHOUXIANG** in Stralsund, Germany and **ZHU LIXIN** in Huangshan, Anhui

In a traditional courtyard, sunlight streamed through carved wooden windows, falling onto a table covered with bamboo strips and colorful paper. The courtyard belongs to a workshop in Hongcun, a historic village at the foot of Huangshan Mountain in East China's Anhui province.

At the workshop for the intangible cultural heritage, where experts impart skills for making fish lanterns, a mayor from Germany carefully inserted the final bamboo frame into the lantern's body.

When the lantern was completed, its maker, Alexander Badrow, mayor of Stralsund, was expected to write his name on it. But he did not sign his own name. Instead, he wrote two letters: "HS", the abbreviation for Huangshan.

The fish lantern has become a symbol of a much larger connection: a mayor from a European city had linked his hometown with Huangshan through China's traditional cultural artifacts.

Behind those two letters was a decade-old friendship. In 2015, Stralsund and Huangshan established a sister-city relationship.

Huangshan is a mountain city; Stralsund is a coastal city, while both rose through trade and cross-regional exchanges.

Stralsund was a major Baltic trading hub in the Middle Ages, while Huizhou — a historical region that roughly corresponds to Huangshan today — stood as a commercial center of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties in ancient China, with its merchants playing a prominent role in commerce for more than three centuries.

Their commercial past has left both cities with remarkable cultural heritages. Huangshan Mountain was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1990, while Xidi and Hongcun, two ancient villages at the foot of Huangshan Mountain, were added in 2000 as cultural heritage sites. Stralsund's historic old town, with its brick Gothic architecture, joined the World Heritage list in 2002 as part of the "Historic Centers of Stralsund and Wismar".

For Badrow, who first visited Huangshan in 2015 and returned for his fourth visit in May, the two old cities are not merely preserved historical sites — they are living communities, where past and present coexist in everyday life.

"Brick Gothic architecture (in Germany) and traditional Chinese architecture may be very different, but both are magnificent testaments to the craftsmanship of earlier generations and to the care taken in their restoration today," Badrow said.

"I was particularly struck by the detailed restoration and preservation of the wonderful buildings in Huangshan — something we have also attempted in Stralsund. I was also deeply impressed by the fact that these are not museums; people actually live and sell goods there."

His impression is echoed by the people who make these old buildings their home. For the residents, heritage is not a relic behind glass.

Li Shengtao, who runs a homestay out of his ancestral house in Xidi, said: "Our houses, which are hundreds of years old, are alive here."

He said that every hall displays inscribed plaques and couplets, through which ancestors passed down their life wisdom.

Job creation

Wu Yuming, director of Xidi Intangible Cultural Heritage Experience Center, spent over two decades as a tour guide before taking on her current role.

After the villages were inscribed on the UNESCO list, residents developed a community agreement governing the renovation and maintenance of historic homes.

"If you need to repair any part of it, you must submit a proposal and apply for approval. Any interior decoration or beautification must be done without compromising the main structure," Wu said.



Alexander Badrow, mayor of Stralsund, Germany, takes a photo of a fish lantern in Huangshan in May. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

She said the revival of these ancient villages has created abundant local jobs — many villagers now run guesthouses, homestays, private kitchens or coffee shops right on their doorsteps.

"As we protect the old houses, it brings tangible economic benefits to villagers," she said. "We don't have to go out — we can earn a living right here. That gives us even more motivation to protect our ancestral homes."

He Yi, mayor of Huangshan, frames this approach in broader terms. "We cannot sidestep the new demands and challenges that modern life brings," he said.

"Instead, we must enable our historical buildings to actively embrace contemporary living. We want the original owners, the local villagers, to become the guardians, operators, and beneficiaries of these ancient structures.

"Only when those who protect the heritage truly benefit from it can preservation be sustained over the long run," He said.

"It is not easy to keep an old city vibrant while preserving its historical character," said Frank-Bertolt Raith, head of the Office for Planning and Construction of Stralsund, who visited Huangshan with Badrow in May. "I think Huangshan has done an excellent job."

He said the underlying philosophy — honoring the historical fabric while embedding modern urban functions — mirrors the approach taken in Germany.

For Olaf Fromme, chairman of the association "Save the Old Town of Stralsund", preservation is ultimately a dialogue between past and future. "The preservation needs a sensible, healthy balance between the past and the future. It makes little sense to reproduce a historic house unchanged if people cannot live in it properly."

Olaf said cooperation with Huangshan could help through an exchange of experience. Both cities have followed different paths, and each can learn from the methods the other has developed to protect historic buildings and keep its old town attractive and alive.

For Fromme's organization, that principle is translated into practical, sometimes small-scale action.

Heiko Werner, its treasurer, said the association encourages owners to retain and restore their properties, sometimes by supporting repairs to a door, a window or a small fresco.

For Dagmar Fromme, Olaf's wife and a local tour guide in Stralsund, such preservation is deeply personal. The historic center is not simply a collection of protected buildings, but the setting of memories that have shaped her own life.

"The Alter Markt (a historic square in Stralsund) is deeply personal to me. My grandmother lived nearby, and my husband and I met here more than 40 years ago.

"The square and surrounding buildings were once badly deteriorated, but over the past 30 years they have been restored with enormous effort. Today people can sit here, watch the world go by and enjoy the old town's special atmosphere," she said.

Citizen participation

Fang Qian, deputy director of the Huangshan Municipal People's Government's Office of Foreign Affairs, said Stralsund has done an excellent job in engaging its citizens. The city has a dedicated heritage institution which provides professional guidance for heritage protection decisions.

She highlighted the high level of citizen participation — residents weave their everyday lives into conservation efforts, achieving a seamless blend of preservation and development.

"This is something we can learn from," she said.

This kind of cross-border exchange is not new.

Decades before Stralsund and Huangshan became sister cities, a Huizhou-style garden had already taken root in Frankfurt, Germany.

Its chief designer was Cheng Jiyue, an expert in traditional Huizhou architecture from Huangshan.

In 1988, Cheng led the garden's design, refining every detail with his team. The design drew on the ancient villages of Huangshan, but had to be adapted to Frankfurt's soil, climate and locally available materials. As Cheng put it, the project was about "planting the soul of Huizhou in German soil".

Cheng remembered working alongside German stonemasons and carpenters, exchanging techniques and solving problems together. He said the garden has endured because its care has always been a shared responsibility.

Throughout decades, artisans from Huangshan brought the seeds of Huizhou culture to Germany. Those seeds have taken root and, with care from both sides, blossomed into new avenues of collaboration.

In May, the Huangshan Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism signed a memorandum of cooperation with the cultural heritage department of Stralsund during the Global Mayors Dialogue.

Looking ahead, the bureau said Huangshan plans to establish a cultural tourism promotion center in Germany.

It also intends to partner with Huangshan Vocational and Technical College to launch a training program for tour guides specializing in European languages.

Fang said that building on shared cultural heritage, the two sister cities aim to deepen collaboration in tourism, cultural exchanges, and economic and trade ties.

"Whether it is Huangshan or Stralsund, these are shared treasures of all humanity — we have a common duty to protect them, safeguard them, and pass them on," Fang said.

Xia Ji in Huangshan, Anhui, contributed to this story.

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Online
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From left: Participants enjoy a ride in a horse-drawn carriage during the Wallenstein Days in Stralsund, Germany, on July 24. People wear historical costumes during the festival, said to be one of the largest in northern Germany, on July 27. PHOTOS BY STEFAN SAUER / DPA PICTURE-ALLIANCE A folk performance at the Tangmo scenic area in Huangshan, East China's Anhui province, on July 25. XIAO BENXIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Mayors see a shared future harnessing technology to preserve heritage sites

By **HOU CHENCHEN** in Beijing, **XIA JI** in Huangshan, Anhui, and **ZHANG ZHOUXIANG** in Stralsund, Germany

The cities of Huangshan and Stralsund differ in size, geography and architectural style. Yet both face the same challenge: how to balance preservation and development as World Heritage Site cities.

At the 2026 Global Mayors Dialogue in Huangshan in May, the mayors of the two cities found common ground: technology can empower culture and urban development, bridging tradition and the future.

Their vision extended from nature and culture to daily life and urban governance.

Alexander Badrow, mayor of Stralsund, outlined three priorities: protecting the environment, safeguarding world heritage and diverse urban cultures, and integrating innovative technologies into urban construction to improve livelihoods.

"If we achieve these three goals," he said, "our cities will embrace sustainable and sound development."

During the visit, Badrow climbed Huangshan Mountain equipped with an exoskeleton. After fastening it to his legs, he stood up and took several steps, joking: "Now, I'm Iron Man."

For Badrow, the exoskeleton embodies a key idea: technology should help people interact better with nature. It allows climbing without creating more work — technology enabling, rather than disrupting.

He Yi, mayor of Huangshan, extended this thinking from nature to culture.

He said technology has the potential to preserve culture while revitalizing livelihoods.

"Culture is a slow variable that accumulates over time, while technology is a fast variable that drives rapid change. We have witnessed countless cases where technology activates, catalyzes and reinvents traditional culture, thereby promoting urban progress and social development."

He highlighted that frames for traditional fish lanterns are 3D-printed but continue to be painted and decorated by hand — preserving authenticity while enabling mass production.

Technology like this has boosted rural incomes. Since last November, villagers had gained an average of 5,000 yuan ($740) in just four months. With annual per capita income of about 25,000 yuan, this points to a potential 10,000 yuan yearly increase — a significant leap.

Badrow sees parallels. The old town of Stralsund, which dates back to the 13th century, is strained by the influx of visitors. He believes technology offers a way forward.

"We receive millions of tourists every year, and the surge of vehicles brings huge pressure on urban parking resources. We believe autonomous driving will be an effective solution to this dilemma in the future.

"We have experienced self-driving vehicles in trial operation for two days here in Huangshan. This innovative technology will completely reshape urban traffic patterns and solve the long-standing parking and travel problems in historic old towns."

At the conclusion of the dialogue, the mayors from around the world who attended the dialogue jointly endorsed the Huangshan Initiative: first, adhering to heritage protection to build a foundation for civilization; second, deepening cultural exchanges to promote symbiosis; third, strengthening technological empowerment to advance urban governance; and fourth, improving cooperation mechanisms to share responsibilities.

Looking ahead, Badrow said Huangshan and Stralsund will keep learning from each other about heritage preservation and urban governance.

"I am grateful for the friendship between our municipalities in China and Germany, and I am grateful that Stralsund is part of this."

Zhu Lixin in Huangshan, Anhui, contributed to this story.

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WORLD

Honoring liberation



French President Emmanuel Macron (second from right) marks the 82nd anniversary of Operation Dragoon — the World War II Allied landings in Provence — during a commemoration ceremony in Bormes-les-Mimosas, southeastern France, on Monday. MANON CRUZ VIA AP

Takaichi's words stir concerns

Japanese PM's shifting rhetoric on war history sparks fears of a militarist turn

By HOU JUNJIE in Tokyo
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The recent shifts in Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's wording on sensitive issues, including Japan's history of aggression and nuclear policy, have sparked domestic controversy.

Experts said the changes, coupled with moves by the ruling party over the Yasukuni war shrine and military expansion, reflect an increasingly overt militarist tendency in the Takaichi government.

They urged Tokyo to confront its history of aggression and improve ties with neighboring countries through diplomacy rather than military buildup.

On Saturday, the anniversary of Japan's unconditional surrender in World War II, Takaichi made a monetary offering to the infamous Yasukuni Shrine, which honors 14 convicted Class-A war criminals. Several senior officials and political figures also visited the shrine.

Atsushi Koketsu, professor emeritus at Yamaguchi University, said Japanese politicians had once exercised relative restraint in visiting the war shrine, but such visits have become increasingly frequent since Takaichi took office last year, reflecting Japan's growing tendency toward militarism.

Koketsu called Yasukuni an "aggression shrine", saying politicians' renewed visits not only reopen painful historical memories for countries that suffered Japanese aggression, but also risk putting Japan back on the path toward aggression.

In her speech at the annual memorial in Tokyo marking Japan's surrender at the end of World War II, Takaichi omitted references to "remorse" and a "pledge never to wage war". Her predecessor, Shigeru Ishiba, had revived the phrases a year earlier, marking the first such references in 13 years to Japan's responsibility as a war aggressor.

For many Japanese people, such a shift is deeply troubling, Koketsu said. The anniversary should be an occasion for Japan to reflect on its history of aggression and apologize to its Asian neighbors, including China, he said. Instead, Takaichi ignored such public sentiment and focused on her own position, he said.

Japanese media also noted Takaichi's choice of wording. She altered a phrase long used by previous prime ministers, changing "(Japan) must never repeat the horrors of war" to "the horrors of war must never be repeated".

Koji Nakakita, a professor of Japanese political history at Chuo University, told The Asahi Shimbun that "must never repeat" emphasizes Japan's resolve not to wage war again, while "must never be repeated" could suggest that wars were started by other countries.

The wording could even imply that World War II was not a "war of aggression" launched by Japan, but a "war of self-defense" that it was forced to fight, he said.

Hiroshi Shiratori, a professor at Hosei University, told China Daily that such negative wording on the issue of war could be seen as provocative by countries that suffered from Japan's wartime aggression.

Nuclear policy

The controversy over Takaichi's wording extends beyond wartime history.

Earlier this month, at the atomic bombing memorial ceremonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Takaichi said Japan "is upholding the Three Non-Nuclear Principles", but stopped short of explicitly pledging to continue doing so, a subtle change that has raised questions in Japan.

Tatsuo Sekiguchi, head of a civic group in Nagasaki, said the absence of a clear commitment to uphold the principles in the future suggests the Takaichi government may be considering a review of the long-standing policy.

As a Nagasaki resident, Sekiguchi said he strongly opposes such a move, citing the enormous loss of life and prolonged suffering caused by the atomic bombing. Any remarks that could undermine the principles are unacceptable, he said.

Shiratori said the ambiguity over whether Japan will continue to uphold the principles, coupled with rising defense spending, reflects the country's growing "Japan first" tendency.

A supplementary budget for fiscal 2025 allowed Japan to reach its target of raising defense spending to 2 percent of GDP two years ahead of schedule, and the increase has continued unabated.

With the initial defense budget for fiscal 2026 reaching a record high, Japan's defense budget request for fiscal 2027 is reportedly set to rise further.

Shiratori said rising defense spending, along with a lack of consideration for neighboring countries, could further fuel concerns about Japan's remilitarization.

Rather than reinforcing a "Japan first" approach through military expansion, Japan should strengthen diplomacy and deepen cooperation and friendly ties with other Asian countries, he said.

Tougher social media restrictions test digital protection



Xin Xin
Reporter's log

FIRST PERSON VIEW

About two years ago, when I first saw a short video on my phone about Australia's plan to ban children from using social media, my first thought was: Can a ban really protect children in the digital age?

For many families, social media is no longer separate from childhood. It is embedded in phones, games, chat groups and other forms of online communication. Even adults can struggle to know when to stop scrolling, what information to trust or how much personal information they have shared online. For children, the challenges can be even greater.

That is why Australia's social media minimum age law has drawn broad attention since it came into effect on Dec 10.

More than half a year after its implementation, the law is being strengthened further. In June, the Australian government said it was "doubling down on platforms that are not doing enough to keep under-16s off social media", doubling the maximum penalty for breaches to A$99 million ($70 million).

The new legislation will also strengthen the information-gathering powers of the eSafety Commissioner, making it easier for the independent regulator to request information and documents from social media companies to ensure compliance.

Since the law took effect, eSafety has considered services including Facebook, TikTok and YouTube as age-restricted platforms. They need to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 from having accounts.

In other words, the responsibility lies with the platforms, not children or their parents.

The Australian government said more than 5 million accounts belonging to under-16s have been removed, deactivated or restricted since the ban began.

Described by Australia as "world-leading", the law quickly drew international attention. The United Kingdom has announced plans to ban social media platforms from providing services to children under 16, with the measure expected to take effect next year. New Zealand, Norway and Turkiye are also considering similar restrictions.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said when announcing the stronger enforcement measures that he was heartened by the shift in public discussion and the global momentum since the country introduced the minimum age law. However, he said it was clear that big technology companies were not doing enough to comply, with too many children still accessing social media.

The changes reflected how seriously the government viewed any failure by social media companies to comply with the "world-leading" law, he said.

Doubling the fines can certainly put pressure on platforms. Tech giants have long profited from users' time, clicks, comments and traffic, giving them a greater responsibility to protect minors on their platforms.

However, as the debate around this law has spread from Australia to other countries, I feel the most important point is not the size of the fine, but the signal it sends: As children enter the digital world at increasingly young ages, their protection needs to be taken more seriously.

The law is not meant to punish children or blame parents. Rather, it serves as protective line before children enter the complex online world.

Still, the law can only do part of the job. The people who spend the most time with children every day are parents.

Closing an account or limiting an app does not make online risks disappear. Children can still connect with the outside world through games, chat groups, video platforms and other online spaces.

The ban is also a reminder for parents to pay closer attention to what their children see online, whom they talk to, and whether they know how to protect themselves.

The hardest and most important part is explaining to children why this is being done. If parents simply say, "You are not allowed to use it," children may see it only as control. But if they understand how certain content, interactions with strangers, online comments and algorithmic recommendations can affect their emotions, privacy and safety, they are more likely to accept the rules.

Today, digital life is already part of everyday life. Protecting children cannot simply mean pulling them away from screens. Parents also need to keep pace with the times and help children build stronger digital skills, enabling them to assess information, identify risks, protect their privacy and use technology responsibly.

In this sense, Australia's ban may also offer an important lesson for children before they truly step into the digital world.

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Germany demands Apple revise app consent prompts

By JONATHAN POWELL in London
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United States tech giant Apple is set to revise the policies that govern third-party developers' use of personal data for ad targeting on iPhones and iPads, Germany's competition watchdog said on Monday, concluding a multiyear probe.

Germany's Federal Cartel Office determined that Apple's App Tracking Transparency framework, or ATT, gave its own applications an unfair competitive advantage by using more favorable, less discouraging language and design than those required for third-party developers.

The FCO said these more favorable consent prompts potentially breached competition law.

Apple has four months from the date of the decision to roll out the changes, which will remain in effect for seven years under the oversight of an independent trustee, Reuters reported.

"Apple is allowed to provide for a level of protection for its users that exceeds the minimum legal requirements," Andreas Mundt, president of the FCO, said in a statement.

"However, if Apple sets up additional rules within its ecosystem for the use of data, these rules must, under Germany's special abuse provision for large digital companies, not treat its own offerings better than those of its competitors.

"This is precisely where our competition concerns arose," he said. "Apple will now align the consent requests much more closely and give third-party app providers more freedom to combine the necessary requests in a sensible way."

Under the commitments, third-party apps' consent pop-ups must be redesigned to remove discouraging wording and symbols and be presented in a visually and linguistically neutral form. The changes will apply in almost all European Union countries.

"While we believe the current ATT prompt provides a clear, easy-to-understand and effective way to keep users in control of their data — an opinion shared by the German data protection authorities — we have agreed to make changes to the text and formatting of the prompt at the FCO's request," Apple said in a statement.

"These commitments ensure we can continue to provide this important privacy tool in Europe, and keep users, not ad tech companies and data brokers, in control of their data," it said.

Initial fix rejected

Apple had previously proposed a fix that mostly amounted to tweaking the wording of the first-run warning prompts shown in third-party apps. Regulators rejected that proposal, but now the German authority said it has secured binding commitments from Apple and closed the case.

Third-party app developers, such as Facebook parent Meta Platforms, seek precise user data to display targeted ads, which typically yield higher returns than broad, untargeted campaigns.

Regulators in France and Italy have already penalized Apple for its ATT framework, issuing fines of 150 million and 98.6 million euros ($174 million and $114 million), respectively.

Gaza stalemate continues as Israel, Hamas hold firm

JERUSALEM — US President Donald Trump's envoy Jared Kushner left Jerusalem on Monday without a breakthrough after two days of talks with Israeli and Hamas leaders over a stalled plan to end the conflict in Gaza, with both sides standing firm on key demands.

Kushner met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a day after his meeting with the political leader of Hamas in a bid to revive the United States-backed plan. Israel has carried out airstrikes and seized more territory in Gaza despite an October ceasefire, while Hamas has insisted "there must first be Israeli approval of the road map".

Kushner described his nearly four-hour meeting with Netanyahu as "good". He added that Hamas representatives said "all the right things".

"We could be seeing progress in as little as 30 days, hopefully on starting to take some of the weapons out and hopefully filling in some of the tunnels as well in the next 60 to 90 days," Kushner told Fox News.

He also said that the United States is "not going to restrict Israel's right to defend itself if there are any imminent threats" in Gaza.

Last month, Trump announced that Hamas had agreed to lay down its arms in phases, under a 15-point road map put forward by the US-led "Board of Peace" to advance his plan, as Israel's military withdraws from Gaza. Hamas said it agreed to the road map but implementation depends on Israel first meeting its own commitments, including halting attacks and withdrawing.

On Tuesday, Hamas reiterated that it remained committed to the Gaza peace deal.

"Hamas is committed to this agreed-upon process," the group's spokesman Hazem Qassem told Agence France-Presse.

"It is clear that, so far, the Israeli side has not given the mediators clear approval of the road map," he said.

"There are timelines and procedural steps that need to be worked out in detail, but there must first be Israeli approval of the road map," he added.

Netanyahu, whose ruling coalition is trailing in opinion polls ahead of an October national election, rejected the deal earlier this month, insisting that Israel would not pull back until Hamas is completely disarmed.

An official with the "Board of Peace" said Israel would be able to "act accordingly" if Hamas "resorts to terror, violence or attempts to rearm". However, the official said Netanyahu was told that Hamas has committed to fully disarm and "cease immediately all military activity, including rearmament and tunnel digging".

Israeli operations have killed at least 1,265 Palestinians since a ceasefire came into effect on Oct 10, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, whose figures are considered reliable by the United Nations.

The Israeli army has reported five deaths in its ranks from Gaza operations over the same period.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Pentagon's scrutiny of normal research collaborations reeks of McCarthyism

Academic and research exchanges have been a vibrant and resilient bond in relations between China and the United States. For decades, universities and research institutions from both countries have collaborated closely in science and technology, yielding breakthroughs that benefited not only the two nations but the entire world.

Despite this, the US government has intensified its crackdown on Chinese scientists and researchers in recent years, baselessly alleging that they "threaten national security" by accessing sensitive research and advanced technology.

The so-called "China Initiative", launched by the US Department of Justice in 2018, sought to identify "Chinese spies" in US universities, leading to racial profiling. Though the program was terminated four years later because it was found to be harming the US' technological competitiveness, the US House Select Committee on China last year directed six universities to provide data on Chinese students, claiming that the admission of a large number of Chinese students into science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs might be "at the expense of qualified Americans".

Such discriminatory policies have prompted many US universities to "wind down" partnerships with Chinese universities and restrict the admission of students from China.

The US crackdown on academic exchanges with China is a critical front in its broader strategy to contain China. By severing research ties, Washington aims to stifle China's progress in high-tech fields such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors and biotechnology, where collaborative research has long driven innovation. This strategy is complemented by restricting supply chains and trade, creating an isolated ecosystem intended to limit Chinese access to Western knowledge and markets.

In the latest move, the Pentagon has asked 30 US universities to audit their foreign research partnerships, specifically targeting collaborations with Chinese institutions and entities linked to Confucius Institutes. These universities risk losing future federal research funding if they fail to comply.

In the past few years, the US government has already labeled Confucius Institutes in the country as "foreign missions", and implemented administrative and legislative measures that have effectively forced nearly all of them to close down. This latest round of scrutiny, once again justified as safeguarding "national security", raises concerns about its true purpose.

Instead of enhancing research security or promoting institutional accountability, this initiative is simply intellectual McCarthyism. By casting a wide net of suspicion over academic exchange programs, the Pentagon directive risks stifling the open exchange of ideas and undermining academic freedom. Washington should reflect on whether such measures truly serve the US' national interests, or merely fuel the atmosphere of fear and mistrust surrounding China.

The Pentagon claims it aims to protect research investments from "foreign exploitation", yet it has given the schools only two weeks to submit their findings and mitigation plans. The tight deadline makes the proposed scrutiny either perfunctory or impossible, raising doubts about the feasibility of meaningful results. As a consequence, the schools may feel compelled to end partnerships, disrupting ongoing projects and adversely affecting faculty and students involved in related research.

Moreover, the lack of transparency in selecting universities raises questions about the criteria and processes used to identify "entities of concern". Without clear guidelines, institutions may struggle to navigate this uncertain situation, potentially hindering their ability to engage in meaningful international collaborations and ultimately impacting their competitiveness in global research.

The Pentagon's coercive tactics of pressuring universities into self-audits and scaling back collaboration risk pushing the academic sector into geopolitical rivalry, ultimately harming academic freedom and exchanges in the US.

Scientific research transcends borders, and innovation thrives on cross-border exchanges and sharing of resources. Instead of imposing restrictive measures, the US government should respect the spirit of science, allowing academic institutions to address shared technological challenges and meet development needs to serve the interests of people in both countries and beyond.

Macao's high-quality development course set

Macao's development achievements and social stability since its return to the motherland in 1999 testify to the vitality of the "one country, two systems" framework. The special administrative region's Third Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development (2026-30), released on Tuesday, marks a new starting point for Macao to seize opportunities, address challenges and pursue high-quality development by turning its institutional advantages into development momentum and development gains into public well-being.

A notable feature of the plan is its emphasis on docking with national development. As Macao SAR Chief Executive Sam Hou-fai stressed, the plan is aligned with the national five-year plan for this period while taking into account Macao's own realities. By strengthening integration with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, deepening Macao-Hengqin cooperation and better leveraging Macao's international connections, the SAR can translate the advantages of national development into new opportunities for itself, while contributing its own strengths to the country's overall development.

The plan's formulation also shows that the SAR's development course is rooted in the aspirations of Macao residents. During the 40-day public consultation, 1,716 submissions containing 8,230 opinions were collected. The largest number of opinions concerned strengthening and optimizing people's livelihoods, followed by appropriate economic diversification and high-quality development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. The plan received positive feedback of 92.1 percent.

These figures demonstrate that the plan reflects extensive participation and broad consensus. The Macao SAR government has incorporated feasible suggestions that gained broad consensus into the final plan, while pledging to use other opinions as references for future policymaking. Measures on urban renewal, healthcare, social security and improvements to older districts directly respond to public concerns.

At the same time, the plan identifies appropriate economic diversification as essential for Macao's long-term prosperity and stability. With a target of raising the contribution of non-gaming sectors to around 60 percent of GDP by 2030, Macao is seeking to build a more balanced and resilient economic structure.

The "1+4" strategy, backed by major infrastructure projects and a government guidance fund, will promote industries, including high-tech, biomedicine and "big health", specialized finance, MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions), culture and sports, while consolidating integrated tourism and leisure. Preliminary estimates put total budgeted investment in major economic diversification projects during the plan period at about 130 billion patacas ($16.1 billion). Such substantial investment will help cultivate new growth engines and create opportunities for enterprises, talent and young people.

Hengqin is key to this transformation. Through deeper integration in rules, infrastructure, education, technology, finance and industries, "Macao + Hengqin" can combine Macao's international resources with Hengqin's development space and the vast mainland market. The two sides can jointly advance projects in education, technology, tourism, traditional Chinese medicine and finance, creating greater synergies and providing stronger foundations for Macao's economic diversification.

Macao's unique role extends beyond its economic functions. As an international city, Macao serves as a connector between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. Its distinctive cultural and international advantages give it an important role in the country's high-standard opening-up. By facilitating trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges, Macao can contribute more effectively to the country's overall development, while strengthening exchanges between different civilizations.

To those seeking to malign the "one country, two systems" framework, Macao's high-quality development and long-term stability offer an effective rebuttal. The SAR's new five-year blueprint, grounded in public aspirations, aligned with national development and focused on sustainable growth, points precisely in that direction. By implementing this plan, Macao can better achieve sustainable prosperity and lasting stability, further demonstrating the enduring vitality of the "one country, two systems" framework.

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Shi Yu



Opinion Line

Green code crucial framework for cleaner skies, clearer waters

When China's Ecological and Environmental Code came into force on Saturday, it heralded a new stage in China's environmental rule of law, as previously fragmented rules have been brought together to form a more coherent and enforceable legal framework.

With 1,242 articles in five chapters, the code brings together more than 30 existing laws, over 100 administrative regulations and more than 1,000 local laws and regulations. Its real significance lies in the logic behind it: environmental governance can no longer be treated as a collection of separate tasks. Pollution control, ecological protection, resource conservation, carbon reduction and the green transition are to be governed as one integrated system.

China's environmental legislation has developed for more than four decades, from early learning at the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, which was the first world conference to make the environment a major issue, to the adoption of the Environmental Protection Law of the People's Republic of China in 1989 and the goal of realizing an ecological civilization as a national strategy after 2012.

Over time, China has moved from borrowing international experience to building its own environmental governance model, with the Ecological and Environmental Code being the latest expression of that evolution.

What makes China's exploration distinctive is that it starts from China's own realities. China is a country with a huge population, relatively limited per capita resources and highly uneven ecological conditions. Its northern regions face water stress, its western regions include fragile ecosystems and its eastern coastal areas bear intense development pressure.

A development model that consumed resources first and repaired damage later is no longer sustainable. China has therefore had to answer a basic question: how can a large developing country pursue modernization without the environmental costs of the industrial age?

The answer, embedded in the code, is clear: environmental protection and development must reinforce one another. By dedicating an independent chapter to green and low-carbon development, the code makes a powerful institutional statement: climate response and the green transition are legal commitments.

In a world where many environmental laws still focus narrowly on pollution control, China has placed carbon peaking, carbon neutrality, the circular economy and the clean energy transition under the same legal roof as ecological protection. It moves beyond the old pattern of "one department handles pollution, another handles ecology, and yet another handles development". Instead, it aims to establish a holistic governance structure, one that supports coordinated progress in reducing pollution, cutting carbon emissions, expanding green development and growing the economy. This is a notable innovation, and is consistent with China's other innovations in recent years, including ecological red line protection, ecological compensation, environmental damage compensation, public interest litigation and the carbon emissions trading market.

The code also has a broader global significance. Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution do not respect administrative boundaries, national borders or institutional silos. By integrating pollution prevention, ecological protection and green, low-carbon development into one code, China is offering a legislative reference to other countries, especially developing countries.

This global relevance is reinforced by the code's explicit provisions on international cooperation. That means China is not only building a domestic legal framework; it is also translating global environmental commitments into domestic law.

China's green modernization is already generating experience that can be shared beyond its borders. Water-saving terraced farming introduced from China has been replicated in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. Chinese photovoltaic technology is helping support solar power development in countries such as Saudi Arabia.

But the code's enduring significance will depend on implementation. The law should become an evolving legal framework for cleaner skies, clearer waters, healthier ecosystems and a more sustainable development model.

— HOU LIQIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Plan aims to nurture zero-emission factories

Editor's note: *The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology has launched an initiative to develop national-level zero-carbon factories. Several experts, including He Kebin, dean of the Institute for Carbon Neutrality at Tsinghua University, and Chen Daji, deputy head of the China Electronics Standardization Institute, explained what zero-carbon factories are and the importance of the move. Below are excerpts of their comments as reported by Xinhua News Agency. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

A zero-carbon factory does not imply it emits absolutely no carbon dioxide. Instead, the term signifies efforts by the factory to implement systematic emissions reduction measures. These include technological innovation, structural adjustments and management optimization to fully tap into its emissions reduction potential. The goal is to minimize emissions as much as possible under current technical and economic conditions and to continuously improve operations so that the factory's carbon dioxide emissions are at the lowest possible level.

Under the initiative, there are three core indicators for a national-level zero-carbon factory: carbon emissions per unit of energy consumption, the proportion of nonfossil energy consumption, and the percentage of nonfossil power in the electricity used by the factory. These indicators provide measurable and verifiable criteria for defining a "national-level zero-carbon factory".

Carbon emissions per unit of energy consumption measure the amount of carbon dioxide emitted for each tonne of standard coal consumed. While different industries may adopt different development paths, the objective should be to steadily reduce emissions and move toward near-zero emissions.

The indicator of the share of nonfossil energy consumption will encourage enterprises to accelerate the green and low-carbon transition of their energy mix. The share of electricity consumption coming from nonfossil energy will encourage enterprises to increase the use of such electricity and enhance the supply, local utilization and physical traceability of nonfossil energy-based electricity.

One sector that has witnessed rapid growth in energy consumption in China is computing power infrastructure. In 2025, electricity consumed by such infrastructure accounted for approximately 1.6 percent of the total consumption in China.

Going forward, computing power infrastructure operators should strengthen collaboration among different sectors, including equipment procurement, project construction, energy supply, operation and maintenance, and the use of computing power to ensure the selection of low-carbon equipment, better utilization of green electricity and eco-friendly management of infrastructure.

Intelligent carbon control is crucial for establishing zero-carbon factories. Companies in the automobile industry should seize the opportunity of the country's zero-carbon factory initiative and enhance their digital capacity for energy and carbon management. They need to develop a data collection network which covers the whole factory to enable automatic aggregation and real-time transmission of energy consumption and carbon emissions data.

As the initiative progresses, China is expected to foster a number of national-level zero-carbon factories. These factories will play an important role in exploring practical ways for the green and low-carbon transition of the country's industrial sector, providing strong support to the country's green growth.

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VIEWS

Huang Rihan

Robots need open doors, not visas

Beijing's Yizhuang will become a global shop window for robots this August. At the 2026 World Robot Conference, a dedicated procurement day will bring buyers from Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Latin America looking for machines that can solve real-life problems. A Thai farmer may want a robot that can spray crops. A Saudi engineering contractor could size up robotic dogs for project inspections. A Latin American plantation owner may ask the price of a harvesting robot. The questions will be refreshingly practical: How can this machine make the job easier?

The United States, however, is asking a very different question. The US Federal Communications Commission has updated its "Covered List" of communications equipment and services that can threaten the "national security" of the country to include new Chinese-made humanoid and quadruped robots. While buyers are asking what robots can do, policymakers in Washington want to know where they come from.

Caution about new technology is understandable. When the power loom first appeared, textile workers feared the iron machine would devour their livelihoods and stormed factories to smash it. When cameras arrived, some people avoided the lens, worried that a flash might somehow steal their souls. Nearly every invention that changed the world has passed through a period of suspicion. Security concerns are real and deserve to be taken seriously.

But caution is not the same as closing the door. Robots have eyes, legs and internet connections. Smartphones, electric cars, and robot vacuums in millions of homes also use sensors and internet connections.

A better approach to new technology might look more like airport security: Every passenger is screened, but no one is denied boarding simply because of their nationality. Robots can be tested, certified and held to common standards, while their data and cybersecurity can be scrutinized. That is far more effective — and more reassuring — than simply turning them away at the gate.

The need for robots around the world may be greater than many realize. Populations across much of the world are aging, while the supply of young workers is shrinking. Factories in Vietnam struggle to fill vacancies. Construction sites in the Middle East can become dangerously hot in summer. Plantations in Latin America face labor shortages during the harvest season.

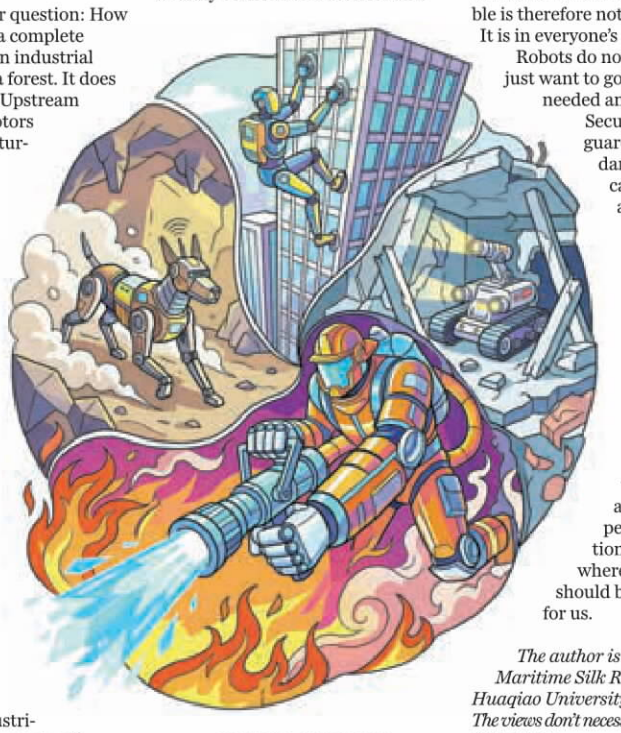
Robots are not necessarily here to take jobs. Often, they fill gaps where there are too few people willing — or able — to do the work. A robot sent down a mine can spare a human being from taking a potentially fatal risk. A machine working in a furnace room can take on work that the human body cannot safely endure.

This raises a larger question: How can a country build a complete robotics industry? An industrial supply chain is like a forest. It does not grow overnight. Upstream companies make motors and joints; manufacturers assemble complete machines; downstream users find tasks for them to perform. Along the way, an industry needs engineers, customers and a market large enough to allow companies to make mistakes and learn from them. Building all of this takes decades.

On the other hand, a wall can be built overnight. But no matter how high it is, a wall cannot grow a forest behind it. Forests need sunlight, rain and time. The same is true for industrial ecosystems, which need policy support, open markets and supply chain integration to grow and flourish.

China's experience illustrates the point. Its robotics industry was not built by shutting itself off from the world. It was built through openness. Over the decades, foreign companies have established factories in China, components from around the world have flowed into the country; and intense competition has forced Chinese companies to learn, step by step, how to make — and then improve — everything from robotic joints to intelligent control systems.

Chinese companies now account for more than half the humanoid robot models in the world, while roughly eight out of every 10 quadruped robots sold come from China. The cost of producing robots has fallen so sharply that automation is no longer a privilege reserved for wealthy economies. Factories and farms in developing countries can afford it too.



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Openness did not destroy China's industrial ecosystem. Instead, it helped nurture one of the world's most complete industrial ecosystems. China is now willing to share that experience — and those robots — with the rest of the world.

Ultimately, robotics is a global creation. Japan may provide precision joints; Europe may supply motors; the US may contribute chips; and China may produce complete machines and offer a vast range of application scenarios. Remove any one of these elements, and the system will not function as smoothly.

When a river is blocked, the water does not just stand there but finds another route. The detour costs more, and eventually someone has to pay for it. Preserving the networks that make cooperation possible is therefore not an act of charity. It is in everyone's interest.

Robots do not need visas. They just want to go where they are needed and get to work. Security can be safeguarded through standards. Competition can be settled by asking who can build a better, cheaper machine that solves a real-world problem. That kind of competition does not produce losers but can benefit the whole world.

So, the next time a robot arrives at the door, perhaps the question should not be where it came from. It should be what it can do for us.

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

Zhang Monan

Tussle between open and closed AI reshaping global order

The tussle between open-source and closed-source artificial intelligence models in China and the United States is more than a debate over technological paths. It reflects the broader China-US technological rivalry, influencing the underlying architectures, industrial control and global rule-making. The clash between these two approaches could profoundly reshape the landscape of the intelligent age and global technological competition.

In recent years, Silicon Valley giants such as OpenAI, Anthropic and Google have built towering technological advantages through closed-source business models, backed by massive capital investment and vast computing clusters. At the same time, the open-source camp — which includes Chinese technology companies Alibaba, DeepSeek and Zhipu AI and US players such as Meta — has risen rapidly, thanks to more efficient algorithms and open ecosystems.

Broadly speaking, the closed-source approach favored by leading US AI laboratories aligns with Washington's desire to maintain technological dominance and Silicon Valley's capital-intensive model, which hinges on massive computing power and premium pricing. US closed-source models, represented by OpenAI's latest reasoning model GPT-5.6 Sol, Anthropic's Claude Opus 5 and Google's Gemini 3.5 and 3.6 series, use top-end GPUs and sophisticated data engineering to build formidable computing barriers and seek a commanding position at the technological frontier.

By keeping model capabilities behind cloud-based application programming interfaces, US companies have created highly controlled commercial ecosystems. This model can also become a geopolitical instrument. By restricting access to advanced models in the name of "national security", Washington has developed a broader narrative: frontier AI may pose national security risks and therefore should remain concentrated in the hands of a select group of Western companies.

High API subscription fees and dependence on cloud services raise the financial barriers for small and medium-sized companies seeking access to advanced AI. They also leave countries without domestic computing capacity increasingly dependent on foreign digital infrastructure, creating strategic vulnerabilities.

Faced with US restrictions on advanced chips and computing power, Chinese tech companies are increasingly turning to open source as a strategic breakthrough, pursuing an asymmetric path based on extreme algorithmic efficiency and large-scale industrial deployment.

At the algorithmic level, DeepSeek demonstrates that performance comparable to leading Silicon Valley closed models can be achieved at significantly lower cost, challenging the assumption that breakthroughs necessarily require billions of dollars and ever-larger, energy-intensive computing clusters. At the ecosystem level, Alibaba's Qwen 2.5 and related models are among the world's most widely downloaded open-source models, serving as a popular foundation for developers.

A report by the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission highlights two key areas of Chinese advantage: a "digital loop" and a "physical loop". Open-source models lower the cost of AI deployment, allowing them to move rapidly into manufacturing, logistics, robotics and other sectors of the economy. The data and practical demands generated by these applications, in turn, feed back into model development.

This creates a virtuous cycle of efficient algorithms, open ecosystems and industrial validation. Together, these strengths give China's AI sector considerable resilience and the potential to catch up or even overtake competitors despite the constrained access to advanced computing resources.

The China-US contest between open-source and closed-source models is also accelerating a broader rebalancing of global technology, giving the Global South and other economies, including those in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Latin America, an opportunity to enhance technological sovereignty rather than remain caught between major powers.

Reuters reported on Aug 14 that the US was preparing to ask dozens of countries to choose between US- and China-led AI cooperation frameworks, with those joining Beijing's initiative potentially excluded from a US-led AI coalition. The move shows how competition over AI has extended beyond technology into the geopolitical arena.

For European and Middle Eastern countries, sending sensitive industrial or government data to cloud servers controlled by Silicon Valley giants poses unacceptable compliance and security risks. Yet developing a large foundation model from scratch requires enormous financial and computing resources.

In this context, high-performance open-source models such as Qwen, DeepSeek and Llama are emerging as digital infrastructure for countries seeking to build their own localized AI capabilities. By fine-tuning these models in local languages and deploying them on private infrastructure, institutions in countries such as France, Singapore and Saudi Arabia can develop more cost-effective and independently controlled AI systems. Open source is thus transforming AI from a strategic technology concentrated in the hands of a few countries into a global public infrastructure.

The divide between open and closed models is also a contest over competing approaches to AI safety, governance and regulation. The closed-source camp has long argued that keeping advanced models inside a "black box" is the best defense against misuse, including applications involving biological weapons or cyberattacks. This argument has also been used to justify technological restrictions and stricter administrative controls.

But as open-source models become increasingly capable, the idea that security can be achieved primarily through secrecy is facing growing scrutiny from academia and the international community. More standards bodies and regulatory institutions are recognizing that excessive restrictions on access can easily turn into barriers that reinforce geopolitical and commercial monopolies. From this perspective, governance built on transparency, auditability and multi-stakeholder participation offers another path toward trustworthy AI.

Looking ahead, the global AI landscape is unlikely to be defined by complete technological closure or the wholesale replacement of closed-source models with open-source ones. A dual-track competition is more likely.

Closed-source laboratories, particularly in the US, will continue to use their enormous advantages in capital and computing power to pursue high-risk exploration at the uncertain frontier toward artificial general intelligence. Open-source ecosystems, led primarily by China and the wider global developer community, will rely on lower costs, stronger adaptability to real-world applications and millions of developers to become a major engine bringing AI into industries across the economy.

In effect, the competition between open-source and closed-source AI models is breaking down barriers to technological monopoly and accelerating the wider diffusion of AI. As a result, a more multipolar, resilient and competitive global AI order is beginning to take shape.

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



Zhou Shuchun

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Navigating the new normal of public opinion society

Recent events, from the playful use of bamboo cicada toys as a metaphor for a tech giant to the posture of a hostess during an interview, epitomize a defining feature of contemporary Chinese society: the frequent emergence of public-opinion incidents. Every few days, a headline-making topic goes viral on social media, capturing widespread attention and triggering a cacophony of divergent views.

This phenomenon can rightly be termed a "public opinion society", though interpretations of individual incidents can vary wildly. For instance, when internet users mashed up the audio of a bamboo cicada toy with clips from a company's product launch to parody its promotional slogan, the creator's meme and the legal response by the company drew mixed reactions.

Similarly, when a hostess crouched to interview foreign creative team members seated on high stools at a film premiere, some praised it as a professional move to avoid blocking the camera, while others decried it as obsequious deference to foreigners.

As such incidents multiply, public opinion has become a complex social issue. While this is a norm of the digital era, the constant barrage of controversies undoubtedly fuels anxiety among officials, corporations, public figures, and even ordinary citizens.

Media outlets recommend overcoming what might be called public-opinion mysophobia — an excessive fear of negative publicity — by building psychological resilience and responding proactively. Influential commentators advocate establishing a mechanism to mitigate the negative fallout of viral incidents.

The digital public sphere is characterized by low barriers, widespread participation and rapid dissemination.

The sheer volume of grassroots voices highlights societal vitality, but it also breeds emotional manipulation, rampant rumors, and one-sided verdicts, leading some to view it as a monstrous threat.

Yet, the collision of diverse perspectives itself is a product of social transition. Compared to the information silos and limited channels of expression in the past, this change represents undeniable progress.

Over decades of reform and opening-up, China has undergone a profound transformation — from isolation to openness, scarcity to abundance and uniformity to diversity.

In terms of public discourse, citizens have moved beyond basic needs to pursue higher aspirations such as fairness, justice and transparency. Various demands regarding livelihoods and governance expectations are now the driving force of public expression.

At a deeper level, the growing awareness of civil rights sustains the vitality of this public opinion society.

The catalyst of this change is the widespread adoption of digital technology. With mobile internet — particularly social media — permeating daily life, everyone has become a broadcaster, capable of voicing opinions at any moment. This has shattered the old paradigm where a select few monopolized the discourse, revealing the pluralistic and often conflicting nature of a society in transition.

At a deeper level, the growing awareness of civil rights sustains the vitality of this public opinion society. Citizens have evolved from passive bystanders of public affairs into active participants in social governance, making the oversight of public power a social norm. More people are now emboldened to express themselves on various issues. The increasing complexity of voices in the internet age is both an objective trend beyond anyone's will and a hallmark of social progress.

To some extent, the frequent eruption of public opinion incidents is fostering a mechanism of societal self-correction. In recent decades, no incident that captured national attention ended merely in emotional venting. Instead, each became a milestone in addressing institutional flaws and social shortcomings. Many far-reaching social reforms were triggered by major public uproars.

One notable example is the death of Sun Zhigang in 2003, which led to the abolition of an outdated system. Sun, a young man from Hubei province, was detained in Guangzhou for not having a temporary residence permit and later died in custody. The case sparked a nationwide outcry, leading to scrutiny of the flaws in the custody and repatriation system. Three months later, the Measures for the Custody and Repatriation of Urban Vagrants and Beggars — in effect for over two decades — was repealed and replaced by a new assistance regulation that better protected the rights of the floating population.

Admittedly, the profusion of public opinion also carries risks that can't be ignored. Algorithms can amplify negative emotions rapidly, and the traffic-first logic of dissemination favors extreme content. Conflict, pathos, and labeling quickly attract eyeballs, inflaming netizens and allowing one-sided views to dominate while occasionally silencing objective voices. Unchecked public opinion can fracture social consensus, interfere with the rule of law, and magnify societal anxiety.

A tragic example is the case of Liu Xuezhou, a young man from Hebei province who eventually committed suicide because of online violence. Sent away at three months old, he found his biological parents through DNA matching when he was 17 in 2022.

However, a dispute over housing was exposed on the internet, where some accused him of demanding an apartment from his parents. A deluge of abusive comments led to Liu's breakdown, and he committed suicide. While long-standing psychological trauma was a factor, the online abuse was the final straw for the young man.

In this case, the influencers who fanned the flames were sued and a court found them guilty of fabricating facts and committing defamation. The ruling highlights the importance of tackling the challenges of public opinion.

Building a healthy online ecosystem requires guiding the public to respect facts, and avoid black-and-white thinking. Most importantly, under the supervision of regulators, platforms must shoulder their responsibilities — breaking the chain of misinformation and minimizing the space for extreme narratives.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

CHRISTOPH NEDOPIL

Shaping a clean and green future

China's renewable energy five-year plan charts a new chapter for high-quality development at home and abroad



As China enters its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, the nation's renewable energy landscape is undergoing a crucial transformation. Rather than simply chasing green energy installation speed, China's renewable energy five-year plan, issued by the National Energy Administration and the National Development and Reform Commission, focuses on quality development, system-wide reliability and decarbonization across both power and non-power sectors. This shift marks an important evolution in China's renewable energy ambitions, offering vital lessons for emerging economies and the wider international community.

A critical milestone underpinning this new plan is that China surpassed its previous 2030 target of 1,200 gigawatts of wind and solar capacity well ahead of schedule by September 2024. Building on this momentum, China aims for over 2,800 GW of wind and solar capacity by 2030. These new targets seem anchored in a realistic assessment of grid integration capabilities, economic shifts and technological readiness.

An important feature of this plan is its focus on energy regeneration and replenishment through dependable, firm renewables rather than expanding generation capacity. In the past, rapid capacity additions often outpaced grid flexibility. The new plan addresses this by prioritizing high-quality development through firming renewables. It mandates that newly built centralized wind and solar stations achieve a dependable capacity of no less than 10 percent, with high-performing projects encouraged to exceed 20 percent by 2030.

To achieve this level of system firmness, the plan stipulates massive expansion of energy storage assets over the next several years. As China balances hydropower development with ecological protection, flood control, water supply, irrigation and navigation, the country's conventional hydropower installed capacity is expected to reach about 410 million kilowatts by 2030.

By 2030, China is targeting 15 million kW of installed solar thermal power capacity, 400,000 kW of marine energy capacity and approximately 160 million kW of pumped storage power capacity, according to the National Energy Administration.

Combined with significant expansion of battery storage, advanced grid-forming inverters and source-side energy storage integration, these measures support the orderly substitution of fossil fuels in the country.

Renewable energy also plays a significant role in heavy industry upgrading, which requires retrofitting in hard-to-abate sectors such as steel and cement, alongside the physical relocation of energy-intensive industries to green-energy-rich regions.

At the community level, microgrids and rural development take center stage. Through initiatives such as the village-level micro-energy network pilots, China is pioneering decentralized off-grid and micro-grid solutions. These localized models offer invaluable lessons and practical blueprints for emerging economies across the Global South and Belt and Road countries seeking reliable, clean energy access in areas without grid connection.



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Crucially, the country is charting a new chapter in renewable energy deployment at scale, proving that high levels of variable renewable penetration can be managed safely and efficiently in the world's largest energy system. For the international community, the plan offers a clear message: China's energy transition has entered a new phase where innovation, quality, security and systemic integration pave the path to a global energy transformation.

China has already become the global technology leader in green energy, and to enable more innovations in renewable energy, China can strengthen deep research collaboration among Chinese institutions — bridging universities and industry leaders — to drive breakthroughs in next-generation climate prediction, advanced materials and artificial intelligence-empowered grid dispatch.

With China's green energy successes drawing significant global attention, China's leadership demonstrates that domestic success can be paired with open international cooperation. By sharing its high-quality, cost-effective green technologies with other countries, especially some Global South countries, China is helping other nations accelerate their own low-carbon transition. Through both large-scale projects and livelihood-oriented "small yet beautiful" initiatives, China contributes to global green supply chains and standard harmonization.

On a broader global outlook, the accelerated integration of renewable energy opens unprecedented avenues for nations across the world to harness cost-effective green energy to improve industrial competitiveness while relatively lowering energy-related emissions. At the same time, some developed and developing countries increasingly want to benefit from integrating into global green energy value chains. Realizing this potential requires recognizing that trust-based collaboration and knowledge sharing are more important than ever. In this context, it is remarkable to observe China's rapid transition from an absorber to a prominent contributor of technological knowledge, now well-positioned to take the lead in upgrading green industries.

In conclusion, China's renewable energy five-year plan is much more than an energy road map. Rather it highlights China's transformation from a historical energy importer into a dominant global energy power and producer. By harnessing vast domestic resources — particularly through the mega wind and solar bases in the Three-North area and the Gobi regions — China is endeavoring to secure its own energy independence while helping the global energy transition. Crucially, the country is charting a new chapter in renewable energy deployment at scale, proving that high levels of variable renewable penetration can be managed safely and efficiently in the world's largest energy system. For the international community, the plan offers a clear message: China's energy transition has entered a new phase where innovation, quality, security and systemic integration pave the path to a global energy transformation.

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WALDEMAR KARPA

Picture of health

China's growing contribution to pharmaceutical innovation heralds a new era for global industry



China's pharmaceutical industry, once primarily known for its role in producing affordable generics, has undergone a profound transformation, emerging as a leading force in global drug innovation. This evolution is not merely an industrial shift but a significant development poised to deliver new medicines to patients worldwide, presenting both opportunities and a call for enhanced international collaboration.

This pivotal moment was vividly illustrated at the 2024 World Conference on Lung Cancer, where Akeso, a biotech company from Zhongshan, Guangdong province, presented groundbreaking data. Its bispecific antibody, ivonescimab, demonstrated superior efficacy against Keytruda (pembrolizumab) in a head-to-head trial for non-small cell lung cancer. Keytruda, a cornerstone of global oncology, represents a multi-billion-dollar market. Akeso's achievement, often described as the industry's "DeepSeek moment", signals China's arrival as a frontrunner in developing novel therapies, challenging established paradigms and inspiring new possibilities for patient care.

This success is not an isolated incident but part of a broader trend. A decade ago, China accounted for less than 8 percent of global clinical trials. In 2020, it had surpassed both the United States and Europe in annual trial volume. In 2024, it initiated close to 5,000 trials. This growth is not just in quantity but in quality, with China's high-novelty trials growing significantly faster than the US benchmark. A Boston Consulting Group report earlier this year further notes that since 2021, China has outpaced the US in new molecular entities entering clinical development, contributing about 44 percent of the global total last year. Its share of potential first-in-class drugs rose from 16 percent in 2020 to 34 percent in 2025, nearing the US' 38 percent.

China's journey from a generics producer to an innovation leader is rooted in strategic policy reforms. The National Reimbursement Drug List reform, initiated around 2016, played a crucial role. By offering guaranteed, near-universal access in exchange for significant price reductions, the State effectively stimulated demand for innovative drugs. This policy led to a substantial increase in the utilization of covered drugs, with oncology volumes growing nearly tenfold, demonstrating that innovation flourishes where there is clear market demand and patient access. This approach has fostered a dynamic ecosystem where laboratories and research thrive.

This demand-driven innovation is supported by an efficient research and development ecosystem. The "decode, iterate, execute" flywheel, as described by the Boston Consulting Group, operates with remarkable cost-effectiveness. Drug discovery and preclinical work in China can be conducted at a fraction of the cost in the West. Contract research organizations, including WuXi AppTec, have built integrated platforms spanning drug discovery, preclinical testing and other stages of drug development, helping pharmaceutical companies reduce costs and accelerate development. This efficiency has allowed China to effectively counter "Eroom's law" — the observation that drug development costs double every nine years — by leveraging vast patient pools, rapid engineering iteration and streamlined regulatory processes. The result is a robust pipeline extending beyond oncology into respiratory, immunology and metabolic diseases, with Chinese companies now confidently designing Phase III trials head-to-head against global blockbusters.

The global pharmaceutical industry has recognized China's ascendance. Insiders such as Pfizer's CEO Albert Bourla have acknowledged China as a significant challenger to US strength in biotechnology. While some regions such as Europe have seen their share of global clinical trials decline, China's share has tripled, particularly in advanced fields such as cell and gene therapy. In 2024, China became the leading source of new active substances, contributing 35 percent globally.

Rather than viewing this as a zero-sum game, the industry is increasingly embracing collaboration. Facing patent expirations and seeking new growth avenues, Western pharmaceutical companies are actively investing in and partnering with Chinese biotechs. Cross-border out-licensing from China reached an estimated total potential value of $135.7 billion in 2025, with a significant surge in early 2026. Major deals, such as Pfizer's investment in 3SBio's bispecific and GSK's commitment to Hengrui, highlight a strategic "re-platforming" onto Chinese science. Beyond licensing, new strategies include "local for local" manufacturing, establishing R&D centers in China, and China-first drug launches, all aimed at fostering deeper integration and mutual benefit.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

While geopolitical complexities, including the BIOSECURE Act and designations affecting companies such as WuXi AppTec, present challenges, the intertwined nature of the global pharmaceutical ecosystem underscores the importance of open scientific exchange and collaboration. Protectionist measures risk hindering global health progress. The optimal path forward involves fostering an environment where competition drives innovation, and partnerships accelerate the delivery of life-saving medicines.

China's innovation strength, characterized by its engineering brilliance and focus on optimizing known targets, continues to grow. While its R&D spending is still a fraction of the US', and its venture capital ecosystem is still maturing, the impact of its contributions is undeniable. The notion that smaller economies should merely be "free riders" importing innovations no longer holds true. China has not only become a significant innovator but is actively shaping the future of global health.

This new reality is a call on the traditional leaders of the industry to adapt and engage with a rapidly evolving landscape. Embracing this shift through competition, partnership and domestic reform, rather than restrictive policies, is the most effective approach. For patients everywhere, it would mean access to better medicines, developed faster and more affordably. Denial of this transformation would be a disservice to global health and scientific progress.

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County-level consumption prioritized

Measures set to unlock potential of smaller-scale urban markets

By **ZHANG CHENXU**
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China has unveiled a package of measures to unlock the potential of lower-tier, smaller-scale urban markets, with a particular focus on county-level spending, as counties emerge as an increasingly important driver of consumption growth, officials and experts said.

The latest push is expected to tap a deeper reservoir of domestic demand and lend fresh impetus to the building of a strong domestic market, thereby reinforcing China's longer-term transition toward consumption-led growth, they added.

"County and township markets now hold the key to further consumption growth," Yuan Xiaoming, assistant minister of commerce, said at a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday, noting that county-level areas account for about 40 percent of China's economic output.

Their comments came after the Ministry of Commerce and eight other government departments released the guideline earlier that day, setting out 18 measures covering upgrades to retail infrastructure, business format innovation, the supply of goods and services, distribution networks and financial support.

Under the guideline, efforts will focus on improving the retail environment in county-level areas by upgrading existing commercial facilities and retail networks, strengthening support services and making better use of idle assets, the ministry said.

Dai Mingfeng, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said: "County-level consumption is undergoing a structural shift, with consumers increasingly trading up and devoting a growing share of their spending to services.

"Young people returning home are playing a dual role — starting businesses that broaden local supply while generating fresh demand as consumers," Dai said. "They are a small but pivotal force driving consumption growth in counties."

To better meet evolving demand, the measures will encourage chain operators to accelerate their expansion into county-level markets, help local brands blend heritage with innovation and support localities in developing new business formats suited to their own conditions, the ministry said.

Retailers are increasingly looking to counties for growth. Busy Ming Group Co, a snack and beverage retailer, said in its 2025 annual results announcement that around 60 percent of its 21,948 stores were located in counties and townships at the end of 2025. Its network reached 1,401 counties, or around 75 percent of the national total.

> "County-level consumption is undergoing a structural shift, with consumers increasingly trading up and devoting a growing share of their spending to services."
>
> **Dai Mingfeng,** a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation

The guideline also promotes emerging business formats tailored to local conditions and closer integration of commerce with agriculture, culture, tourism and sports, said the ministry.

New travel hot spots are emerging beyond major cities. China's "hidden-gem small cities" posted the strongest booking growth this summer, with hotel bookings in Zherong county, Fujian province — about a three-hour drive north of Fuzhou — surging more than tenfold from a year earlier, said online travel portal Qunar.

In addition, the measures call for stronger fiscal and financial support. Eligible personal loans for consumption and business loans in the services sector will qualify for interest subsidies, while retail businesses opening new chain stores in counties may apply for government-backed startup loans and receive interest subsidies, the guideline stated.

The measures come as lower-tier markets take up a growing share of consumer spending. Retail sales of consumer goods in county and township markets accounted for 39.1 percent of the national total in the first seven months, up 0.3 percentage point from a year earlier, according to estimates released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Monday.

Bai Wenxi, vice-chairman of the China Enterprise Capital Union, said China's consumption growth over the next decade will be driven largely by county-level markets.

"Supportive policies have already created favorable conditions, but the ultimate outcome will hinge on the quality of local implementation and whether businesses are prepared to make a long-term commitment to these markets," Bai said.

Briefly

Geely reports record H1 sales growth

Chinese automaker Geely Automobile Holdings Ltd reported record-high sales and revenue growth in the first half of the year, according to its interim report. The company announced record sales of more than 1.42 million vehicles, with revenue growing 15 percent year-on-year to 173.6 billion yuan ($25 billion) during the period. Marking its sixth consecutive year of positive first half revenue growth, the company also reported a 46 percent rise in core profit attributable to owners of the parent, reaching 9.68 billion yuan for the period.

Railway investment in Jan-July rises

China has made steady progress on a number of key railway projects as investment in railway construction continued to expand in 2026, generating a notable driving effect and injecting fresh momentum into regional economic and social development, the national railway operator said. Fixed-asset investment in the railway sector totaled 440.6 billion yuan ($64 billion) in the first seven months of the year, up 1.8 percent year-on-year, according to China State Railway Group Co Ltd.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY



View of SenseTime's booth during an expo in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

End-to-end solutions key to AI exports

By **MA SI**
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As the artificial intelligence industry rapidly evolves, a new frontier is emerging: the export of AI computing infrastructure. Chinese tech companies, once known primarily for hardware manufacturing and consumer app exports, are now taking their AI models, algorithms and computing infrastructure to overseas markets, corporate executives and experts said.

"China's AI-led expansion overseas is changing. It is moving beyond the export of stand-alone software and applications toward a more sophisticated offering of industry-specific solutions and digital infrastructure," said Jeff Shi, president of SenseTime's Asia-Pacific business, in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

That model draws on nearly the full breadth of China's AI ecosystem — from data centers and token plans to governance frameworks and talent development, Shi said.

SenseTime is at the forefront of this transformation, he said. Since its founding, the company has expanded into more than a dozen overseas markets, serving over 500 enterprise clients globally, with more than 430 in the Asia-Pacific region alone. From intelligent hardware and software licensing to industry solutions and cloud services, the company has built a comprehensive portfolio that spans the entire AI value chain.

The shift from exporting trained AI models to exporting computing infrastructure represents a strategic upgrade driven by fundamental changes in the industry. Shi explained that in the early stages of international expansion, SenseTime primarily delivered computer vision models trained in China, with computing needs met domestically. But the generative AI era has fundamentally altered the landscape.

"Customers no longer need just a single model — they need an end-to-end solution that integrates computing power, models and applications," Shi said. The surge in overseas demand for AI inference has created an urgent need for local computing infrastructure.

At the same time, the rise of "Chinovation" — a term coined in 2011 to describe Chinese innovation has taken on new meaning. It has changed from representing cost-effective alternatives, to being the flagship of high-tech original innovation.

"Overseas clients now come to China to find Chinese technology, Chinese applications, and Chinese opportunities," Shi noted. This shift reflects China's growing global competitiveness in technology — and explains why the world's best open-source large language models are emerging from China.

According to Shi, more foreign visitors are traveling to China to study AI firsthand. International business visitors to SenseTime's Executive Briefing Center in Shanghai have risen tenfold so far in 2026.

SenseTime's computing power export strategy took a major leap forward in 2025 with the successful deployment of China's first overseas domestic computing cluster in the Middle East. The company established a joint venture called SenseTime MEA with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, or PIF, and has been deeply engaged in the country's Vision 2030 transformation.

Hong Kong also plays a pivotal role in SenseTime's global computing strategy. In June, SenseTime partnered with Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corp to build the city's largest domestically developed AI data center, targeting over 40,000 petaFLOPS of computing capacity by 2030. The first phase, expected to be completed by the end of 2026, will deliver 3,000 petaFLOPS of computing power.

Shi described Hong Kong as an "AI-era entrepot trade center" with three unique advantages: dual-compliance capabilities bridging Chinese and international legal systems; superior international network connectivity; and its strategic location within the Greater Bay Area, backed by the Chinese mainland's vast talent pool.

"The project will significantly supplement SenseTime's own computing power supply while serving as a springboard to support the overseas deployment of integrated 'computing+model+application' capabilities," Shi explained.

The senior executive identified three key drivers for SenseTime's future growth: the unprecedented opportunity created by Chinovation; the maturation of the global computer vision market where SenseTime has achieved global leadership; and the trust and reputation built over eight years of overseas operations.

Industry observers are taking note of the broader implications. Li Shan, country head of NCS Greater China, highlighted two key characteristics of Chinovation: practicality and openness. "China can turn lab experiments into real industrial productivity in a very short period of time, and we also have a very fast turnaround time to improve technology," Li said.

Home prices see narrowed declines

China's 70 major cities generally saw narrowed year-on-year home price drops in July, adding to signs of stabilization of the property market, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Monday.

In the four first-tier cities of Guangzhou and Shenzhen in Guangdong province, Beijing and Shanghai, new home prices fell 1.1 percent year-on-year last month, compared with a 1.3-percent drop in June, while the decline in second-hand home prices narrowed from 4.9 percent to 3.7 percent in July.

In other cities, year-on-year declines of home prices also narrowed slightly in July, except new home prices in third-tier cities, where the decline was unchanged from June.

On a month-on-month basis, home prices in first-tier cities generally rose, while those in second- and third-tier cities went down. Across the 70 cities, 23 recorded increases or no change in new home prices, two more than in June, while the figure for second-hand homes was eight, two fewer than the previous month.

The NBS releases a monthly home price report tracking market changes in 70 major cities, including four first-tier cities, 31 second-tier cities and 35 third-tier cities.

More signs emerging this year suggest the property market has remained broadly stable with confidence and expectations gradually improving.

At a meeting on economic work held by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee at the end of last month, policymakers called for continued efforts to stabilize the property market.

Experts said the policy direction remains clear, with local governments expected to make better use of policy tools tailored to local conditions to meet housing demand.

Yu Xiaofen, a researcher at Zhejiang University of Technology in East China, called for faster progress in developing a new model for the property sector, as well as improving long-term mechanisms to promote the stable and healthy development of the market.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY



Visitors look at a demonstration apartment model of the Lakeside Mansion Project of China Railway 22nd Bureau Group, which aims to showcase its low-carbon technologies and ergonomic urban environment. The project has won multiple prestigious awards in utilizing advanced technologies in cutting-edge housing development. SU TIANJIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

APEC meeting spurring trade

By **ZHONG NAN** in Dalian, Liaoning
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With customs officials from Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation economies meeting in Dalian, Liaoning province, to advance trade facilitation across the region, trade experts and exporters said the talks will further boost China's trade with other APEC economies, underpinned by strong economic complementarity.

They said China's industrial upgrading and growing supply of high-tech and green products are helping developing APEC economies advance industrialization, as expanded trade and closer supply chain integration create new opportunities for regional economic cooperation.

Ahead of the meeting in Dalian, which starts on Wednesday, the General Administration of Customs said in a statement on Monday that it will work with other APEC economies to enhance regional trade security and facilitation, align customs rules and standards, and reduce institutional trade costs.

Ji Wenhua, a professor at the Academy of China Open Economy Studies — which is part of the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing — said that against the backdrop of a sluggish global economic recovery and rising geopolitical tensions, APEC has become an increasingly important platform for deeper economic integration across the region.

Zhang Yun, a professor at the School of International Studies at Nanjing University in Jiangsu province, said China's industrial upgrading and companies' growing global presence are creating new opportunities for developing APEC economies by bringing investment, advanced technologies and production capacity to local markets, strengthening their industrial capabilities and facilitating their integration into regional value chains.

Gu Yanping, customs affairs director at Zhejiang Sunny Optical Intelligence Technology Co Ltd — a manufacturer of optical imaging products based in Ningbo, Zhejiang province — said the company's Vietnam plant began operations in October, assembling China-sourced camera modules, vision modules and lens components into vision systems for smart robots, which are then sold globally.

"It has become a key overseas innovation and production base for the company, while also contributing to local employment and industrial development," said Gu.

Imports and exports with other APEC economies through Ningbo ports reached 747.96 billion yuan ($110.91 billion) in the first seven months, up 9.9 percent year-on-year, said Ningbo Customs.

Fujian Tide Power Technology Co Ltd, a power generation equipment manufacturer in Fuzhou, Fujian province, shipped 227 million yuan worth of products to other APEC markets between January and July, up 9.89 percent year-on-year, said Fuzhou Customs. Its exports included lighting towers, energy storage systems and gas and diesel generators, with diesel generator sets seeing particularly strong sales.

Cai Jinjin, the company's director of international sales, said demand for diesel generators remains strong across many APEC markets, particularly in developing economies where infrastructure construction and industrial expansion are boosting the need for reliable backup power.

China is hosting the third APEC Senior Officials' Meeting in Dalian from Monday through Aug 28, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

More than 2,300 representatives from APEC member economies and regional and international organizations will attend the meeting. The event will cover a wide range of fields, including trade, customs, transportation, food, science and technology, energy and health.

More broadly, Northeast China's two-way trade with other APEC economies reached 493 billion yuan during the January-July period, rising 8.1 percent year-on-year, said Shenyang Customs.

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BUSINESS

China-built water treatment plant hailed

Mongolian president calls it testament to bilateral strategic partnership

By **HAN JINGYAN**
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Staffers from China Railway No 4 Engineering Group check the operating status of equipment at the CREC4-built Ulaanbaatar Central Sewage Treatment Plant in Mongolia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Having been stationed in Mongolia for 11 years, Wang Jilin feels proud as he departs from a Mongolian airport after a local customs official gave him a hearty smile upon seeing that he's with China Railway No 4 Engineering Group.

"CREC4 has constructed a lot of projects in Mongolia and has become a well-known name to Mongolians," Wang said, adding that the warm smiles he receives make all the painstaking efforts worthwhile.

Since the 1950s, Chinese aid workers have come to Mongolia, helping construct over 850 projects, including highways, port facilities, shantytown renovation, urban infrastructure, as well as desertification prevention and control works.

On June 15, a central sewage treatment plant built by State-owned CREC4 officially began operating in Ulaanbaatar, the Mongolian capital, and on June 30, Mongolian President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh inspected the facility.

Spanning 178,000 square meters and comprising 55 individual buildings with a designed daily processing capacity of 250,000 cubic meters, it is the largest and most advanced sewage treatment facility in Mongolia, Wang said.

After examining the plant's major treatment units and receiving a detailed briefing, Khurelsukh highly praised the facility, calling it a symbol of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Mongolia and a testament to the friendship between the two peoples.

Wang said the plant can collect and treat domestic and industrial wastewater across Ulaanbaatar, serving nearly half of Mongolia's population of around 3.5 million, and significantly improving water quality in the capital.

"At busy times in our work, we could see some 400 Mongolian builders and 700 Chinese builders work side by side on the construction site. It was quite impressive," said Wang, who acts as Party chief for the CREC4 team that built the plant.



Staffers from Chinese State builder China Railway No 4 Engineering Group are hosted as guests at a home of a Mongolian employee. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Better livelihoods

The sewage treatment plant — a key Belt and Road undertaking — is only part of the many public works projects CREC4 has undertaken in Mongolia, said Wang from CREC4 First Engineering.

"But the plant carries vital importance," said Zhang Jiawei, chief engineer of the CREC4 team that built the plant.

In addition to serving nearly half of Mongolia's population, the country's most advanced sewage treatment facility ensures that water quality will be improved in the capital, as all treated sewage will finally enter the Selenge River, which eventually empties into Lake Baikal — the world's oldest and deepest freshwater lake.

Located in the southwestern part of Ulaanbaatar, in Songino Khairkhan district, the project includes pump houses in an old plant area, sewage pipelines into the plant, the new central sewage treatment plant and the tailwater discharge channels.

During its official inauguration on Feb 2, 2019, President Khurelsukh — who served as the nation's prime minister at the time — said many important projects in Ulaanbaatar were built with the help of Chinese friends.

Greatly elevating living conditions in Ulaanbaatar and improving public well-being, "it will become a model project of pragmatic cooperation between Mongolia and China", he said.

During a visit to the work site of the plant on Aug 17, 2021, Begzhavyn Monkhbaatar, then Mongolian minister for urban and construction development, applauded CREC4's efforts in building the facilities.

During construction work, CREC4 provided some 3,000 jobs for the locals.

Local resident Tsedev, who goes by one name only, said that at the guidance of Chinese colleagues, he learned to read Chinese project drawings and worked as a competent CREC4 builder.

"The salary here is higher than many others, and I can also learn many new skills," he said, adding that his hard work helped win recognition of CREC4, which awarded him a title of "Excellent Mongolian Worker" in 2021 as well as a bonus of 1,000 yuan ($148).

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, delivered a speech on June 15, as the sewage treatment plant launched operations.

China has always supported Mongolia in developing its economy and improving people's livelihoods, he said, adding that the cooperation always benefits the Mongolian people, with bilateral ties becoming a model of friendly coexistence, and common development and prosperity among neighboring countries.

Uyirs Tuguldur, director of the Presidential Office of Mongolia, hailed it as a major achievement of Mongolia-China cooperation, bringing tangible benefits to the Mongolian people.

He also expressed gratitude for China's support in Mongolia's socio-economic development.

Bonds of friendship

Earlier, CREC4 helped build the Development Center for Disabled Children in Mongolia, the No 2 Highway, and the country's first expressway leading to the new airport in Ulaanbaatar, which opened to traffic in late 2017, said Wang Jilin.

CREC4 is going all out to link the Belt and Road Initiative with Mongolia's Steppe Road Program, unveiled in November 2014, to reinvigorate its economy through transport and trade, he said.

Currently, CREC4 is still involved in projects in Mongolia, including the Qiaoba Mountain Highway Project in Eastern province; construction at Ulan Mine; and project management of a commercial/residential construction project in Ulaanbaatar, said Wu Yiyong, publicity chief of CREC4 First Engineering.

Back in July 2019, when the two-way six-lane expressway leading to the new airport in Ulaanbaatar was officially handed over to the Mongolian government, Khurelsukh said at the time that he believed "it can play a very good role", adding that "the quality is very good and it is of a very high standard".

Construction commenced on June 6, 2016, and the entire line was completed on Oct 12, 2018.

On Oct 19, 2023, Liu Bo, Party secretary and chairman of CREC4, also attended a signing ceremony in Beijing for CREC4's construction of a 6.96-kilometer railway line in Mongolia.

The signing ceremony between CREC4 and its Mongolian partners was for CREC4's general contracting of engineering project in building the Mongolian Xiberkulun Port Railway Engineering Project, another BRI undertaking.

The railway will start from the Sino-Mongolian cross-border point at the end of China's Linhe-Ceke Railway in Inner Mongolia, and extends northward for some 6.96 km. There will be a newly built facility — Xiberkulun Port Station. China's Ceke Port is situated along the China-Mongolia border.

Unseen contributions

Mao Mingliang, director of the engineering division of the CREC4 project department for building the Development Center for Disabled Children in Mongolia, said he had witnessed the hardship Chinese aid workers met in Mongolia.

The project site was located in the Tuul River Valley, with sandy and rocky geological conditions and extremely abundant groundwater — making building homes in the area akin to conducting construction on watery tofu, he said.

The foundation pit needed to be dug five meters below ground, with some sections reaching 6.5 meters. "During the trial excavation phase when the digging was less than one meter deep, numerous 'spring eyes' emerged at the bottom of the pit, bubbling up with water," recalled Yu Jin, the project's chief engineer.

The team ultimately adopted a "tube and well dewatering" solution — drilling three threaded steel pipes in the north and south outside the foundation-pit excavation line, allowing the groundwater to seep into the pipes and continuously pumping it out with high-pressure pumps.

The project was completed 10 days ahead of schedule, and in 2019, it won the "Best Architecture Award" for 2019 in Mongolia, Mao said.

The construction conditions were harsh, as Mongolia can have temperatures as low as -40 C, sandstorms and heavy snowfall were common, water shortages were constant and communications were underdeveloped, creating challenges for Chinese builders.

Wang Jilin recalled that in constructing the central sewage treatment plant in Ulaanbaatar, extreme cold temperatures were a big challenge.

"The project is located in a high-altitude region, with winter lasting for five months, and long-term very low temperatures can lead to unstable concrete performance, limiting construction processes," Wang said.

Meanwhile, the lack of supporting resources for large-scale sewage treatment projects in local regions also posed severe challenges throughout the project, he said.

"The construction team has optimized a special construction plan for extremely cold weather, and innovated low-temperature construction techniques, by adding insulation enclosure structures for biological treatment units, and customizing antifreeze protection devices for deep treatment equipment and pipelines," Wang recalled.

"Although the work was arduous, it was also a treasure in my work and in my life, as we had solidified our friendships among us, and it can last a lifetime," he said.

Wang said that he is immensely happy with his work, as it can help strengthen the friendship between the two peoples.

Construction projects strengthen bonds of Chinese-Mongolian friendships

By **HAN JINGYAN**

After finishing her studies at Beijing University of Technology, Otgonbaya Urna returned to Mongolia and joined China Railway No 4 Engineering Group in September 2016 as a project coordinator.

Though busy with her work building a Development Center for Disabled Children, she was also very proud to be helping the Chinese State builder with translations covering tax exemption for import and export materials, as well as with local procurement and archiving of project completion acceptance.

"She is very professional, conscientious and hard working, and has helped us a lot," said Lyu Haiyun, a CREC4 project leader in Ulaanbaatar, the Mongolian capital.

The bond of friendship between the Chinese and Mongolian peoples is rooted in fine traditions, mutual respect and shared visions. Since the 1950s, Chinese aid workers have been traveling to Mongolia to help construct over 850 projects, he said.

Lyu added that the projects adhered to a people-oriented approach, ensuring that the cooperation always benefits the Mongolian people.

While building the Development Center for Disabled Children in Mongolia, CREC4 provided over 1,000 jobs for locals, with the number of Mongolian employees reaching more than 70 percent, Lyu said.

Sohobater, 40, was one of the participants. Prior to this job, he primarily made a living by herding some 100 sheep, earning slightly over 20,000 yuan ($2,966) each year.

After joining the project in September 2016, he became a Mongolian employee of CREC4. "I was actually quite hesitant at first, worrying about poor living conditions, unfamiliar food, language barriers and communication difficulties," he said.

Understanding this, the project department built a Mongolian yurt for him, set up a Mongolian staff canteen and even sent gifts during festivals and holidays.

When teaching him how to tile, Chinese master colleague Zhang Ruimin demonstrated the process with great care, helping Sohobater grow into a team leader managing 24 Mongolian employees. Sohobater was awarded the title of "Excellent Mongolian Employee" every month.



Chinese and Mongolian project builders enjoy activities at a construction site in Mongolia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"My work here has changed my life completely and taught me skills. I love my Chinese colleagues and our relationship is like that of brothers and sisters," he said.

But the road to full cooperation was not smooth at first. CREC4 employee Wang Jilin, who has been stationed in Mongolia for 11 years, recalled the job of building the two-way six-lane expressway leading to the new airport in Ulaanbaatar between June 2016 and October 2018.

"When the construction work on this 32-kilometer highway officially commenced on June 6, 2016, we faced a big challenge — our Mongolian employees were not used to working overtime," he said. "Though we discussed this with them, they were still unwilling to do it."

"When the Chinese employees learned of the situation with the tight schedule, they all said: 'we can do it ourselves'. I was almost moved to tears," recalled Deng Erlong, the then CREC4 project manager.

Mongolian nights in September are bitterly cold, but the construction site was brightly lit and all the Chinese employees went outside to measure data and elevations, and took shovels to begin their work.

After the Mongolian builders visited the site at night, they changed their minds after seeing the busy scene and actively joined in the construction.

In 2020, the expressway project won the "Luban Award" as an overseas engineering undertaking for the National High Quality Project.

During the expressway's construction, CREC4 partnered with over 30 enterprises in Mongolia, creating over 1,000 local jobs and cultivating various professional talents and technical workers in highway construction.

When Mongolia's Badakh road and bridge company cooperated with CREC4 in 2017, it only had five engineers. Now, it has more than 20 engineers, over 100 technical workers and more than 60 types of construction machinery.

Its Deputy General Manager Sayinsur said: "From being able to build roads that are only seven or eight meters wide to now being proficient in building roads that are 14 meters wide, Chinese builders have generously passed their guidance on to us, greatly improving our technology. We thank them sincerely."

In building the central sewage treatment plant project in Ulaanbaatar, CREC4 hired over 600 local Mongolian laborers and trained more than 50 local technical professionals, Lyu said.

The bonds of friendship developed even further. Ganbgatu, from CREC4 International Business Department, went to work on the central sewage treatment plant project in Ulaanbaatar.

In 2022, he met local girl Eenhhosharura, and by gradually understanding and respecting each other's culture and values, they got married on May 20, 2024.

"In the future, we will contribute our own strength in helping bolster the high-quality development of CREC4," said Ganbgatu.

Sohobater noted: "China's aid to Mongolia is sincere, selfless, beneficial to people's livelihoods and of high quality and quantity. We appreciate it very much."

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CHINA

Plan to tailor new routes for road trips

Authorities target a 60,000-km-long natl network linking major attractions

By **LUO WANGSHU**
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China plans to develop about 60,000 kilometers of routes specifically tailored for road trips by 2030, linking some of the country's best-known landscapes and cultural sites while improving services for travelers, the Ministry of Transport announced on Monday.

The national network will largely make use of existing highways and connect major tourist attractions, cultural landmarks and scenic areas. At its core will be three loops, four east-west routes and five north-south routes.

The loops will consist of routes along China's border and coastal areas, one around the capital metropolitan region, and another through Qinghai and Gansu provinces.

The east-west routes will take in areas associated with the Great Wall, the Yellow and Yangtze rivers, as well as the high-altitude landscapes of western China. The north-south routes will feature the Grand Canal, world heritage sites in eastern China, mountain scenery in Central China, sites associated with the Long March and historic travel routes.

According to the ministry, the network will include long-distance routes crossing provincial boundaries, complemented by locally developed itineraries tailored to regional attractions and travel demand.

The plan goes beyond the roads themselves. It calls for better rest areas, viewing points and safety facilities, along with more charging stations, roadside repair services and car rental options at airports, railway stations and other transport hubs.

Local authorities are also encouraged to develop camping, educational trips, sporting events and other activities along the routes, making the journey itself a bigger part of the tourism experience.

The initiative comes as road trips account for a large share of domestic travel.

During this year's nine-day Spring Festival holiday in February, an average of nearly 270 million passenger trips were made by private vehicles each day, up 8.3 percent year-on-year and accounting for 86 percent of all passenger trips, according to the Ministry of Transport.

An average of about 650,000 small passenger vehicles were rented each day during the holiday period, up 15 percent from the previous year.



Visitors in self-drive vehicles stop at a viewing platform to admire a breathtaking sea of clouds in Longhui county, Hunan province, on Aug 5. ZENG YONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Vice-Minister of Transport Xu Chengguang said at a news conference in July that developing routes for road travelers and making car rentals more widely available would be among the ministry's priorities during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30).

The ministry will "develop routes for self-drive travel and expand the coverage of car rental services", Xu said. He added that more rental outlets would be established near airports and high-speed railway stations to enable travelers to arrive by air or rail and continue their journeys by car. The ministry is also encouraging cheaper or free one-way returns for rental vehicles.

Liu Dong, an official with the ministry's department of comprehensive planning, said at a policy briefing in February that road trips had emerged as a new source of tourism spending, with some highways becoming attractions in their own right.

He said the ministry planned to make greater use of national and provincial highways to develop longer routes spanning multiple regions, while improving connections between highways and tourist attractions and upgrading services along the way.

For some families, road trips have already become an annual tradition. A woman surnamed Pan from Northeast China said she travels by car with her family to different parts of the country every year, with her daughter or other family members taking turns behind the wheel.

"Traveling by car is very convenient now. The roads are good and the service areas are comfortable, which makes it a good option for families," she said.

Better charging infrastructure is also making long-distance road travel easier, particularly for electric vehicle owners.

An EV owner surnamed Xu said drivers now have less reason to worry about finding a place to recharge their vehicles than they did several years ago. Charging stations have become easier to locate and much more widely available along major roads.

"Now there's almost always a charging station nearby," he said.

By 2035, the ministry aims to have a more complete national network in place, with better services, stronger safety support and a wider range of tourism and leisure options for road travelers.

Single travel permit to push GBA integration

By **ZHENG CAIXIONG**
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Macao residents and Hong Kong permanent residents can now use a single document — the Mainland Travel Permit for Hong Kong and Macao Residents (including non-Chinese citizens) — to complete automated immigration clearance when both departing from and arriving at three ports linking Guangdong province and the Macao Special Administrative Region.

The new measures are a part of refinements to the "joint inspection, one-time release" model, which was officially implemented on Tuesday at three major land checkpoints — the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, Hengqin and Qingmao ports — between Guangdong and Macao.

Previously, Hong Kong and Macao residents were required to present different documents depending on the direction of their travel when using the joint-inspection automated channels. When traveling from Macao to the mainland, they had to present their Mainland Travel Permit for Hong Kong and Macao Residents. When returning to Macao from the mainland, they were required to present either a Macao resident identity card or a Hong Kong permanent identity card.

"In the past, I had to bring two types of documents when traveling, and sometimes I forgot to bring them. Now this method is flexible and convenient, so you don't have to worry about forgetting to bring your certificate, and you won't get confused when passing customs," said a Macao resident.

The measures, approved by the National Immigration Administration, aim to further enhance travelers' exit-entry clearance experience and facilitate the movement of people in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, according to a statement released on Monday by the Zhuhai general station of immigration inspection. They are expected to further accelerate integration between the three regions, the statement said.

At Qingmao Port, a frequent cross-border commuter between Zhuhai and Macao surnamed Lin praised the smooth process after experiencing the optimized joint-inspection and one-time-release immigration service on Tuesday.

Located south of Zhuhai Railway Station of the Guangzhou-Zhuhai Intercity Railway, Qingmao Port is a 24-hour passenger-only port for pedestrians.

Besides optimizing the submission and verification of documents for Hong Kong and Macao residents, the new measures also increase the number of people eligible to use the cooperative fast-inspection channel and the joint-inspection lane for vehicles entering and leaving Macao.

Under the new measures, eligible foreigners and Taiwan residents who have completed registration for expedited customs clearance with authorities in both the mainland and Macao can use the "One-stop Joint Services Lanes" at Hengqin Port.

"The measures represent not only an upgrade in inspection methods, but also a vivid practice of the Greater Bay Area's 'hard-connectivity' development," said He Caigen, director of the border inspection division of the Zhuhai general station of immigration inspection.

Real-time dynamic monitoring of lane operation data will be conducted to continuously optimize the systems and publicize user-friendly policies, while every effort will be made to ensure smooth port clearance in the weeks to come, He said.

"Under the premise of 'effective regulation', we will further deliver liberalized access and efficient clearance," he said.

The Zhuhai general station of immigration inspection first rolled out its "joint inspection, one-time release" model in 2018. The model has served as a national benchmark and represents a novel approach to immigration clearance under the "one country, two systems" framework. It has undergone continuous upgrades and expanded coverage in recent years.

According to a statement released on the official website of the Macao SAR government, the cumulative inbound and outbound passenger flow through the three cooperative inspection ports reached 42 million in the first half of this year, with an average daily passenger flow of 235,000, an increase of 12.8 percent compared with the same period in 2025. Macao residents accounted for 43.8 percent of the total, up 12.4 percent year-on-year, while Hong Kong residents accounted for 2.2 percent, up 12.2 percent year-on-year.



Milestone visitor

Zhang Zhiheng (second from left), a young visitor from Binzhou, Shandong province, views a robot model at the Shanghai Science & Technology Museum on Tuesday. Zhang was celebrated as the museum's 100 millionth visitor since its opening in 2001. TAO LEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

PLA Navy's first group of carrier-based female trainee pilots ready to take off

By **LI SHANGYI**
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> "The ship's pitching and rolling require more precise control for landing."
>
> **Wang Mengdi,** a female flight cadet from the PLA Naval Aviation University

The first group of female naval pilot trainees selected to train as carrier-based aircraft pilots recently passed their daytime individual landing assessments in the Bohai Bay in Shandong province, marking a significant step forward in the People's Liberation Army Navy's efforts to train female pilots for carrier-based aircraft.

The female flight cadets were enrolled at the PLA Naval Aviation University in 2023 and completed their maiden flights in April 2024, demonstrating their ability to independently pilot aircraft. Over the past three years, the group has progressed from theoretical study to aircraft type conversion training.

Wang Mengdi, a female flight cadet from the PLA Naval Aviation University, told China Central Television News that landing over the sea presents a psychological challenge because the landing platform is relatively small and is affected by waves and sea winds.

"The ship's pitching and rolling require more precise control for landing," she said.

During the assessment, a helicopter lifted off as Han Meng, another flight cadet, steadily raised the throttle. As strong winds over the sea caused the aircraft to shake, Han made subtle adjustments with her left hand on the collective — a lever that controls the pitch angle of the rotor blades — and gently worked the control stick with her right hand to keep the helicopter on course.

As she entered the landing phase, the ship swayed with the swells, leaving the deck unsteady. Han remained focused on changes in the ship's wake, carefully monitoring the aircraft's altitude and speed while sensing feedback from the control stick with her fingertips.

Upon receiving the landing guide's command, Han seized a brief moment of stability, decisively reduced the throttle and lowered the collective, guiding the helicopter to a smooth touchdown with virtually no impact.

The group of female flight cadets completed the assessment as multiple aircraft took off and landed in an orderly manner.

After completing the assessment, Han said, "It feels as if there's an invisible high wall in front of you during landing, and the psychological pressure suddenly increases."

According to training unit leaders, a progressive training model — moving from instructor-led flights to phased individual flying — has been adopted for the first group of female flight cadets.

The approach draws on the female cadets' calm, meticulous nature and gentle handling skills while strengthening areas in which they are less proficient, including attitude awareness, instrument interpretation and deviation correction, the leaders said.

Training plans were also tailored to each cadet and each training subject, covering ground simulation, in-flight execution, and post-flight review and evaluation, with strict oversight throughout the process.

After each landing, instructors led the cadets in reviewing flight data, replaying their control trajectories and analyzing deviations in their actions to identify their causes and develop improvement plans. This closed-loop training process helped the first group of female flight cadets improve their ability to coordinate and operate carrier-based aircraft.

Next, they will undergo training and assessments for more challenging subjects, such as formation flying and nighttime landings.

Father, son sentenced to prison for trafficking chemicals

By **CAO YIN**
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A Chinese court has sentenced a man and his son to prison and issued them fines for trafficking precursor chemicals abroad, amid strengthened anti-narcotics cooperation between China and the United States.

The Jiang'an District People's Court in Wuhan, capital of Hubei province, convicted the duo of illegal operations on Friday, Xinhua News Agency reported on Tuesday. The father was sentenced to six years in prison, while his son received a five-and-a-half-year prison sentence.

The court found that the two organized the sale of controlled stimulant substances in 123 transactions between November 2021 and July 2024, with a total value exceeding 1.69 million yuan ($250,000).

The case came to the attention of Chinese authorities after the US Drug Enforcement Administration reported a related incident involving the trafficking of sensitive chemicals to China's Ministry of Public Security in June 2023. The ministry promptly instructed police in Hubei to investigate.

1.69 million yuan
The total value of the sale of controlled stimulant substances in the case

The investigation identified a father-and-son team, surnamed Xia, as being suspected of trafficking large quantities of non-regulated precursor chemicals overseas. Since May 2021, the pair had registered multiple companies and hired people to advertise nonregulated chemicals on domestic and international websites, falsely claiming that they had the capabilities to produce, operate and transport such chemicals.

After receiving orders from overseas buyers, they sourced the chemicals domestically and shipped them abroad through international freight forwarders. Police later discovered that the chemicals they had trafficked included controlled stimulant substances.

In recent years, Chinese narcotics control authorities and the US DEA have intensified law enforcement cooperation, cracking down on cases involving drug smuggling and the transnational trafficking of new psychoactive substances.

In May, for example, Chinese police apprehended a suspect surnamed Gong in Tianjin after receiving information from the US in a jointly investigated cross-border drug trafficking case involving new psychoactive substances. US authorities had earlier arrested an American suspect involved in the same case in Georgia.

The two countries have also stepped up cooperation in areas including combating telecom fraud and repatriating fugitives.

In April, police from China, the US and the United Arab Emirates conducted a joint international law enforcement operation targeting telecom fraud syndicates operating in Dubai. The crackdown dismantled nine scam compounds and led to the capture of 276 suspects.

Also in April, US authorities repatriated a Chinese national suspected of drug smuggling and trafficking, marking the first drug-related fugitive handed over by the US to China in recent years.

China, for its part, apprehended a US citizen wanted through an Interpol Red Notice for serious violent crimes and handed the fugitive over to US law enforcement at Shanghai Pudong International Airport following an investigation in July.

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POLICY REVIEW

Factory floors produce visitor intrigue

Nation's assembly lines have grown into hot spots for culture, learning

By YANG FEIYUE
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SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

The repurposed giant steel furnaces of Beijing's Shougang Park no longer produce metal, but they have become a draw for tourists. In Wuhan's Optics Valley in Hubei province, visitors explore the technologies behind modern communications, while in Guangdong's smart factories, robotic production lines have become attractions in their own right. Together, they reflect the rapid rise of industrial tourism across China.

Long associated with smokestacks, assembly lines and production targets, factories are increasingly becoming destinations. Travelers are no longer content with simply viewing landscapes or historical monuments. Many, particularly younger visitors, want to understand how products are made, how technologies work and how China's industrial transformation has reshaped cities and communities.

Against this backdrop, in May, seven central government departments issued a directive aimed at accelerating the development of industrial tourism nationwide. The policy, jointly released by agencies including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, lays out eight key tasks covering heritage surveys, conservation, product development, cultural interpretation, educational integration, promotion and safety management.

The directive calls for nationwide surveys and documentation of industrial heritage resources, along with the establishment of graded and categorized databases to clarify the value and development potential of each site.

It emphasizes the principle of "protection first, rational utilization and minimal intervention", ensuring that core structures, spatial patterns and authentic industrial features are preserved. Rather than treating industrial heritage as static relics, the policy seeks to safeguard its historical integrity while allowing for appropriate reuse.

The directive also highlights the importance of interpreting industrial cultural values, including craftsmanship, entrepreneurship and innovation, through exhibitions, creative content and cultural products. It further encourages the development of branded cultural goods, including "*guochao*" (Chinachic) products, to bring industrial heritage into contemporary consumption spaces.

On the tourism side, the policy promotes diversified formats. These include heritage-based redevelopment projects that adapt old industrial sites through creative design and new business models; factory tours that open production lines for public viewing, hands-on participation and product customization; and smart tourism experiences powered by digital technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence and autonomous systems.

Service quality is another key focus. The directive calls for improved infrastructure, professional guide training, better integration with urban transport systems, and enhanced multilingual services and tax refund facilitation to support inbound tourism.

The document signals a shift in thinking that industrial tourism is no longer viewed as a niche form of factory sightseeing. Instead, policymakers increasingly see it as a platform for integrating culture, tourism and industry while showcasing the achievements of Chinese modernization.

According to Hou Yanquan, an associate researcher with the strategic planning institute at the Industrial Culture Development Center of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, China has more than 140 national-level industrial tourism demonstration bases. Industry forecasts suggest the sector could maintain annual growth of around 18 percent through 2029, with market value potentially exceeding 300 billion yuan ($44.5 billion).

Behind those figures lies a deeper change in consumer behavior.

Gong Jian, a professor at the College of Urban and Environmental Sciences at Central China Normal University, said that tourism was largely associated with mountains, ancient towns and scenic attractions in the past, but today's visitors increasingly seek knowledge and participation alongside leisure. Young travelers want to understand the technologies behind new energy vehicles, optical fibers, industrial robots and advanced manufacturing systems, Gong said.

The trend reflects a growing demand for authenticity in tourism experiences. Unlike purpose-built attractions, industrial tourism often takes place in real production environments. Visitors encounter working factories, preserved workshops, original machinery — and the people who operate them.

"What visitors see is not a replica or a staged performance. They see real production sites, real processes and real labor," Gong said.

The transformation of China's manufacturing sector has further expanded the appeal. Smart factories, automated workshops and digital production systems have replaced many traditional images of heavy industry, creating environments that combine technology, innovation and education.

Ma Xiaolong, a tourism professor at Nankai University, said projects that offer immersive and participatory experiences have performed particularly well.

He identified intelligent manufacturing facilities, traditional craft enterprises and revitalized industrial heritage sites as among the fastest-growing categories.

Broader vision

For years, many industrial tourism projects focused primarily on factory visits and product displays. The new framework places industrial culture at the center. The emphasis shifts from simply viewing equipment to understanding the broader stories behind industrialization, technological innovation, craftsmanship and social development.

Gong described this as a move from treating industrial tourism as a tourism product to viewing it as a form of cultural interpretation.

The challenge, however, is ensuring that development does not come at the expense of heritage value, experts cautioned.

Industrial sites often contain layers of historical, technological and social significance that extend far beyond their physical structures, they said.

Gong said that industrial heritage should be understood as an integrated cultural landscape rather than a collection of isolated buildings.

He pointed to Wuhan Iron and Steel Group as an illustration of this approach. The company remains in full operation today, with its active modern production lines running alongside carefully preserved industrial heritage, including a blast furnace museum and smart manufacturing demonstration lines. Together, the operational plant and heritage attractions host tens of thousands of visitors annually, local authorities reported.

This integration of active production, historical memory and urban development makes it a powerful example of how industrial sites can become meaningful cultural landscapes, Gong said.

New audiences

The policy arrives as the market for industrial tourism continues to diversify, said Zhang Zuqun, a staff member at the School of Arts and Design at Beijing Institute of Technology and an expert in industrial heritage evaluation.

Study tours have emerged as one of the most important growth segments. Educational reforms emphasizing labor education, practical learning and scientific literacy have increased demand for experiential learning opportunities outside traditional classrooms, Zhang said.

Industrial sites offer students direct exposure to manufacturing, engineering and technological innovation. Family travelers, photography enthusiasts, cultural tourists and corporate groups have also become important audiences, he said.

Zhang added that consumer demand has been increasingly centered on immersive experiences, knowledge acquisition and cultural engagement rather than simple sightseeing.

Yet meeting these rising expectations is no simple task.

The challenge, Gong said, is avoiding two extremes. One is turning industrial tourism into a technical lecture that overwhelms visitors with information. The other is reducing industrial heritage to generic commercial developments stripped of their historical character.

He said that successful projects must balance technology with storytelling, education with entertainment, and heritage with innovation.

Gong said that the policy's deeper significance lies in cultivating cultural confidence and industrial identity. By opening up production sites and preserving industrial memory, the policy will help people understand that Chinese-style modernization was created generation by generation by workers, engineers, entrepreneurs, researchers and urban residents.

Factories, mines and workshops, he said, are becoming places where the stories of industrial development and modern China itself can be experienced firsthand.

Professor Ma said the directive provides a crucial foundation for industrial tourism to move beyond novelty check-ins toward technological knowledge, cultural depth and emotional resonance. By encouraging branding, content development and diversified formats, the policy helps shift competition from resource advantages to IP and distinctiveness, he said.

Policy Digest

Unified national standard set for medical lab pricing

China's National Healthcare Security Administration has issued trial guidelines for medical laboratory service pricing. This release completes a comprehensive 40-batch rollout, marking the basic establishment of a unified, standardized nationwide system for healthcare billing.

The guidelines cover major areas including clinical testing, blood transfusion and blood typing, microbiology and parasitology, molecular diagnostics, biochemistry and immunology. They contain 662 primary items, 114 surcharge items and seven extension items.

Pricing focuses on service outcomes rather than testing methods to eliminate arbitrary price gaps. Billing units are unified for clearer, simpler charging.

An NHSA official said that nationwide standardization will drive high-quality development in laboratory medicine while facilitating the mutual recognition of test results across regions and healthcare providers.

Blueprint released for weather warning system

The China Meteorological Administration and the National Development and Reform Commission have issued a joint plan for the development of the national comprehensive meteorological observation system during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period.

The roadmap aims to modernize the country's meteorological science, technology and public services through integrated multi-domain coverage, broadened scope and utility, and enhanced resource coordination.

The plan stresses accelerating the development of a modern comprehensive meteorological observation system that integrates land, sea, air and space, promotes coordination across sectors, and operates intelligently, efficiently and precisely.

$200b target set for emergency equipment

China has unveiled a new five-year plan to rapidly modernize its safety and emergency equipment sector, aiming for output in key areas to hit 1.4 trillion yuan ($206 billion) by 2030. Jointly issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Ministry of Emergency Management, the strategy centers on cultivating market-leading enterprises to drive the nation's response capabilities.

The plan aims to significantly raise the industry's scale, technological capabilities, product quality and application levels over the next five years.

China's safety and emergency equipment industry has grown rapidly in recent years, with output in key areas surpassing 1 trillion yuan in 2025.

New technologies and equipment have been increasingly deployed in front-line rescue and relief operations. During this year's flood season, drones and satellite communications systems were used to detect risks at dams and ensure communications during emergencies, making flood control and disaster response more precise and efficient.

CHINA DAILY—XINHUA

Xiaomi puts smart manufacturing on public show

By YANG FEIYUE

When visitors step into Chinese tech company Xiaomi's electric vehicle factory in Beijing E-Town, the giant robotic arms swinging with precision never fail to take their breath away.

Autonomous robots glide silently across the floor carrying parts. A 9,100-metric-ton die-casting machine shapes molten metal into automotive components in just 100 seconds. Over 600 robots work in concert across the 718,000-square-meter facility, where every 76 seconds, a new electric vehicle rolls off the production line.

Since beginning public tours in March 2024 — and fully opening to individual visitors in November 2024 — the factory has welcomed more than a quarter of a million people, making it a popular destination to experience firsthand how electric vehicles are manufactured.

The factory's openness aligns with a directive issued in late May by seven central government departments — including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology — which encourages manufacturers in sectors such as automotive and robotics to open production lines to public viewing, offer hands-on experiences and develop educational study tours.

"We started by studying how to make it work," said Ma Lan, general manager of Xiaomi's Beijing E-Town campus, which encompasses the EV factory and research and development facilities. The challenge, she said, was to maintain production, ensure safety and keep the tour engaging.

"The factory produced 410,000 vehicles last year — all real production, not a set built for show," Ma said. "We needed to explore the integration of manufacturing and tourism while ensuring normal operations and product quality."

The solution involved scientifically designed tour routes, strategically scheduled visiting hours and strict safety protocols. Visitors enter production areas with full protective gear and remain in vehicles throughout the tour. Since opening, the factory has recorded zero safety incidents.

"We have visitors of all kinds," said Zhao Liangtao, director of the factory's comprehensive management department. "We tailor our explanations — technical depth for professionals, educational content for students, fun and engagement for families."

Since May, the factory has offered weekly English-language tours. Any visitor from any country can book through Xiaomi's mobile app using a passport. The factory also hosts a steady stream of international delegations — government officials, industry experts, business executives and university groups.

"Beyond the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, Xiaomi's EV factory gives international visitors a direct, in-depth look at China's smart manufacturing capabilities," Ma said.

The factory has made educational programming a strategic priority. In May this year, it launched the "Science Lecture Hall" project, signing agreements with 11 primary and secondary schools in the Beijing E-Town area.

The program offers a two-hour experience: a one-hour customized factory tour and an hour of interactive classroom learning. Two courses are currently available, focusing on exploring the relationship between car design and aerodynamic drag, and green development in the industry, with two more in development.

"Children's experience at the factory is completely different from learning from textbooks," Zhao said. "They can see with their own eyes how cars move along the production line and how robots automatically transport materials. These real front-line scenes stimulate imagination, leave a deeper impression and bring more inspiration."

The program is expected to offer more than 300 sessions this year, reaching over 10,000 students.

The factory's appeal extends beyond the assembly line. A go-kart track opened on site in March, featuring a 580-meter circuit that uses only electric karts. The track has attracted nearly 9,000 visitors since its debut.

The factory canteen opened in March 2025, and a cultural and creative products store opened in April 2025. Both have become hits among visitors.

"We want the factory to be more than a place where cars are made," Zhao said. "We want it to become a window showcasing China's manufacturing innovation, a key vehicle for spreading industrial culture and a new landmark for industrial tourism with international influence."

For Ma, the factory's deeper value lies in what it reveals about industrial culture. She described two core principles that define Xiaomi's approach.

"The first is engineering culture — a commitment to relentlessly pursuing perfection, to sparing no effort in mastering every detail, to solving technical challenges with focus and precision," she said.

"The second is entrepreneurial culture. The project has carried forward the spirit of hard work and determination," she added.

The Xiaomi EV factory has set its sights on becoming a national industrial tourism demonstration base and is pursuing 4A-level scenic spot certification. But its immediate goal for this year is to welcome 200,000 visitors.

"We hope that through industrial tourism and educational study tours, more members of the public will visit the factory, learn about manufacturing and experience the charm of China's automotive industry innovation," Ma said. The May directive, she added, gives the factory a clear direction as it pursues its goal.

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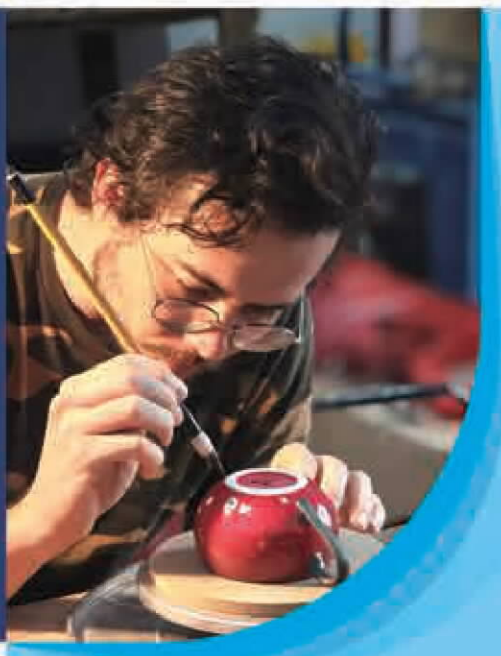
All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY



Jingdezhen fires global imagination

Once carried overseas, Jingdezhen porcelain now draws international artists to its source, creating new exchanges between cultures and creative traditions.

Above: Yann Colleu paints on a red-clay teapot with a calligraphy brush at his studio in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province. **Bottom:** Denis Naymark carves decorative textures into a white porcelain teapot in Jingdezhen. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By **GUO JIATONG**
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When French artist Yann Colleu first encountered porcelain in 2014 as a contemporary art student in France, he had little idea that the material would eventually become central to his life.

At the time, he worked across a range of media, from wood and oil painting to performance and music, with porcelain just one material among many.

That began to change in 2017, when he traveled to Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, for a three-month academic exchange at Jingdezhen Ceramic University.

Colleu said his time in Jingdezhen opened his eyes to how expressive porcelain could be on its own. "I want to explore every aspect of porcelain that can emulate thought and convey emotion."

Back in France, he could not stop thinking about Jingdezhen and soon found himself longing to return. Over the following years, he traveled back and forth between the two countries. In 2024, when Colleu was 32, he and his family decided to settle in Jingdezhen.

Colleu is one of many international artists drawn to the city, some for short stays and others who eventually choose to put down roots.

Their presence has taken on added significance since the Jingdezhen Handicraft Porcelain Industry Sites were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in July.

For centuries, Jingdezhen porcelain traveled overseas along ancient maritime trade routes, carrying Chinese craftsmanship and aesthetics to distant markets. Today, artists from around the world are making the journey in the opposite direction, learning from the city's ceramic traditions while bringing artistic languages of their own.

Colleu has witnessed the city's creative scene become increasingly international and diverse.

What was once centered on technical mastery and material quality, he said, has grown to embrace contemporary art, performance, experimental music, digital modeling and 3D printing. "Some artists who left for larger cities in search of opportunities are also beginning to return."

Colleu himself went on to study *qinghua*, or blue-and-white porcelain, and *youzhong wucai*, an in-glaze polychrome decoration technique, working with local craftspeople to learn from and experiment with these traditional methods.

The longer Colleu worked with porcelain, however, the more he came to understand how much of the process lay beyond the maker's control. Moisture, drying, shrinkage and firing can all affect the final results, and even a carefully made piece can crack or deform in the kiln.

> "If used well, livestreaming can help the industry grow, but when everyone is chasing traffic and quick profits, prices can become distorted, and craftspeople devoted to traditional techniques may be left wondering where the industry is headed."
>
> **BangCho (pseudonym),** a South Korean entrepreneur

He compares the process to a human relationship.

"You cannot force a relationship and expect positive results," he said. "You have to observe, you have to listen, and you have to adapt."

That dialogue between maker and material has also fascinated Denis Naymark, a sculptor from the United States.

Naymark began working with ceramics at around the age of 8, in a studio at a university in New York where his father taught. After his father's lectures, he recalled, he would run to the studio and shape clay into faces, dragons, horses, teapots and bowls.

"The possibilities were always endless," he said.

He later studied ceramic sculpture and traveled to Jingdezhen in 2013, at age 22, to deepen his knowledge of advanced porcelain techniques and traditional Chinese ceramic materials.

Naymark said the city gave him the space to weave his fascination with nature into his work.

"Growing up near the ocean in New York, I developed an enduring interest in aquatic life," he said. "The hills and forests around Jingdezhen offered me further inspiration."

That influence can be seen in his teapot designs, which draw inspiration from seashells, coral, and other marine life. Rounded bodies, shell-like ridges, dotted textures and glossy blue, white and pink glazes give them the feel of an underwater world.

Though the compositions may appear spontaneous, every shell, form and color is carefully placed.

For Naymark, experimentation does not mean breaking with tradition. "You need both traditional techniques and modern, new ideas," he said.

Beyond aesthetics

South Korean entrepreneur BangCho (pseudonym), who came to Jingdezhen in 2019, found his own path into the city's porcelain legacy through tea. "To him, porcelain is particularly well suited to bringing out the character of tea.

"Jingdezhen is one of China's major production centers for everyday tea-ware, with kilns capable of consistently firing porcelain at temperatures above 1,300 degrees Celsius," he said. "At such temperatures, the glaze forms a smooth, glasslike surface with very low water absorption, helping preserve the tea's original aroma and flavor."

That understanding shapes his designs. For BangCho, function comes before decoration.

When designing a *gaiwan*, or lidded tea bowl, he considers factors such as its thickness and diameter, pouring speed and heat retention — all of which influence the experience of drinking tea.

Beyond his own designs, BangCho sees porcelain not only as an art form, but as a craft that has supported the city's economy for generations.

"There is hardly another city anywhere in the world that has sustained itself on a single ceramics industry for a thousand years," he said.

Over the years, he has also watched the city and its ceramic economy evolve.

"Years ago, young people were far less visible in the city center," he recalled. Today, he said, they fill its streets and markets, while contemporary ceramics, from coffee cups to plates and bowls with modern designs, have grown in popularity alongside traditional wares.

Livestreaming and e-commerce have further expanded the market, extending the reach of Jingdezhen ceramics beyond the city.

But BangCho sees that growth as a double-edged sword.

"If used well, livestreaming can help the industry grow, but when everyone is chasing traffic and quick profits, prices can become distorted, and craftspeople devoted to traditional techniques may be left wondering where the industry is headed," he said.

He believes preserving the knowledge behind the craft is just as important as expanding the market and has called for publicly supported training programs to provide craftspeople with the resources and opportunities needed to pass their skills on to younger generations.

Looking ahead, BangCho hopes to develop products that bring Chinese and South Korean aesthetics into dialogue while introducing ceramic works from both countries to wider audiences.

The paths taken by Colleu, Naymark and BangCho are different, but what connects them is Jingdezhen itself — a place whose centuries-old ceramic traditions continue to attract people from beyond China, not simply to observe them, but to learn from them and become part of their continuing evolution.

For Colleu, that pull has become inseparable from a feeling of home.

"Once you experience that environment, it becomes very difficult not to feel that you belong here," he said.



Social Media Digest

Steel the fun

Think regular DIY isn't cool — or hard-core — enough? Young Chinese people are finding their next craft obsession in an unlikely place: the hardware store.

Metal elbows, faucet fittings, valves, pipes and all kinds of steel odds and ends can be picked up for just a few yuan. Add a little imagination, and plumbing supplies suddenly become Thor's hammer, a steampunk wine dispenser or something even harder to explain.

Snap a photo, post it online, and these creations can quickly go viral on social media under the tag "hardware store Lego".

It might sound like a fleeting fad. But the trend says something interesting about how young people are redefining fun.

Not long ago, getting into crafts often meant signing up for pottery, tufting or another carefully curated studio experience. Now, young people are looking for something that costs less, feels more personal, and leaves much more room for creativity — walking into a hardware shop, buying a handful of ordinary parts and figuring out what they could become.

Behind those neighborhood shops sits China's enormous manufacturing ecosystem, producing an extraordinary variety of metal fittings, tools and components at low prices. Parts designed for plumbing, construction and repair are abundant and easy to find.

With such a ready supply of cheap parts to play with, who says Lego has to be plastic?



A new generation of DIY enthusiasts is turning hardware stores into unlikely creative playgrounds. VCG

Picture imperfect

Tired of seeing picture-perfect lives all over social media? Apparently, so is everyone else. TikTok's "Yes, but" trend is giving those flawless posts a reality check.

The format is simple: two photos, two very different versions of the same moment. The top image is the polished "Yes"; the bottom is the decidedly less glamorous "but".

Picture this: "Yes" — you're posing effortlessly on the beach, sunglasses on, sunset glowing behind you. "But" — seconds later, a wave knocks you off balance and sends you scrambling through the sand. One frame belongs on your feed. The other shows what actually happened.

That contrast is exactly what makes the trend work — perfection on top, reality underneath.

And there's a refreshing honesty in putting both versions on display. For years, social media has rewarded the highlight reel: the best angles, the best outfits, the best moments. "Yes, but" allows the outtakes to crash the party. It's a reminder that behind every polished shot, there may be an awkward pose, a failed attempt or something gloriously unphotogenic.

Posting that second photo takes a little nerve, too. Showing the mess behind the magic feels like a small act of rebellion. The message is simple: I'm not perfect, but that's totally fine.

LI YUCHE



A growing social media trend is challenging the pressure to present only polished, picture-perfect versions of everyday life. VCG

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Young footsteps echo the Long March

A journey through historic sites helps students connect textbook history with the lives of those who endured the Long March.



Students from Jinggangshan University renew their oath as members of the Communist Youth League of China at a study and education base dedicated to the Young Communist International Division in Ningdu county, Jiangxi province, on July 2. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By MENG WENJIE
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Standing before a display case at a museum in Yudu county, Jiangxi province, 23-year-old Zeng Yan read a letter written by a Red Army soldier nearly a century ago.

The letter's writer, Liu Xingfa, was just 19. In the letter, he repeatedly reassured his family that he was safe and well, concealing the hardships he was enduring amid the fighting at the time.

After reading it, Zeng wrote a reply from the perspective of a young person today. She told Liu that China had changed profoundly, that people now lived in peace and that his sacrifice had not been forgotten.

"The letter was not only meant to comfort a fallen soldier," Zeng said. "It also reminded me that I cannot simply be moved by his story and leave it at that."

The exchange across time was part of a five-day journey undertaken by 11 students from the School of Marxism at Jinggangshan University. From July 2 to 6, they traveled through Ningdu, Yudu, Shicheng and Guangchang in Jiangxi province, as well as Jianning in Fujian province, retracing the footsteps of young Red Army soldiers before and during the Long March (1934-36).

According to Li Qiong, the team's instructor and a teacher at the university, the journey was intended to create a dialogue between young people from two different eras.

"The young soldiers were about the same age as my students," Li said.

"I hoped the students could experience history in a more personal way by reflecting on their own choices and responsibilities," she added.

The year 2026 marks the 90th anniversary of the victory of the Long March. In October 1934, the Central Red Army began a strategic transfer to break through Kuomintang's encirclement.

The university program focused on the Young Communist International Division, a special Red Army unit established in Bosheng county (present-day Ningdu county) in 1933. Composed mainly of young soldiers, the division had an average age of just 18.

During the Long March, it carried out missions including protecting the main force and serving as the rear guard. The unit suffered heavy casualties during the Battle of the Xiangjiang River in Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region in 1934, and its remaining troops were later incorporated into other Red Army units.

He Xin, 24, who led the student team, was born in Ningdu but had never visited the historical sites associated with the division.

Standing on a former racecourse where the unit was established, she found herself looking back 93 years.

"Many people that age today are sitting in classrooms, while those young soldiers had to take up arms to defend their homeland," He said.

"We share the same youth. Standing there, I suddenly felt that the distance between history and the present had disappeared," she continued.

Walking into history

As the journey continued, history gradually moved beyond textbooks and became something the students could see, touch and feel.

That sense of connection deepened as He encountered the ordinary objects that had accompanied the soldiers on their journey.

One object seen repeatedly in museums and at historical sites offered her a glimpse into the hardships of the march: straw sandals.

Made from rice straw, the footwear accompanied countless soldiers along the route.

In Yudu, He met an 80-year-old veteran from Guangdong province, who told her that making a pair of straw sandals took two days, yet they could wear out in as little as 15 days.

"Comparing them with today's leather combat boots gave me a much clearer understanding of the shortage of supplies and the hardships the soldiers endured," He said.





Above: Students from Jinggangshan University recite excerpts from *The Long March Suite* at a Long March ferry crossing in Yudu county, Jiangxi province, on July 3. **Bottom:** He Xin (right) interviews a veteran from Guangdong province at a memorial hall marking the departure of the Long March by the Central Red Army in Yudu county, Jiangxi province, on July 3. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "We share the same youth. Standing there, I suddenly felt that the distance between history and the present had disappeared."
>
> **He Xin,** leader of the student team that retraced the route of the Long March

> "History lives through a wall, a stroke of writing and the people who protect it."
>
> **Zeng Yan,** a student at Jinggangshan University

While such objects helped He imagine the soldiers' daily struggles, walking part of the route gave Zheng Ting a more immediate sense of the dangers they had faced.

At a battle memorial in Guangchang, the 24-year-old stood in silence and felt what she described as "history coming toward me".

She compared learning about the Long March from a textbook to viewing a river from above: readers may know where it begins and ends, but they cannot experience every bend along the way.

By walking the route, feeling the mud beneath her feet and enduring the July heat of southern Jiangxi, Zheng gained a deeper understanding of the uncertainty faced by the young soldiers.

"They did not know how much farther they had to go or whether they would live to see New China," she said. "What sustained them was the belief that they could not accept oppression or lose their homeland."

Carrying memory forward

Those encounters did more than make the past feel real. They prompted the students to consider what their own generation should do with that history.

For Zeng, the answer begins in the classroom. After graduation, she hopes to become a politics teacher and introduce students to the Long March through the lives of real people and their individual stories.

"I want to bring these stories into the classroom in a warmer and more personal way, so students can understand how history continues to unfold through time," she said.

For others, the answer lies in protecting the physical traces that allow such stories to be told.

One of He's most memorable moments came at a memorial hall in Ningdu, where the deputy director explained how memories of the Long March had been preserved across generations.

The woman's father began collecting historical materials related to the Red Army in 1969. She has continued his work by visiting villages across Ningdu, collecting objects from descendants of Red Army soldiers and preserving them in archives.

The conversation helped He understand that without people collecting letters, protecting former sites and recording family memories, many individual stories could disappear.

Preserving these materials, she realized, allows young people to examine the choices made by those who came before them and reflect on their own responsibilities.

Similar efforts can be seen in Danxi village in Shicheng, where residents have preserved former Red Army sites and maintained slogans painted on village walls more than 90 years ago.

"The person who wrote those words left no name, but his spirit has endured," Zeng said. "History lives through a wall, a stroke of writing and the people who protect it."

After returning to campus, the students began exploring their own ways of carrying those memories forward.

They drew a replica of the Young Communist International Division's armband by hand and created digital maps, magnets and badges inspired by the relics, documents and stories they encountered during the journey.

Through these creative forms, they hope to make the history of the Long March more accessible to young people who may never have the opportunity to visit the sites themselves.

He also plans to draw on what she learned in her future academic research.

"Ninety years ago, young people defended their homeland with their lives," she said. "Today, young people are using their knowledge to build the country. Times have changed, but the courage and determination of youth remain unchanged."

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When age opens doors

For young followers anxious about falling behind, Suzi de Givenchy's journey offers proof that life does not unfold on a fixed timetable.

By GUI QIAN
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During the 79th Festival de Cannes, Suzi de Givenchy (Chinese name Huang Xianxi) joined a forum organized by The One International Women's Film Festival on narratives by Asian women in cinema. Around her were directors, writers and journalists. Suzi, however, was a fashion model.

At first, she wondered why she had been invited.

"I'm not an actress. I'm not really from that field," she recalled. But as the discussion unfolded, she began to understand what she brought to the conversation. "I think I represented the spectator — the person who goes to the cinema, the person who loves films."

For Suzi, finding herself in an unfamiliar room was nothing new. Her life has been shaped by unexpected turns.

Born in Hong Kong, Suzi moved to New York with her single mother at the age of 4. As the eldest child, she began taking part-time jobs at 14 to help support the family. At 20, she traveled to Paris to celebrate her birthday, where she met a nephew of the French designer Hubert de Givenchy. The two married, raised three sons and settled in the French countryside.

For decades, Suzi's world revolved around her children, her husband and their life together. Then, in 2016, her husband died suddenly of a heart attack.

Writing became one way through her grief. She began keeping a journal, a practice she later described as therapeutic, saying it helped her process the loss and put it into perspective.

Three years later, her life took another unexpected turn. At a gathering, a casting director noticed her and encouraged her to pursue modeling professionally.

She was 52.

In an industry long defined by youth, Suzi stood out precisely because she did not fit the conventional mold. Her wrinkles, high cheekbones, freckles and gray hair were not hidden — they became part of her visual identity. She went on to work with fashion houses including Balenciaga, Lemaire and Off-White, and appeared on the cover of Vogue.

The sudden visibility made her biography easy to package as an inspirational transformation. But Suzi is wary of that framing.

"At times, my story can be perceived like a fairy tale, like a movie story," she said. But she believes many lives contain remarkable turns. What makes a story seem extraordinary is often not the life itself, but the attention it receives.

That may be why the film forum felt less like a detour than another extension of her story. Rather than seeing herself as someone deliberately crossing industries, Suzi says she simply follows her curiosity wherever it leads.

"My life has been about getting outside of a box," she said.

More important, perhaps, is how she approaches what comes next: with humility.

She assumes others may have studied longer and know more, so she listens, asks questions and tries to set aside her preconceptions. Rather than needing to arrive as an expert, she is comfortable starting from a place of not knowing.

"I always try to go into a space as a student," she said.

This willingness to begin again has shaped a life trajectory that runs against the fear that every important choice must be made early — and may also help explain her appeal to younger followers.

Yet her advice to them is grounded in practical realities rather than simply telling them to "follow your passion".

"Everyone has to pay their bills. Everyone has to eat," she said. Instead of waiting for a single, perfect calling, she suggests finding something they are good at and enjoy, then building their skills in it — even if it cannot immediately become a career.

"Things are meant to happen when they're supposed to happen," she added.

Owning her place

Suzi's years across Hong Kong, New York and France have also shaped how she thinks about identity. For much of her life, she tried to work out where she belonged. Over time, she realized the search was not about finding a country or a place to call home.

"What I was looking for was myself," she said. "I feel most at peace with myself."

That answer may resonate with young people facing anxieties about identity, appearance and age, but Suzi does not pretend that self-acceptance, once found, comes effortlessly or lasts forever. Some days are less peaceful than others. Her message to her 20-year-old self — and to young women now — is simple: trust yourself, ask questions, be kinder to yourself and surround yourself with people who appreciate you.

That self-acceptance matters especially in an industry built around appearance. Even as an established older model, Suzi describes holding her ground as a continuing battle: asserting that she has a place and deserves it.

Her next chapter may return to the medium that helped her through grief: writing. She has taken a workshop and is interested in exploring this further, drawn to the introspective nature it offers.

"Writing is a very interesting process because you do learn a lot about yourself," she said.

At Cannes, Suzi arrived as neither a filmmaker nor an industry expert. She came as a model, reader, cinema lover, mother, widow, grandmother and a woman who remains curious about what might come next.

That may be the clearest thread running through her life. Beginning again, for Suzi, is not about erasing what came before or pretending age does not matter. It is about refusing to see age as the end of possibility — and being willing to enter the next unfamiliar room as a student.



Suzi de Givenchy walks the runway for Oude Waag, a Shanghai-based Chinese fashion label.



Suzi de Givenchy attends a forum organized by The One International Women's Film Festival in Cannes, France, in May 2026.



Suzi de Givenchy takes photographs on the street.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Seeds of curiosity grow beneath giant telescope

By MENG WENJIE
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In early August, 20-year-old Liu Chang stood at the front of a classroom, feeling slightly nervous. It was her first experience as a volunteer teacher.

Facing her were students from Kedu Experimental Primary School in Pingtang county, Guizhou province. Pingtang is home to the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope, or FAST, the world's largest single-dish radio telescope.

A student in the department of engineering physics at Tsinghua University, Liu was among 14 members of the university's Cyrus Tang Love and Care Society who traveled to the county for a two-week summer camp from July 27 to Aug 10.

Huang Zijun, 22, the team leader, said the camp aimed to combine local characteristics with children's personal growth.

"FAST is of great significance to national security and scientific development," he said. "Drawing on the region's astronomy culture and the children's interests, we created courses that brought together scientific exploration, sports, artistic expression and life education."



A Tsinghua University student volunteer teaches children Latin dance during a two-week summer camp at Kedu Experimental Primary School in Pingtang county, Guizhou province, on Aug 3, 2026. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

To make the science behind FAST more accessible, Liu designed a course in which students built their own telescope models to explore its structure and working principles.

The lesson drew an enthusiastic response. One student, usually energetic and easily distracted, worked on the model in her spare time and finished it ahead of schedule. She then picked up Liu's camera and filmed a short vlog, introducing each part of her model and explaining how it related to the real telescope.

In another class, Li Yiheng, 21, a student at Tsinghua University's School of Aerospace Engineering, taught the children how to make water rockets.

Rather than giving them answers directly, Li asked the students to experiment with different amounts of water and launch angles to see which combinations could make their rockets fly farther.

"When they found the answers themselves, my explanations became much more meaningful," Li said.

The emphasis on experience extended beyond science: the volunteers also sought to support the personal growth of rural girls.

Du Xuanye, 21, a philosophy student at Tsinghua University's Rixin College, helped design sports activities that, rather than emphasizing competition, aimed to build girls' "body confidence".

"Many girls worry about being judged for their appearance when taking part in sports, which can affect their focus and enjoyment," Du explained. " So, we encouraged them to pay more attention to how they feel and build a stronger connection with their bodies."

As a member of Tsinghua's drama club, Du also brought theater exercises into the classroom. For example, she guided the children to use body movements to "write" their names and make funny expressions to relax their facial muscles. She also introduced exercises to help improve their concentration and self-awareness.

To Du's surprise, the children soon required less guidance than she had expected. During a flag football activity, one girl wearing a skirt and sandals threw herself into the game without hesitation.

"She did not spend time worrying about whether her clothes were suitable for sports," Du said. "She simply focused on running and carrying the ball toward the end zone."

For the volunteers, these small changes were encouraging. But they also raised a more difficult question: How much could a two-week program truly achieve?

"There were so many things we wanted to do together, but we could not get to them all," Liu said. "After seeing the challenges the children face in their daily lives, we realized there was only so much we could do."

According to Huang, university volunteer teaching programs are sometimes criticized as being "brief and superficial". As a result, the team took steps before the camp to make their work more sustained and responsive to the children's needs. They exchanged letters with the children before arriving to better understand their expectations and interests.

After returning to Beijing, they plan to keep in touch with the children through letters.

For Liu, the value of the experience may ultimately lie not in how much the volunteers were able to change in two weeks, but in what the children take away from their time together. "At least they may remember the happiness of those two weeks and that someone took the time to listen to their stories, interests and worries like an adult friend," she said.

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SPORTS

SOCCER



Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta is thrown into the air by his players while celebrating their Premier League title win in London on May 24. AP

New faces, old heads and a whole lot of uncertainty

The Premier League is back, and nobody really knows what to expect from the post-Guardiola era



The post-Pep Guardiola era is already underway in English soccer amid uncertainty and upheaval, not just at Manchester City, but across the whole of the Premier League.

Heading into the new top-flight season, which begins Friday, nine clubs have new permanent managers — an unprecedented number at the start of an English top-flight campaign.

At age 33, Fabian Hurzeler is the fifth longest-serving coach in the Premier League — and he has only been at Brighton for two years.

The biggest vacuum needing to be filled is at City, following the departure of Guardiola after 10 record-breaking years in charge. Good luck following that, Enzo Maresca — especially after the team's lamentable performance in its Community Shield loss to Arsenal on Sunday.

Among the other top clubs with new coaches are Liverpool (Andoni Iraola), Chelsea (Xabi Alonso) and Newcastle (Matthias Jaissle) — all of which competed in the Champions League last season.

Heck, it makes Roberto De Zerbi — appointed by Tottenham on March 31 to escape relegation — and Michael Carrick — installed as interim manager at Manchester United for the second half of last season before impressing and getting the permanent job — seem like veritable veterans.

It also makes Arsenal, the reigning champion, appear a haven of stability as Mikel Arteta goes into his seventh full season at the helm as by far the league's longest-serving manager.

Yet, there's a big question mark hanging over the Gunners, too: Will there be a hangover after winning the league for the first time in 22 years?

We're about to find out, though Arsenal's display in the Community Shield provided early encouragement for its fans.

The nonstop roller coaster that is the Premier League begins in earnest on Friday, when Arsenal hosts newly promoted Coventry, which has a compelling backstory of its own after being out of the big time for 25 years.

Here are some other storylines providing a backdrop to the new season:

A lack of star power?

The Cristiano Ronaldo circus left town in 2022. Harry Kane moved away in 2023. Kevin De Bruyne departed in 2025. Mohamed Salah quit for Turkiye this summer and Rodri has started packing his bags for Barcelona.

It begs the question: Is the biggest league in the world lacking the biggest players in the world?

OK, City still has prolific striker Erling Haaland, whose brand has never been higher after wowing American fans during last month's World Cup.

But soccer superstars like Kylian Mbappe, Ousmane Dembele, Vinicius Junior, Lamine Yamal and even England's own two top players, Kane and Jude Bellingham, play in other countries.

All-time greats of this century — think Lionel Messi, Ronaldinho, Zinedine Zidane — never played in England, either.

The big blockbuster deal of the offseason could have been Vinicius joining Arsenal, but he chose to stay at Real Madrid.

The Premier League has recently prided itself in having the world's top coaches, yet Guardiola and Jurgen Klopp are no longer around.

The competition might have to settle, then, for having the greatest strength in depth, with the mid-level clubs having arguably never been better owing to the league's huge broadcasting deals.

Arsenal the favorite

Amid so much turbulence among its rivals, Arsenal has a great opportunity to retain the title and is the favorite with British oddsmakers.

Brazil midfielder Bruno Guimaraes has joined from Newcastle to bolster an already-strong midfield, left-winger Christos Tzolis signed from Club Brugge to replace the departed Leandro Trossard, and there is strength in depth in every position.

Counting against Arsenal, however, is an injury to defensive mainstay William Saliba that will rule out the France centerback for the first few months.

Also, there's an intangible: Will there be a drop-off in intensity or motivation after finally winning the league?

Arteta is determined that won't be the case.

High-profile returnees

Welcome back, Marcus Rashford. The England winger has rejoined Manchester United after a title-winning loan spell at Barcelona. Whether he wants to be at Old Trafford, though, remains to be seen.

Hello, again, to Frank Lampard, a title-winning great for Chelsea who has led Coventry back to the Premier League promised land as manager.

Coventry, a founding member of the Premier League, was relegated in 2001 and plunged into such financial chaos that the club lost its home and went on to drop into the fourth tier.

The Sky Blues' rise is one of English soccer's feel-good stories and they will be joined by fellow returnees Ipswich and Hull.

$3 billion and counting

England is in a league of its own when it comes to spending power, and Premier League clubs' outlay on new players in this transfer window is already approaching $3 billion.

The biggest signings so far have all been midfielders: Morgan Rogers to Chelsea for $156 million; Elliot Anderson to City for $155 million; Sandro Tonali to Tottenham for $133 million; and Guimaraes to Arsenal for $100 million.

Chelsea's net spend is almost $300 million, as Alonso reshapes the squad. Tottenham has also spent around $300 million on new players, in a reversal in policy following back-to-back 17th-place finishes.

The window remains open for two more weeks.

A set-piece-heavy style?

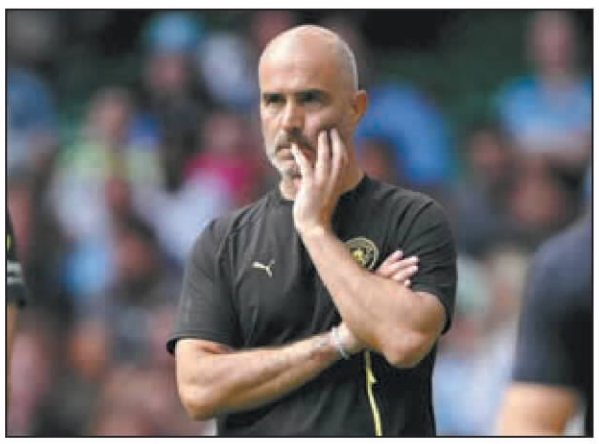
A significant change in English soccer last season was a reversion to old-school tactics, such as long throws into the area, a reliance on set-pieces and long clearances by goalkeepers, in a perceived snub to the Guardiola-influenced style of play where possession of the ball was king.

With Guardiola now out of the picture, will this trend increase further? Marco Rose at Bournemouth, Pierre Sage at Crystal Palace, Alvaro Arbeloa at Fulham and Alonso at Chelsea are all coaching in the Premier League for the first time.

Will this wave of new managers establish another different approach?

AP





Left: Liverpool coach Andoni Iraola walks off the pitch following a preseason club friendly win over Sunderland on July 25 in Nashville, Tennessee. **Right:** New Manchester City manager Enzo Maresca, pictured during Sunday's 3-0 Community Shield defeat to Arsenal in Cardiff, faces the daunting prospect of filling Pep Guardiola's shoes. So far, he seems to have nailed the look, but not the results. AP

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DECODING CHINA

River's revival a case study in good governance

Hunan's environmental success shows full potential of people-first approach

By **CAO YIN** and **HE CHUN**
in Changsha

On a balmy June afternoon, the banks of the Guitang River hum with life. Joggers pass by on the wooden boardwalks, while families push strollers past cafes and quaint shops. It's a scene that 75-year-old Chen Xiaofan, who lives along the river in Hunan province, sees as nothing short of a miracle.

After all, in the early 2000s, the river in Changsha, the provincial capital, was a black, open sewer — a literal scar on the city's Yuhua district.

Today, the river's water quality has improved from an inferior Grade V to a Grade I or II — suitable for fish and as a source of drinking water. Biodiversity has rebounded, with 425 species now inhabiting the area, including rare fish, wild ducks and egrets.

The transformation is much more than an environmental success story. It has become a key case study in a Party-wide campaign launched in February that redefines what constitutes political success for local officials.

The Guitang River's transformation demonstrates the results of generational efforts made by successive local officials under a governance philosophy based on a key principle: "Gold and silver cups are not as valuable as public reputation".

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, has emphasized this principle, stressing the importance of establishing and practicing a correct understanding of governance performance.

Xi, who is also Chinese president, said that communists must bear in mind that working for the people's well-being is their greatest political achievement, and that officials should contribute their share to this cause without taking credit for its success.

Continuous progress

Flowing 28.3 kilometers through a basin of more than 2 million people, the Guitang River was a childhood playground for residents like Deng You, who in the 1980s caught shrimp in its clear waters. However, rapid industrialization meant that the river was exposed to high levels of pollution. By the 1990s, the water quality had plunged to the worst national grade, and the river was placed on a national blacklist of polluted urban waterways.

When early, disjointed cleanup attempts failed in the 1990s, local authorities established a unified governance team in 2016. Since then, a chain of officials has built continuously on their predecessors' work rather than dismantling it to start their own projects.

Deng, deputy director of the Yuhua administrative committee of China (Hunan) Pilot Free Trade Zone Changsha area, joined the team as a coordinator. Her mission was to reconcile bureaucracies, demolish illegal structures, repair pipelines and restore the local ecosystem.

"I just wanted my mother river to breathe again — to be what it was in my childhood," she said.

The monumental undertaking saw millions of square meters of illegal construction torn down, every unregulated sewage outlet intercepted, and thousands of tons of fresh water pumped in daily. German experts were also invited to redesign the river's natural curves and bends as well as its ecological zones.

At the end of 2020, Deng passed her baton to Wang Bin, head of the district's river chief office. His role was to act as a bridge between residents, volunteers and government departments, finding and addressing the problems of the river and its surrounding areas in a timely manner.

"Early reports when I took the position were about broken pipes and illegal discharges. Now, residents ask for greener parks and more recreational space," Wang said. "That shift in public complaints is real evidence that our work is paying off."

Yang Weidong, a professor at China University of Political Science and Law, said that the governance of the river is a prime example of practicing a correct understanding of governance performance.

"What those officials do is to serve the people and put the public's demands first. They work not for immediate accolades but for long-term, sustainable public welfare," Yang said, adding that the change in the Guitang River shows the true potential of good governance.

Response to public needs

Following the river's environmental recovery, a commercial zone has emerged along its banks, offering communities a place to eat, unwind and enjoy leisure activities. Since last year, the area has seen a fresh wave of revitalization, drawing in young entrepreneurs and cultural-creative hubs, including artisan coffee roasters, bicycle culture studios and even a freshwater museum.

According to Yang, the transformation has responded to public needs at every turn — first for environmental restoration, then for community amenities, and now for jobs and economic vitality.

"At every stage, one conviction has never wavered: The people's genuine acclaim is the real yardstick of achievement," he said, emphasizing that, since the purpose of governance is to serve the people, their assessment and responses are what ultimately count.

The campaign, running through July, urges all Party members to embrace a correct understanding of governance performance. It calls for pragmatic, law-based decision-making, and for concrete outcomes that stand the test of practice and history — outcomes that genuinely serve the people and earn their recognition through solid, well-grounded work.

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Online
See more by scanning the code.



Foreign Minister Wang Yi takes part in a bilateral meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Pasay, Metro Manila, the Philippines, on Wednesday. BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI / REUTERS

China, US agree to prepare for high-level exchanges

By **ZHANG YUNBI**
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China and the United States need to translate the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries into whole-of-government consensus and action across various domains, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said during his meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Wednesday.

The two met in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, on the sidelines of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meetings.

Beijing and Washington "agreed to jointly implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state, tap into the roles played by political and diplomatic channels, and prepare for high-level exchanges in the next phase", the Foreign Ministry said in a release.

Both sides believe that "this meeting was pragmatic, positive and constructive", and they agreed to "promote substantive progress in a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability", the ministry said.

This is Wang's second face-to-face meeting with Rubio this year following their talks on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference in February. They also held a phone conversation in June.

During the talks on Wednesday, Wang said that this year is a "major year" for China-US relations and mentioned US President Donald Trump's state visit to China in May.

The two heads of state held a historic meeting in Beijing, defined the framework for the constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability, and outlined the direction for both sides' joint efforts, Wang said.

It is now the duty of both sides to "follow the course set by the two heads of state, eliminate disturbances, and overcome obstacles" to ensure that the leaders' consensus is translated into whole-of-government consensus and action across all fields, he said.

Both sides should "promote world peace and stability through China-US strategic stability" and "provide important impetus for international cooperation through constructive China-US interaction", he added.

Wang also made clear China's solemn position regarding a series of recent negative remarks and actions by the US.

He called on Washington to respect China's core interests, faithfully adhere to the one-China principle, effectively manage disagreements and differences, and address China's legitimate concerns, so that this "year of opportunity" for China-US relations can become a reality.

Wang was in Manila to attend the China-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Wednesday amid tension between China and the Philippines over the South China Sea issue.

When meeting with Philippine Foreign Secretary Maria Theresa Lazaro on Wednesday, Wang lodged a strong protest against the ramming of a Chinese law enforcement vessel at Ren'ai Reef of the Nansha Islands by Philippine sailors.

Currently, China-Philippines relations stand at a crossroads, and the Philippines' needs to make the right and rational choice for the future developments, he said.

He warned that the Philippines "will ultimately have to bear the bitter consequences of its own making" if it attempts to utilize outsiders for provocations.

China has never posed a security threat to the Philippines, has never in history invaded or colonized the Philippines, and has always been committed to managing differences and stabilizing the situation through bilateral dialogue and consultation, Wang said.

The Philippines should immediately stop provocative maritime actions, strictly abide by the commitments it has made to China to date, and make concrete efforts to stabilize bilateral relations, he said.

Lazaro said the Philippines hopes to find an appropriate solution to maritime issues through dialogue and strive to improve bilateral relations.

ONLY COLD NOODLES CAN BEAT MAJOR HEAT

Refreshing Northeast China dish is a must-have meal when the mercury rises

By **LI YINGXUE**
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In Yanji, a city in Jilin province, a cold noodle broth is often the first thing diners order after taking their seats.

Served in a stainless-steel bowl, the clear broth is icy cold, balancing sweet, sour and savory flavors. Then comes the main dish — long, chewy noodles resting in chilled beef broth. A pair of scissors allows diners to cut the noodles into manageable lengths.



Cold noodles, a traditional food of the Korean ethnic group. NIU CHENGYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

As Major Heat, or *da shu*, the hottest of China's 24 solar terms, arrives on Thursday, people across the nation will seek relief from soaring temperatures. In Yanji, many turn to cold noodles, a traditional food of the Korean ethnic group that has become one of the city's culinary calling cards.

China Vibes — FOOD —

"In Yanji, once the weather turns hot, people naturally think of cold noodles," said Jin Yongfu, manager of Yanji Fuwudalou Cold Noodles, one of the city's best-known cold noodle restaurants.

Yanji cold noodles are made from a mixture of buckwheat flour, wheat flour, sweet potato starch, tapioca starch and acorn powder. The dough is scalded, kneaded and pressed into thin strands, then briefly cooked before being rinsed twice in cold water.

The defining element of a good bowl of cold noodles though is the broth.

At Jin's restaurant, the beef is soaked in running water for up to a day and a night. It is then blanched and simmered for about five hours with carrots, scallions, onions, ginger, licorice root and red dates.

See ***Taste,*** *page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.

'Shock 2.0' narrative flawed in concept

WORLD WATCH
By Tu Xinquan

Since the second half of 2025, some Western media outlets, politicians and scholars have been promoting the so-called "China Shock 2.0" narrative, portraying China's progress in new energy, electric vehicles, biomedicine and other sectors as a threat. Behind this rhetoric is a familiar purpose: to provide a new justification for protectionist policies.

The phrase may sound new, but the argument is old. "China Shock 2.0" is merely the latest version of the "China overcapacity" theory and the "China threat" narrative. Twenty years ago, some in the West spoke of a "China Shock 1.0", claiming that China's low-cost, labor-intensive goods had disrupted developed markets. But a broader look at world economic history shows that every major technological revolution and industrial shift has produced anxiety among vested interests. British machine production replacing Indian handloom weaving in the 19th century, the rise of the United States auto industry relative to Europe's in the 20th century and the effect of Japanese cars on Detroit in the 1980s all followed this pattern. What is now called a "shock" is, in essence, a normal adjustment of dynamic comparative advantage.

At the center of the "China Shock 2.0" argument is the claim that China's new energy sector suffers from "overcapacity". Yet by the standards of industrial economics, overcapacity usually refers to a sustained capacity utilization rate below 70 to 75 percent, accompanied by widespread industry losses. China's new energy vehicle sector does not fit that description. Its capacity utilization rate has remained above 70 percent, with some domestic brands approaching 100 percent. By contrast, the average utilization rate of European auto plants is about 55 percent, and some companies are even below 50 percent. The data show clearly where the real imbalance lies.

Nor does China's export structure support the accusation. More than 80 percent of China's automobile output is sold at home, while exports account for less than 20 percent. In 2025, China produced more than 16 million electric vehicles, of which only 2.61 million were exported. The vast majority were absorbed by the domestic market. To equate a trade surplus with overcapacity is to confuse two distinct concepts.

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INDEPTH

From 'bedroom heroes' to music stars in China

Audiences embrace wide range of foreign artists, exposure online a key factor

By **WANG XIN** in Shanghai
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Left: German singer and songwriter Chris James at Yuyuan Garden in Shanghai in 2024. **Middle:** James (center) visits Zhangjiajie in Hunan province with his musician friends during his recent China trip. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Right:** Members of British indie band Swim Deep visit Beijing in 2025. SO READY PRESENTS / FOR CHINA DAILY

Chris James, a 30-year-old German singer-songwriter, had no idea a song he wrote quickly in his Berlin bedroom had captivated millions of music fans in China, and would ultimately change his life.

Busy preparing for his new Chinese tour in August, James clearly remembers the magical — or even "confusing" — start of the story. It was about four years ago, when he opened up the official music video of his song *Not Angry* at home and noticed a few comments in Chinese under it.

Those comments increased day by day, and piqued his interest in what was going on.

He ran them through a translator, tracked them to a Chinese app and found out his song, which starts with a catchy humming section, had garnered millions of views. On Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, the hit song has now been used and shared over 5 billion times.

"I was sitting in my bedroom, scrolling on the screen and it was really hard to process. I saw people singing it in schools and malls … This little melody that I made had traveled so far," recalled James.

The singer-songwriter said he simply sat down one morning and wrote it and recorded it, without much thought or any expectation it would become so popular.

Yet, on the other side of the world, it became an earworm — a catchy tune listeners can't get out of their head. "It definitely changed my life in many ways," he said.

Open to new ideas

In recent years, an increasing number of overseas musicians have flooded China's music market.

The Global Music Report 2026 released by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry in March showed that last year, Asia saw strong growth of 10.9 percent in recorded music revenues, and maintained its position as the largest region for physical revenues in 2025, accounting for 45.1 percent.

Notably, China has overtaken Germany to become the fourth largest global market, with remarkable revenue growth of 20.1 percent, the fastest-growing market in the top 20, said the report.

Social media platforms like RedNote, or Xiaohongshu, are also actively facilitating foreign artists searching for new horizons.

The RedNote music team has ramped up efforts to introduce overseas artists to China since early last year, after the "TikTok refugees" phenomenon emerged from the United States' threat to ban the platform.

Among those refugees is a massive number of niche and independent musicians and artists who have captivated Chinese audiences, said Jiang Jiayao, content operations manager of RedNote's music team.

These artists include many unsigned "bedroom musicians" who independently write, record, produce and release music, usually from their homes.

RedNote organized for many of them to participate in the inaugural Global Village Concert on Jan 26, 2025. The event featured 20 groups and musicians from home and abroad, including James. It ran for about seven hours and attracted over 1.28 million online viewers.

The RedNote team later launched the Global Soundwave project and a No-border FM campaign to help overseas musicians connect with Chinese music fans.

Jiang said the team provides guidance and support to the artists on how to make their music reach the local community. The advice covers issues such as account operation, post creation, customized promotions, live settings, interaction, exclusive event planning, and online and offline music shows across China.

In September 2025, the team held the No-border Music Festival in Shanghai. The artist lineup included major stars including Malaysian pop band babychair, indie musician Hayd from the United States, singer Jordann from Canada, and Martin's Mood from France. The festival sold out quickly.

Jiang said many young RedNote users are highly educated, enjoy sharing music, and are open to supporting "niche, distinctive and indie music and artists".

"A vast majority — about 80 percent — of overseas musicians who are eyeing the Chinese market have joined our platform and community," said Jiang.

The team has made connections with artists worldwide, helping over 100 of them tap into the Chinese market and supporting hundreds of shows in China. They come from countries as varied as the US, Brazil, Australia, France, Germany, Norway, Japan and South Korea, and feature diverse music genres such as rock, pop, indie and jazz.

Deeper dive

In 2023, James played his first China show in Beijing, followed by six other cities.

A year later, his Chinese tour covered eight cities, and last year, he performed in 10 cities. James is getting ready to meet his army of Chinese fan crowds again on a new tour.

He has over 3 million fans on Chinese social media platforms, and is affectionately called "*Xiao Kui*", meaning "little sunflower".

"They are very into music, with a very strong passion and a lot of attention to lyrics, details and the depth of songs. They are also very interactive and can sing every song together with me. They are loud, in the best way possible," said James with a smile.

At a festival in Shanghai during the May Day holiday, fans sang along loudly with James in his return tour to China after seven months.

During that tour James organized travel outside his performance schedule to dive deeper into the nation.

Besides Shanghai, he went to Zhangjiajie and ancient towns in Hunan province, climbed Huangshan Mountain in Anhui province, visited Chongqing and even performed one of his hit songs at a hotpot restaurant and a teahouse in Chengdu, Sichuan province.

The laid-back vibe of his travels dovetails with James' life philosophy and the messages he tries to convey through his music. He said that just as the unexpected popularity of *Not Angry* shows, life can be random and filled with "endless possibility", adding it is good to always stay positive, optimistic and "go with the flow".



Swim Deep performs at Strawberry Music Festival in 2019 in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. HASONG / FOR CHINA DAILY





Left: With RedNote music team's support, German rock band Neeve find a fanbase in China and played a show at JZ Club in Shanghai in July 2025. MAJOR Z STUDIO / FOR CHINA DAILY **Right:** Malaysian band babychair performs its 2026 *back in time* China tour. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



James engages with Chinese audiences at a fan meeting organized by RedNote music team in Shanghai in July 2025. MAJOR Z STUDIO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Malaysian connections

Babychair, a three-piece band based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, made its China debut at a music festival in Shanghai three years ago.

The band, which creates retro, dreamlike pieces with experimental music elements, saw its popularity take off in China after joining hands with the talent agency 1500 Sound Academy. The musical trio, who each go by one name, has already toured the country three times.

"The music market in China is very competitive, and everyone strives to be the best," said Aaron, the drummer.

"Our tour in China really opened our eyes and gave us new inspirations. We are always meeting new people and exploring new things, opportunities and possibilities."

Of Malaysian-Chinese heritage, all three were exposed to Chinese culture early in life through music and TV dramas. They can speak Chinese and share many cultural roots with their Chinese fans.

What resonates in China is sometimes different from what is popular with fans in other parts of the region.

For instance, in Southeast Asian nations, babychair's most popular song is *Oh It's You*. In China, however, *Dear* is the song that is more representative of the trio to their fans.

During their recently concluded China tour, audiences sang along with the band when they performed *Dear*.

"I think the market needed us," said lead vocalist Sean. "The idea of our music is simply asking everyone to chill. What we would like to deliver to our fans in music is not only the song, but also the emotions that make us connected. So we hope everyone can listen to the songs, get relaxed, feel differently and chill."

Over the past three years, they have come to value the Chinese musicians and artists they have met along the way.

"We share the same struggles and same happiness. They are very friendly, open, easy to communicate with and down to earth. We feel at ease having a chat or sharing life stories with each other. Such connections are very valuable," said Aaron.

Being valued

For British indie band Swim Deep, who completed their fourth tour last year, one of the most rewarding aspects of performing in China is feeling valued.

Formed in 2011, the Birmingham band has played over eight shows since 2014 and sold out many of them, playing to hundreds and sometimes thousands of fans.

"Every time we go back to China, we feel a little less like being a tourist there, it's a bit more of a feeling of coming home," said Austin Williams, the band's front man.

"We always feel so welcomed by the friendly, supportive, dedicated, loyal and passionate fans out there," he said.

One of Swim Deep's most memorable China shows was the 2019 Strawberry Music Festival in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

Keyboard player James Balmont said audience numbers in China often far surpass what they draw in the United Kingdom.

The biggest UK festival crowd they have played for was 500, while in Guangzhou, they performed to around 10,000 people on the main stage.

While backstage riders of beverages and food for performers are common overseas, Williams was impressed that the Guangzhou organizers had gone to the trouble to prepare a big box filled with imported cheeses, beers, potato chips and other goodies.

"I felt very grateful that they've gone out of their way to do that for us … And it made me realize how these people are working beyond (the basics) to make the artist feel good," Williams said.

"It really proves that they consider art as a valuable and important necessity in culture and life."

Balmont also appreciated the Chinese staff's extra efforts and the respect they showed, which made the band feel valued.

Both band members expressed hope other venues follow this lead and create more comfortable conditions for the artists.

Organizers and promoters of tours and music festivals in China also often pay for performers' travel and accommodation expenses, reducing costs and financial risks for emerging overseas bands.

Touring in China sets a high standard for the rest of the world to follow. Also, the fans are always respectful and polite, show their loyal support in an orderly way, and welcome new music with open arms, Balmont said.

"When you combine all of that, it creates wonderful experiences that make you feel being a touring artist can be really worthwhile," he added.

Sam Tucker, manager of Swim Deep, said: "I think the future of the Chinese music market is very bright. The way the Chinese live market has embraced international artists and tours enables so much potential future growth. As culture becomes less specific to one country or city, it feels like the Chinese music market can only continue to grow and develop."

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TOP NEWS

Practice: Officials punished for serious violations

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The initiative also requires solid efforts to address prominent problems, the establishment of sound systems and rules and the improvement of accountability mechanisms, so that institutions can effectively play their role in guiding and motivating the performance of officials.

"When governance is no longer anchored in serving the people, and public reputation ceases to be its yardstick, it will inevitably deviate from the proper track," said Yang.

In June, the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, China's top anti-corruption body, disclosed details of five notable cases in which officials were held accountable for incorrectly implementing governance performance.

In one case, when serving as Party secretary of Wen'an county in Hebei province from 2021 to 2024, Ren Huashan was found by the CCDI to have pursued personal accolades through reckless decisions. Despite being aware of funding shortfalls, he launched multiple urban village resettlement projects without due diligence — delaying housing delivery, stranding villagers and leaving wages unpaid.

In February 2022, Ren also pushed ahead with a tourist attraction despite clear land-use and zoning violations. Parts of the project were demolished in September 2023, incurring huge losses.

For these and other serious violations, Ren was expelled from the Party and dismissed from office. His suspected crimes were transferred to prosecutors for further review.

Wang Chengbing received similar punishment. The CCDI found that, while holding the position of Party secretary in Jinxi county in Jiangxi province, Wang had prioritized economic growth over environmental safeguards by allowing heavily polluting chemical plants to be set up, weakening regulatory enforcement and ignoring persistent public complaints, thereby allowing a pollution crisis to fester.

Yang, from China University of Political Science and Law, warned that these are typical cases of distorted governance values. He said that the cost is not just wasted public funds, but also eroded public trust and a loss of public reputation.

He pointed out that the baseline of a correct governance philosophy is to abide by rules and never lose sight of the people.

"For officials who aim higher, the challenge lies in sharpening their governance know-how, translating national policies into tangible solutions for local communities, and steering growth that lasts," Yang said.

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Fiery challenge



A fire truck drives past as French firefighters battle a wildfire on Tuesday in the Fox-Amphoux communal forest near Ponteves, southern France, amid worsening drought conditions following a heatwave and widespread water shortages. The prolonged heatwave is placing growing pressure on communities, emergency services and economies across Europe. Officials warned that Europe is entering an increasingly dangerous period. MANON CRUZ / REUTERS

Narrative: Real economic gains stressed

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What the "China Shock" narrative deliberately ignores is that Chinese-made photovoltaic modules, power batteries and electric vehicles have substantially reduced the cost of global green transition. The International Energy Agency has repeatedly noted that without China's large-scale and sustainable manufacturing capacity, the global energy transition would come at a much higher economic cost.

China's new energy industry did not rise by accident, nor did it grow through unfair means. Its success is the result of decades of research and development, complete industry chains and intense market competition. China's photovoltaic industry, after more than a decade of technological progress, has reduced the cost of solar power generation by more than 80 percent, helping clean energy reach households and businesses around the world. China's electric vehicle industry, driven by breakthroughs in battery technology, intelligent driving and related fields, is reshaping the global auto industry.

These achievements are the result of the hard work of Chinese companies, engineers and researchers. Some Western companies have lost ground in this competition. But instead of reflecting on their own lack of innovation or weak cost control, they blame China for developing too fast. This logic is hard to defend. In a race, when a runner is overtaken, the answer is to run faster, not to demand the runner in front to slow down.

Real dividends

China's manufacturing has brought the world not disruption, but real economic and green dividends. For many years, China has contributed more than 30 percent of global economic growth. Amid rising deglobalization, China's complete industrial system has helped stabilize global industry and supply chains. Its vast domestic market continues to create important opportunities for companies around the world.

In green transition, Chinese wind and solar products have been exported to more than 200 countries and regions. Over the past decade, China has helped push down the global cost of wind power by more than 60 percent and solar power by more than 80 percent. Without China's contribution, global climate governance would be far less advanced than it is today.

This year, the European Union has shown a more negative tendency in its attitude and policies toward China-EU economic and trade relations. Yet China has consistently pursued mutually beneficial cooperation with Europe. China has long been one of the EU's largest trading partners, and bilateral trade has reached historically high levels in recent years. European companies have earned substantial returns from the Chinese market. More than one-third of Volkswagen's sales come from China. BASF, Airbus and other European giants have also continued to expand their investment in China and share in the dividends of the country's development.

The essence of China-EU trade is complementarity and mutual benefit, not one side "shocking" the other. Some European countries have followed the US in hyping the "China Shock" narrative, but this only harms their own interests. Protectionism may give certain industries temporary breathing space, but in the long run, it will leave European companies at a disadvantage in the competition for green transition.

China's new energy technologies and products are helping Europe accelerate its clean energy deployment, which is essential to meeting its carbon neutrality goals. Political forces calling for "de-risking" are in fact increasing risks to Europe's green future. Through cooperation with Chinese companies, European automakers such as Volkswagen and BMW have greatly shortened their development cycle of new models and improved their international competitiveness.

The real shock to the global trading system does not come from Chinese manufacturing, but from Western protectionism. The US frequently uses tariffs as a political weapon, and the EU has followed suit. Such unilateral actions seriously violate World Trade Organization rules and openly undermine the multilateral trading system.

History has shown that attempts to preserve dominance through tariff barriers, technological blockades and "small yards with high fences" cannot succeed. US protectionist measures against Japanese cars in the 1980s did not stop Japanese automakers from expanding globally. Today's efforts to contain China will likewise fail to halt the steady rise of Chinese manufacturing in global value chains.

Seeking to blame

Some Western politicians are playing up the "China Shock" narrative to turn domestic problems into external ones. They seek to blame China for their own industrial hollowing-out, unequal distribution of gains and other structural difficulties, using an external target to divert domestic pressure. This is neither responsible nor effective.

"China Shock 2.0" is, in essence, the "China threat" theory repackaged in a new industrial wrapper, with a policy agenda aimed at industrial containment and trade protectionism in the name of national security.

China's manufacturing rise is the natural result of market competition and technological progress under economic globalization. China's best response is to continue expanding its opening-up, deepening reform and advancing high-quality development, while firmly safeguarding its legitimate rights and interests within the multilateral trading system.

Certain forces in the West should face reality, abandon their Cold War thinking and ideological prejudice and cooperate with China on the basis of fair competition. Only then can global trade develop in a healthy direction and the world economy move toward a stronger recovery.

Smearing China will not slow China's development. Protectionism will not stop the wheel of history. The idea of "China Opportunity 2.0" will ultimately replace the myth of "China Shock 2.0" and become the broader consensus of the international community.

The author is dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

China's cyber governance stance hailed

Push for digital sovereignty, multilateralism can help bridge the AI divide, experts say

By **YANG RAN** and **ZHANG YUNBI**

China's advocacy for digital sovereignty and inclusive development in global cyber governance can help bridge the artificial intelligence divide and foster more inclusive global AI infrastructure and governance, experts said.

Their comments came as China recently submitted its position paper on global cyber governance in the digital age to the Global Mechanism on Information and Communications Technologies in the Context of International Security, the first plenary meeting of which opened at the United Nations headquarters in New York on Monday. The mechanism, established through a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in November, is the first permanent, institutionalized multilateral dialogue platform within the UN dedicated to state use of ICTs.

In the paper, China outlined key principles for global cyber governance, including adherence to international rules, respect for digital sovereignty and the need to uphold multilateralism. "Countries should respect each other's digital sovereignty, and they all have the right to independently choose their paths of digital intelligent technology development, including AI, as well as to independently choose AI technologies, products and services in light of their respective national conditions," it said.

Xin Yanyan, deputy secretary-general of the Center for Global AI Innovative Governance based in Fudan University, said that digital sovereignty aims to safeguard every nation's right to independent research and development, thereby fostering truly inclusive and equitable development of technologies such as AI. The practical value lies in dismantling "small yard, high fence" barriers to facilitate open and unimpeded scientific and technological exchanges, she said.

By leveraging responsible open-source ecosystems and fostering independent innovation, countries, especially those in the Global South, can enhance their tech capabilities, bridge the AI divide and protect their data autonomy, Xin said.

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Digital sovereignty is essential for preserving diversity in the intelligent age, she said. "While AI value alignment must address universal technical risks, it should also respect global cultural diversity, rather than enforcing a singular ideological template," Xin added.

China's position paper highlighted the significance of multilateralism in AI governance, stating that "international governance should not be replaced by small-circle governance, and no country should unilaterally impose rules on others".

Zhang Xin, a professor at the University of International Business and Economics' School of Law, noted that China's stance directly tackles the problem of rule fragmentation in global cyber governance. "It reaffirms a commitment to multilateralism, promoting equal participation of all countries in refining rules," she said.

Zhang underscored the paper's positive impact on developing nations, which often confront "a double dilemma" of digital and security divides. It offers a practical solution on bridging the North-South gap, empowering the Global South's voice in cyberspace governance and enabling developing countries to transition from passive rule recipients to active co-developers, she said.

At a news conference on Wednesday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said that digital sovereignty is a key principle put forward by China. The nation "is willing to strengthen cooperation with all parties to promote the development of the international order in cyberspace toward greater fairness, rationality and effectiveness, and to jointly build a community with a shared future in cyberspace", he said.

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Taste: In Yanji, summer begins with sip of icy soup

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After settling for 48 hours, the concentrated broth is seasoned with sugar and vinegar, then frozen into fine ice crystals.

The recipe also reflects traditional ideas about balancing ingredients. "Buckwheat is considered a cooling food, while beef is relatively warming," Jin said.

Each bowl is topped with pickled cabbage, cucumber, half a boiled egg, beef and seasonal fruit like watermelons in summer, and apples in colder months.

"We make the broth more sour in summer, because it is more refreshing," Jin said. "In winter, we make it sweeter so it feels gentler on the stomach."

In Yanji, cold noodles are often paired with *guobaorou*, crispy sweet-and-sour pork. Some diners dip the freshly fried pork into the icy broth, cooling its crisp coating while adding another layer of acidity and sweetness.

In Yanji, summer does not truly begin with the first heat wave. It begins with the first sip of icy cold noodle broth.

Nation expands imports to share market opportunities

By **ZHONG NAN**
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China's expanded import drive for advanced technology and equipment, energy resources and agricultural products will reinforce the country's role as one of the world's largest markets and contribute to more balanced global trade, senior customs officials and importers said on Wednesday.

Speaking at a news conference in Beijing, Sun Meijun, minister of the General Administration of Customs, said that customs authorities will promote more coordinated growth in imports and exports and work to achieve more trade cooperation agreements during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period.

The measures will enable more countries to share the opportunities created by China's vast market while offering Chinese consumers a broader range of high-quality products, Sun said, highlighting that the moves will also help develop new quality productive forces and accelerate industrial upgrading.

China's trade with the United States rebounded in April and continued expanding in May and June, indicating that the new positioning of China-US relations has provided greater certainty for bilateral and global trade and economic growth, she added.

Wang Jun, vice-minister of the GAC, said that China has become "a major trading partner of more than 160 countries and regions, with imports now sourced from a broader range of markets, covering a wider variety of products and featuring a more optimized structure".

The nation has recorded robust growth in imports of advanced equipment and key industrial inputs, Wang said, underscoring stronger demand driven by industrial upgrading and technological innovation.

Beijing Customs announced on Wednesday that the value of imports of semiconductor manufacturing equipment surged 124.7 percent year-on-year to reach 23.43 billion yuan ($3.5 billion) between January and June, providing a strong boost to the city's overall import growth.

South China's distribution center for electronic components — a major import hub in Dongguan, Guangdong province, that serves the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area — handled imports worth 36.47 billion yuan during the January-June period, up 13.11 percent year-on-year, according to Huangpu Customs.

Data from the GAC shows that since the beginning of this year, China has granted market access to 264 categories of agricultural and food products from 79 countries, bringing the number of source countries and regions for such imports to more than 150.

In early May, China expanded its zero-tariff treatment for imports to all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations.

According to Nanjing Customs, Zhongka Supply Chain Management (Kunshan) Co, an agricultural products importer based in Kunshan, Jiangsu province, imported 661 metric tons of coffee, mainly from Africa, in the first half of the year, up more than 100 percent year-on-year.

Qin Yumei, customs affairs manager at Zhongka, said the company mainly imports green coffee beans from African countries such as Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya, adding that it plans to further diversify its sourcing by importing from more African countries.

"As more high-quality specialty products from Africa enter the Chinese market under the preferential tariff policy, their price competitiveness will be further enhanced. This will not only enrich China's consumer market, but also create new growth opportunities for importers like us," Qin added.



Women dressed in traditional Thai costumes display durians on May 23 during the opening ceremony of an event in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, to promote agricultural imports from Thailand. HUANG YANMEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

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WORLD

Africa CDC urges action amid rapid Ebola spread

By **SHARON NAKOLA**
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The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention warned on Tuesday that the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo could become one of the worst epidemics in history if urgent measures are not taken to contain its spread.

Speaking during an African Union extraordinary session of the assembly in Accra, Ghana, Africa CDC Director-General Jean Kaseya said the outbreak is spreading at an unprecedented pace amid insecurity, mass displacement and continued community transmission.

More than 1,000 people have died from the Ebola outbreak since May, Kaseya said, warning that the current epidemic is spreading at a much faster pace than previous outbreaks.

"If we don't stop this outbreak today, it will be the worst one that the world will meet," he said.

The warning comes as the DR Congo's Health Ministry reported on Wednesday that the outbreak has so far infected 2,473 people and claimed 999 lives across five provinces, bringing the case fatality rate to 40 percent.

The ministry said 737 patients are in isolation or hospitalization, while 482 people have recovered.

Health authorities said surveillance and response activities have intensified, with over 80 percent of epidemiological alerts now being investigated within 24 hours and contact tracing reaching 81 percent.

Treatment facilities remain operational, with more than 700 patients under follow-up, while multisectoral teams continue to strengthen laboratory services, logistics, infection prevention and control measures, and risk communication activities.

Despite the progress, the Africa CDC warned that major challenges remain. Kaseya said insecurity in eastern DR Congo and the humanitarian situation are significantly hampering efforts to fully contain the outbreak.

"We cannot continue to respond to an outbreak when we are facing insecurity at that level," he said, revealing that one Africa CDC staff member had recently been injured during an attack by armed groups.

Currently, more than 1.15 million people are living in internally displaced persons camps in affected areas, further complicating surveillance and disease control efforts.

Kaseya said the outbreak has spread much faster than previous Ebola epidemics, warning that persistent community transmission remains a major concern. "This outbreak is very serious," he said.

The Africa CDC and the World Health Organization have jointly launched a continental response plan aimed at bringing the epidemic under control.

Kaseya said the response requires about $1.4 billion, including humanitarian and health interventions, though African countries have so far pledged more than $110 million toward the response.

"We need more," he said, calling on additional African governments to contribute resources.

The agency is also advancing clinical trials for Ebola therapeutics and preventive interventions, but still faces a funding gap of about $12 million. "We are working hard because we don't have confirmed medicines and vaccines," Kaseya added.

Greater self-reliance

The outbreak, caused by the Bundibugyo strain of the Ebola virus, has renewed calls for stronger health security systems and greater continental self-reliance in responding to public health emergencies.

African health leaders warned that failure to contain the outbreak could undermine broader efforts to strengthen the continent's health systems and achieve universal health coverage.

"If we don't control this outbreak, everything we are doing today will not make sense," Kaseya said.

The outbreak dominated discussions at the African Union health meeting, with ministers warning that it reinforces the need for greater health sovereignty, domestic financing and local manufacturing of medicines and vaccines.

Ghana's Health Minister Kwabena Mintah Akandoh said the recent health emergencies had shown that "the next emergency must never again find Africa waiting at the back of the queue".

He called for stronger regional cooperation and increased investment in African health systems.

African leaders said the current Ebola outbreak should serve as a wake-up call for the continent to accelerate efforts to build resilient health systems capable of responding to future epidemics without excessive dependence on external support.

Grand reset



Visitors enter the reopened Apollo Gallery at the Louvre Museum in Paris on Wednesday for the first time since last year's crown jewels heist. No jewels will be on display and the space has been reverted to its original 17th-century ceremonial role. LOU BENOIST / AFP



Sparks of celebration

Fireworks light up the night sky over the Cinquantenaire Arcade in Brussels on Tuesday as Belgium celebrates its National Day. Held annually on July 21, the public holiday commemorates the 1831 oath and investiture of King Leopold I, the nation's first monarch. MARIUS BURGELMANS / AFP

Experts praise Beijing's role in bridging global AI divide

Widening gaps risk creating dependency, while China offers alternative approaches

CROSS CURRENTS

By **YANG RAN**
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As artificial intelligence advances rapidly, experts warn that the widening AI divide is becoming a major challenge for the Global South. They say China is helping narrow the gap by promoting more inclusive approaches and expanding practical cooperation.

China's initiatives in AI governance provide the Global South with a greater voice in shaping global AI rules while helping developing countries benefit from the technology, they said.

The divide is already evident. While more than 1 billion people worldwide use AI chatbots every week, the Global South lags "far behind the Global North" in AI adoption, the United Nations said in a report this month.

The International Monetary Fund's AI Preparedness Index underscores the disparity, with advanced economies scoring 0.68, compared with 0.46 for emerging markets and just 0.32 for low-income countries. The gap is largely driven by the Global North's dominance in computing infrastructure and the Global South's limited capacity for AI research and deployment.

The consequences are far-reaching and potentially transformative, as experts warn of a new form of technological dependency and industrial stratification.

"The Global South, home to 88 percent of the world's population, generates highly valuable local scenario data for model adaptation", said Jiang Tianjiao, a research fellow at the Center for Global AI Innovative Governance in Shanghai. "Yet, without the computing power for storage, cleaning and training, these data are often sent abroad for processing."

Jiang cautioned that this could create a future in which data originate in the South, but profits and development gains remain in the North, leaving advanced economies to control foundational AI models such as ChatGPT while developing countries are confined to application-layer fine-tuning and niche local models.

"What appears to be a division of work is, in essence, hierarchical stratification," he said, warning that the trend could also erode local languages and cultures in AI models.

Carlos Maria Correa, executive director of the South Centre, an intergovernmental organization for developing countries based in Geneva, said AI is, above all, a development issue for the Global South.

Persistent and widening digital divides have left many developing countries ill-equipped to govern or benefit from AI, risking "entrenching dependence on external actors for access to AI", he said.

Lawrence Loh, director of the Centre for Governance and Sustainability at the National University of Singapore Business School, warned of AI "lock-ins" that could prevent Global South countries from advancing along the world's AI development path.

Such dependency on the Global North could give rise to a new form of AI colonialism, "where the less-developed countries may be trapped perpetually", he said.

UN data underscore these concerns. According to UN Trade and Development, fewer than one-third of developing countries have national AI strategies, and 118, mostly developing nations, remain absent from global AI governance discussions.

Experts say the challenge is compounded by policies in some countries that prioritize unilateral security and economic interests by erecting technological barriers, further hindering the Global South's development.

Loh criticized the "small yard, high fence" approach, warning it could create "a restrictive AI order" in which Global South countries become technology rule-takers and importers rather than co-creators of standards and AI systems.

Hernan Gabriel Borisonik, director of the Center for Science and Thought at the National University of San Martin in Argentina, said technological walls duplicate efforts and fuel competing standards instead of cooperation to address shared AI risks, such as algorithmic bias.

"At the same time, it would be naive to dismiss the strategic logic behind these fences," Borisonik said. "The path forward is to build a genuinely planetary framework that can create mechanisms for coexistence and mutual influence, even amid competition."

More equitable

Experts say China's AI governance initiatives are playing an increasingly important role in constructing a more equitable global framework. In recent years, China has introduced a series of governance initiatives and action plans aimed at using AI for good, countering unilateral technological monopolies and advancing inclusive global AI governance.

During the just-concluded 2026 World AI Conference in Shanghai, 29 countries signed an agreement to establish the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization, helping bridge the AI divide by supporting faster AI development in the Global South.

"International cooperation and capacity-building initiatives are key to bridging the global AI divide and promoting inclusive AI development and governance," Correa of the South Centre said, describing the organization's establishment as "very encouraging".

Correa also praised China's AI governance initiatives for enhancing fairness and prioritizing sustainable development, saying they contribute to "a more balanced global AI landscape, fostering mutual benefits and reducing existing inequalities".

Borisonik echoed the view, saying China's initiatives made a crucial contribution to global AI governance by treating it as a shared challenge that must reflect the perspectives and interests of developing countries, not just technological leaders.

China's emphasis on capacity building is especially significant, he said. "AI governance depends not only on legal principles but also on scientific institutions, educational systems and long-term international cooperation. Supporting these capacities is one of the most effective ways to reduce structural inequalities in the global AI landscape."

In recent years, China has expanded practical AI cooperation through infrastructure and talent development. In 2024, it launched the China-BRICS AI Development and Cooperation Center to deepen AI collaboration among BRICS members. Last year, Chinese tech companies also helped Laos develop the world's first Lao large language model.

Alex Gakuru, director of the Center for Law in Information Technology in Kenya, said China's approach differs fundamentally from Western models. "It is not aid-dependent but partnership-based," he said.

He cited the Lao large language model as a prime example, saying its architecture, training data, governance and the Lao government's role reflect "a fundamentally different approach — one centered on sovereignty and self-determination rather than dependency".

"It is the best example of how the Global South could replicate the preservation of their culture in collaboration with China," he said. "The partnership model ensures that linguistic and cultural sovereignty is not sacrificed for technological convenience, and many countries are bound to embrace it."

Online
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New British PM begins tackling cost-of-living crisis

By **EARLE GALE** in London
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Groups lobbying on behalf of the United Kingdom's poorest people have welcomed Prime Minister Andy Burnham's first moves since he took office on Monday.

Burnham, who has vowed to lead a "cost-of-living government", told his new Cabinet on Tuesday that impoverished people struggling with fast-rising prices need a "sense that help is coming".

He then announced he was cutting Value Added Tax from October on household energy bills — from 5 percent to zero — a move that will save the average family 45 pounds ($60) a year.

Burnham's spokesman told reporters that the change will cost the country 850 million pounds this year and would be funded out of 1.8 billion pounds set aside for a digital ID program.

Burnham told his ministers to look for savings to help pay for initiatives to ease the cost-of-living crisis.

"There are things that can be done, big and small," he said.

He also set aside 340 million pounds to help tackle homelessness during the next five years.

On Wednesday, he said bus fares in England will be capped at 2 pounds a journey from January. Previously, the cap had been 3 pounds.

The cheaper fares will cost the country around 500 million pounds, which will be taken from the budget of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

Heidi Alexander, the UK's transport secretary, told the BBC that the government will not make "any unfunded spending commitments".

To finance cheaper bus fares, she said the government will shift its overseas aid strategy — offering loans rather than grants to climate projects in other countries.

Burnham has also promised to help more young people find work and vowed more mental health support.

Alex Chapman, economics and environment policy chief at the London-based think tank New Economics Foundation, welcomed the new prime minister's stated aims but said his first moves have been "very small in government terms".

"The actual scale of this is very limited," he said.

Homelessness charities also welcomed Burnham's pledge to put "the care of people at the heart of everything I do" and to "fix" rough sleeping.

With around 5,000 people thought to be sleeping rough in the UK each night, Helen MacNamara, chair of trustees at the homelessness charity Shelter, told The Independent newspaper, "It's great to see a prime minister standing on the steps of Downing Street, and that the first thing he says is talking about ending rough sleeping and his commitment to building council housing."

Describing rough sleeping as "one of the pestilences of our age", she said Burnham will also need to solve "hidden homelessness", which means 176,000 children do not have a permanent place to live.

Yvonne Hope, chief executive of the Manchester-based homelessness charity Barnabus, added, "If anyone's going to do it, it will be him."



British Prime Minister Andy Burnham (center) holds his first Cabinet meeting in London on Tuesday. EDDIE MULHOLLAND / REUTERS

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WORLD

Demands for peace



A protester holds up a sign during a Senate appropriations committee hearing on US President Donald Trump's funding request for the defense department, in Washington, DC, on Tuesday. ERIC LEE / REUTERS

Resource cooperation urged

By **MINGMEI LI**
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The international community should strengthen cooperation to improve natural resource governance, safeguard the stability of global resource supply and industrial chains, and contribute to international peace and development, China's envoy to the United Nations said.

The UN Security Council held a high-level open debate on the theme "Natural resource governance: the foundation of peace, security and prosperity" on Wednesday, exploring how inclusive, transparent and sustainable natural resource governance can help reverse conflict dynamics and strengthen conditions for peace.

"Natural resources are precious gifts bestowed by the Earth on humanity and constitute the material foundation for human survival and sustained economic and social development. However, conflicts in some regions demonstrate that resource abundance does not automatically bring development and prosperity, while poor governance may trigger and fuel violence and conflict," said Sun Lei, charge d'affaires ad interim of the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN.

Peace and stability are the solid guarantee for natural resource governance, the Chinese ambassador said.

"The international community should uphold a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, remain committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes, urge parties to conflicts to cease military confrontation, support regional countries and organizations in strengthening cooperation, jointly combat the illegal exploitation and smuggling of natural resources, enhance supply chain transparency and traceability, and cut off armed conflicts' access to natural resources at the source," he said.

Sun added that the causes of armed conflict are "complex and diverse", involving political, social and economic factors.

"Natural resources should not simply be regarded as the root cause of conflicts; still less should normal economic, trade and industrial cooperation be securitized, politicized or instrumentalized," Sun emphasized.

Sun also said that fairness and justice are important prerequisites for cooperation on natural resources.

"International law grants states permanent sovereignty over their natural resources, and this principle must not be challenged. Certain countries should stop seizing the resources of other countries through sanctions, pressure and military coercion, and must not revert to colonial domination and plunder. Developing countries have the right to make full use of their natural resource endowments to achieve economic and social development," he said.

Sun added that China supports building an open, inclusive, fair, equitable, cooperative, win-win, green and clean governance system for critical minerals. He also warned that using the pretext of so-called "de-risking" or "safeguarding national security" to pursue bloc confrontation and build exclusive "small circles" will only disrupt market order and undermine the common interests of all countries.

Sustainable development is the ultimate goal of natural resource development, Sun added.

"Facts have repeatedly shown that the persistent problem of the illicit exploitation of natural resources is rooted in poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. To break the vicious cycle between natural resources and conflict, it is essential to support the countries concerned in achieving independent and sustainable development," he said.

Sun also called on the international community, especially developed countries, to fulfill their assistance commitments and support resource-rich countries, especially developing countries, in continuously improving their resource governance systems and increasing the added value and returns of resource products through technology transfer, capacity-building, talent development and industrial upgrading, thereby reducing poverty, creating employment, truly benefiting local people, and building a stronger foundation for peace.

Sun mentioned that at the G20 Summit in 2025, China put forward the International Economic and Trade Cooperation Initiative on Green Mining and Minerals to promote the establishment of a new type of mineral-resources partnership featuring openness, win-win cooperation, fairness and equity.

"China stands ready to work with the international community to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation on natural resources, better help relevant countries transform their resource endowments into drivers of development, and embark on a path toward lasting peace, stability, development and prosperity," he said.

White House readies fresh tariffs as 10% levy to expire

WASHINGTON — The United States is set to impose new tariffs that could hit dozens of countries soon, trade envoy Jamieson Greer signaled on Tuesday, with President Donald Trump's temporary global levies due to expire this week.

The administration has prepared fresh tariffs targeting 60 trading partners over their alleged failures to act against "forced labor", as officials push to rebuild the US leader's trade agenda after legal setbacks.

"We expect to see some action soon," Greer told CNBC when asked if new duties were incoming. He did not specify a timeline.

Trump imposed a 10-percent global duty this year after many of his tariffs were struck down by the Supreme Court in February, but this levy expires on Friday.

Analysts expect that new tariffs over forced labor concerns — set between 10 percent and 12.5 percent — would replace these temporary duties.

They come as Trump makes a renewed push to use tariffs as leverage against US trading partners, sparking fears of retaliation and diplomatic tensions.

Washington announced a fresh 25-percent duty on certain Brazilian goods last week, and on Monday unveiled a 50-percent levy on many Canadian products to take effect in 30 days.



Canada Prime Minister Mark Carney takes questions from journalists after making a statement in Ottawa on Tuesday. Carney said on Tuesday that he was looking at "all options" amid the latest tariff tensions with the US. JUSTIN TANG VIA AP

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said on Tuesday that he was looking at "all options", adding that he and Trump had agreed to "intensify discussions" in the coming weeks on a possible deal.

On Tuesday, Trump announced a new 100 percent sector-specific tariff on imported generic drugs to take effect from August 2028, with that level rising to 200 percent in 2029.

Generic drugs

For now, the US leader said the tariff on generic drugs would be cut to zero from August 2026, in an effort to create a window to onshore such pharmaceutical production to the United States.

Swiss generic drugmaker Sandoz said on Wednesday it would continue discussions with policymakers.

Greer said on Tuesday that new action will cover the majority of US trade, with the moves likely to reignite trade tensions.

The EU previously said that it considers tariffs imposed on these grounds "unjustified".

Washington's planned 50-percent tariff on Canada also comes as US-Mexico talks over a North American free trade pact intensify. Washington recently declined to extend the accord in its current form.

Greer is set to travel to Mexico from Wednesday to Friday for discussions linked to a joint review of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

US plans for a 25-percent tariff on Brazilian goods over accusations of unfair trade practices have separately drawn a sharp rebuke from the Latin American giant. The levy is due to take effect on Wednesday.

A range of products like beef, coffee and certain aircraft parts will be exempted, as will some goods that the United States does not produce.

Still, Amcham Brasil recently warned that Washington's measure places Brazil among countries "facing the most restrictive conditions for access to the US market", affecting more than $11 billion in exports.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Motorists weary of rising gas prices as crisis spirals

By **BELINDA ROBINSON**
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US motorists are growing weary of paying higher gas prices again after renewed military tensions between the US and Iran stoked fears of a disruption in the Strait of Hormuz and gas prices rose to over $4 per gallon, or more than $1 per liter, this week.

The national average for regular gasoline was $4 a gallon on Monday, according to the American Automobile Association, rising 13 cents per gallon, or 3 percent, over the past week amid tensions in the Middle East. It is the first time the national average hit $4 since June 17, and it comes despite the June US-Iran memorandum of understanding to stop the military conflict and a 60-day negotiation period.

Sanjay Patel, 70, from Manhattan, was filling up his white Mercedes-Benz SUV at a gas station in Brooklyn, New York when he expressed how annoyed he was at the rising price of gas. He said he was paying over $4 at the location, as it was $4.15 for regular, $4.55 for silver and $4.95 for diesel.

"I want it to go back below $4," Patel told China Daily, while blaming the rise in gas prices on the ongoing war with Iran. "Well, it's because of the war, they block the Strait of Hormuz, with all of that there's no supply. I think all of the world is suffering because everywhere it is high. But America has enough oil, but they are not really distributing it to the public.

"The government should end the war. That is most important. Secondly, they have to make sure all these big oil companies, BP, Shell and ExxonMobil should not be focusing on selling the oil outside of the country. America is in a war. I have to pay more to fill up the tank. A full tank is $60."

Brian James, 55, from Brooklyn, New York, drives a black Jeep Wrangler.

He told China Daily: "Gas prices are ridiculous right now. Seriously. It costs $90 for me to fill up this car. In the past, it was $70. Instead of being able to buy certain things or save money, then you have to outlay in transportation. It's taking a hit on everyone.

'Govt to blame'

"I blame the government. They're making it hard for everyone right now, we're spending money where we shouldn't have to. The oil companies are passing on the costs to the customer. I remember when the gas price was in the three-dollar range, like $3.60 or whatever."

In March, shortly after the US-Israel attacks began on Iran, gas prices in the US hit an average of $4 a gallon.

In May, they were $4.50 a gallon, then they dropped back down to $4 after the US and Iran agreed to the MoU in mid-June.

US drivers got some relief by early June, when prices at the pump were $3.79, the American Automobile Association found. But they have gradually crept back up this month.

For most motorists, especially those who rely on their vehicles for work, lower gas prices cannot come back soon enough.

Sulaiman, 31, an Uber Eats delivery driver, was filling up his small motorbike at a gas station in New York and checking his phone on his way to deliver food to a customer.

"I'm so busy, I have to deliver this food," he told China Daily. "Higher gas prices make it harder for people like me who need to earn money as more of my money goes toward transportation costs. I just wish they'd make things better for all of us out here working hard."

Briefly

UKRAINE

President says military commander replaced

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced on Tuesday that he has decided to replace the country's top military commander. In a post on Telegram, Zelensky said Mykhailo Drapatyi would become the commander in chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, replacing Oleksandr Syrsky. Syrsky's dismissal was one of the demands of the recent protests in Ukrainian cities, which erupted after the removal of Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov.

UNITED STATES

Stripping immigrants of work permits blocked

A federal judge on Tuesday temporarily blocked President Donald Trump's administration from stripping tens of thousands of asylum seekers and immigrants who have Temporary Protected Status of their ability to work in the United States. US District Judge Nathaniel Gorton in Boston sided with a coalition of immigrant rights groups and labor unions that sued to block US Citizenship and Immigration Services from moving forward with a series of policies designed to implement new restrictions enacted by Congress last year.

Disney cuts jobs in cost-control efforts

The Walt Disney Company laid off several hundred employees on Tuesday in its latest round of job cuts, as the entertainment giant continues to streamline its operations with fewer projects, tighter budgets, and a more integrated corporate structure. A Disney spokesperson confirmed the cuts, saying the company was eliminating several hundred jobs across corporate functions, Disney Entertainment Television, ESPN and Disney's studios. Disney did not immediately disclose exact totals by division or say whether additional job cuts are planned.

SOUTH KOREA

Seoul mayor faces ouster after conviction

A South Korean court convicted Seoul Mayor Oh Se-hoon of campaign finance crimes on Wednesday, a ruling that will oust him and bar a presidential run if upheld by the nation's top court. Oh was first elected Seoul's mayor in 2006 and in June won a fifth term in the nation's most powerful municipal role, considered a springboard to high office. He rose to prominence as a possible contender for the opposition People Power Party as other veterans were tainted by former President Yoon Suk-yeol's 2024 martial law bid. But the Seoul Central District Court ruled Oh had a patron pay 21 million won ($14,200) for five of his opinion polls in a 2021 by-election, breaching the political funds act.

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COMMENT

Editorials

China-ASEAN cooperation remains crucial anchor of regional stability and prosperity

This week's ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and related gatherings in Manila have placed the Philippine capital at the forefront of geopolitical discussions.

Amid the crowded diplomatic calendar, one reality is evident: China's engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations remains focused on strengthening regional cooperation.

Apart from the China-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Wednesday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi also had a series of bilateral meetings in Manila covering a wide range of issues.

The meeting between Wang and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio was conducive to both sides jointly managing their differences and exploring potential areas of cooperation, thereby sustaining the momentum of stabilizing Sino-US ties.

As ASEAN chair this year, the Philippines claims it prioritizes regional unity and security, while also commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. The anniversary is an opportune time to reflect on how ASEAN should uphold its strategic autonomy and consider who its true partners are.

China was the first major country to accede to the TAC, lending international weight to ASEAN's diplomatic architecture. This year also marks the fifth anniversary of the China-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, providing an opportunity to further deepen cooperation through the 65 established mechanisms that already bind the two sides. The China-ASEAN partnership continues to be an anchor for the region's stability and prosperity.

Wang's meetings in Manila reinforced that. In talks with ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn, both sides reaffirmed their support for ASEAN centrality, regional community-building and stronger cooperation across various sectors. Wang's discussions with Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan focused on accelerating the negotiations on a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, reflecting a shared interest in ensuring that regional security issues are addressed by regional countries themselves.

This approach contrasts with the course pursued by some in Manila in recent years. While presenting the Philippines as a "champion" of "regional unity", they have increasingly sought to align the country's security policy with external parties. Frequent maritime provocations in the South China Sea, including the latest incident in waters near China's Ren'ai Reef on Monday, have heightened tensions at a time when most ASEAN members continue to prioritize regional stability.

Equally contentious have been the repeated attempts by those Philippine politicians to link the COC negotiations to an unlawful "arbitral award". If they are genuine in their claim that they seek ASEAN's "collective welfare", they should call on Washington to handle the Middle East crisis with reason, restraint and pragmatism — especially as energy shortages continue to plague the Philippines and its fellow ASEAN members alike.

China's engagement with ASEAN offers a different model. As ASEAN's largest trading partner and the first country to establish a free trade agreement with the organization, China has steadily deepened economic integration with ASEAN and upgraded the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area. Bilateral trade reached 7.55 trillion yuan ($1.06 trillion) in 2025, up 8 percent from the previous year. Over 95 percent of traded goods between them now enjoy zero tariffs, while cooperation has expanded to encompass the digital economy, green development, advanced manufacturing and regional connectivity.

Beijing does not ask ASEAN countries to choose sides. Nor is the development of China-ASEAN relations directed against any third party. Instead, China supports ASEAN centrality and strategic autonomy, recognizing that regional prosperity hinges on openness, inclusiveness and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Even with the Philippines, China has shown restraint and composure. Despite their maritime dispute, China has not allowed that to define the entirety of the China-Philippines ties, and has consistently called for dialogue to resolve it. Wang's discussions with his Philippine counterpart offered a timely chance for the two sides to manage tensions and prevent the situation in relevant waters from further escalating.

The South China Sea is a shared home for regional countries, and the dispute should not become a stumbling block to China-ASEAN relations. China is ready to work with the ASEAN members, including the Philippines, to accelerate the consultations on the COC in the South China Sea, fostering a new narrative of peace, stability, cooperation and friendship in the waters, and keeping the initiative for regional affairs firmly in the hands of regional countries.

While contemplating ASEAN's future, regional leaders should judge partners by their contribution to peace, economic opportunity and long-term regional stability. On that measure, sustained cooperation with China remains a firm foundation for ASEAN's solidarity and prosperity.

Fighting while talking won't benefit EU

The joint statement released after a meeting between French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Friday shows the challenges facing China-EU economic relations.

Both leaders claimed that China's widening trade surplus with the European Union — at "1 billion euros ($1.14 billion) a day" — along with what they described as an "undervalued renminbi", poses an "existential threat" to European manufacturing. It remains to be seen what new "emergency measures" the EU will come up with to "shield" European industry from what it claims are China's "unfair trade practices".

However, a series of restrictive measures introduced by the EU targeting Chinese enterprises suggest a bumpy road ahead for the healthy development of China-EU economic ties.

On July 1, the new European "safeguard" system for steel imports came into effect, introducing lower import quotas for duty-free imports and a 50 percent tariff on imports exceeding these quotas, greatly impacting Chinese steel mills and products. On July 7, the European Commission imposed definitive "antidumping" duties of up to 45 percent on imports of passenger-car and light-lorry tires originating from China.

Additionally, the European Commission on Monday fined Chinese online retailer AliExpress 550 million euros for allegedly "failing to curb the sale of counterfeit goods" on its site, marking the heftiest penalty issued to date under the Digital Services Act. China opposes the EU's practice of erecting digital barriers under the pretext of platform regulation and adopting discriminatory measures to restrict and suppress the normal operations of Chinese e-commerce companies in Europe, said a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Commerce. The EU is urged to stop exploiting the ambiguity of legal provisions to abuse its discretionary power, and to treat Chinese enterprises fairly and impartially.

It is obvious that the EU is taking more protectionist measures against China. The escalating restrictions have occurred shortly after the inaugural meeting of the China-EU trade and investment consultation mechanism late last month, during which both sides agreed to remain committed to addressing economic and trade differences through dialogue and to preventing disputes from escalating into a trade war. They established four initial work streams under the mechanism to further discuss issues such as trade and investment balance, export controls and intellectual property.

It is imperative that China get prepared to deal with the EU's dual strategy of "dialogue" and "pressure" in the long run. The message from French and German leaders suggests the EU may consider a major adjustment of trade policies toward China. Despite this, both leaders emphasized that they are not seeking to "decouple" from China.

In his meeting with a cross-party European Parliament delegation in Beijing on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Wang Yi stressed that China and the EU are partners rather than rivals, and that their interests are deeply intertwined. He called for the EU to stop politicizing economic and trade issues, and to work with China for an upward and dynamic balance of trade from a long-term perspective.

These remarks keep the door open for China and the EU to maintain a constructive, cooperative and win-win relationship based on equality and reciprocity — provided that the EU is willing to meet China halfway, manage differences, broaden consensus and safeguard an open global economy.

There is a need for the two sides to make full use of the established trade and investment consultation mechanisms to bring issues to the table openly and address them with a pragmatic and rational approach. The primary objective is to prevent the European side from adopting a nothing-to-lose mentality, where, driven by internal political pressures, it shifts internal contradictions outward rather than resolving them constructively.

Hopefully both France and Germany can act with a rational and practical attitude, and play a constructive role in helping the EU work with China to address their concerns through dialogue.

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Cao Yi



Opinion Line

Building a community with shared future in cyberspace

The Chinese delegation submitted a position paper on global cyberspace governance at the first meeting of the Plenary Session of the Global Mechanism on developments in the field of information and communication technologies in the context of international security.

The submission of the position paper at the forum, which is being held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from Monday to Friday, reflects China's anchoring of digital security on the principles of data sovereignty and cyber sovereignty.

The paper articulates a natural and logical extension of the Global Governance Initiative that China has proposed, along with its long-standing commitment to building a community with a shared future in cyberspace.

The core tenet of the paper rebuts the approach of some developed countries that want a digital ecosystem as an unregulated domain where might makes right, and where they can coerce smaller nations to choose sides over AI hardware, cloud infrastructure and data standards.

China's position paper, on the contrary, enshrines a foundational right long demanded by developing countries: the autonomy to chart their own digital and AI development courses. No country should be pressured into adopting foreign AI products or algorithms; every nation deserves the freedom to make its own choices, free from technological arm-twisting.

At the heart of this vision lies China's steadfast adherence to mutual respect for national sovereignty and the fundamental norm of noninterference in the domestic affairs of other states. China calls for collective management of the cybersecurity risks posed by AI — from unregulated large language models to the misuse of autonomous AI agents — and demands updated, inclusive international cyber rules fit for the age of generative intelligence.

With digital domains — cyberspace, data pools and frontier AI — becoming a new arena for interstate competition, China advocates extending the UN-centered norms of fairness, peaceful development, civilizational diversity and collective sustainability to technology governance. This stands in unmistakable contrast to the zero-sum approach of certain Western countries.

The Chinese suggestions align with the priorities of a vast majority of countries, especially those in the Global South whose voices have too often been marginalized in decades of technology rulemaking.

The contrast between China's open source, open weight AI models and the United States' closed source AI ecosystem offers a real-world illustration of these two paradigms. Washington's closed source AI model consolidates AI supremacy in the hands of a few tech giants aligned with the US government, restricts the diffusion of global technology, and weaponizes technological scarcity to maintain Western dominance in global digital competition.

China, on the other hand, by prioritizing shared innovation and universal accessibility, is breaking down technological monopoly barriers and enabling developing countries to access and iterate on frontier AI technologies independently. This approach transforms the advancement of AI from a privileged asset for a handful of nations into a global public good benefiting all of humanity.

China's thriving digital economy and competitive AI industry ecosystem have equipped it to counter the monopolization of technological discourse and standard-setting by developed countries. Beijing harbors no ambition to dominate cyberspace; its objective is to prevent digital and AI tools from becoming new geopolitical battlegrounds and to ensure that the dividends of the new technology are distributed fairly across the world.

This commitment was demonstrated at the recent 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance, held in Shanghai, which showcased China's dedication to providing solutions and international public goods to ensure openness, cooperation and shared technological progress for the benefit of all nations.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Virtual human could revolutionize medicine

Editor's note: *As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly integrated with the life sciences, virtual reality has emerged as a major frontier of scientific research. Science and Technology Daily spoke to Zhao Qinping, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, on the pursuit of a virtual human for medical purposes. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The improvement in visual realism, physical accuracy, intelligent virtual characters and natural human-computer interaction has greatly expanded the application potential of virtual reality.

In healthcare, AI assists or even replaces physicians in diagnosing and treating diseases, while VR helps create virtual replicas of patients' organs or pathological conditions. Surgeons can rehearse, evaluate and refine surgical plans on these virtual organs before performing operations on real patients.

But the application of VR in medicine still lags behind the potential. The basic obstacle is the lack of a medical virtual human capable of accurately reproducing the features, physical properties and physiological characteristics of the human body.

Medical science has long faced three major challenges. First, the training of highly qualified medical professionals still depends on laboratory animals and human cadavers, a traditional approach that is becoming increasingly unsustainable. Second, there is still no effective method for rehearsing, evaluating and optimizing surgical plans before operations. Third, the development of new drugs and medical devices also relies on animal testing and human volunteers, resulting in high costs, lengthy development cycles and considerable risks.

A medical virtual human could provide medical students with highly realistic digital models of healthy and diseased human bodies for anatomical education, surgical training and other clinical exercises, substantially reducing reliance on animals and cadavers.

Personalized virtual models of patients' organs could be created to simulate, evaluate and refine surgical procedures, improving both precision and success rates. Virtual humans could also replace some animal experiments and early-stage human testing in the development of pharmaceutical drugs and medical devices, shortening research and development cycles while reducing costs and risks.

However, research on virtual humans is fragmented and lacks a coherent, systematic framework. While some areas have received considerable attention, others remain largely unexplored. Currently, digital models have been developed for fewer than 20 percent of human organs, with research primarily focusing on geometric modeling, physical simulation and surgical interaction.

Studies of microscopic physiological mechanisms remain disconnected from organ-level physical and physiological modeling, and integrated research at the level of the entire physiological system has yet to begin. At the same time, China lacks sufficient data to support the development of medical virtual humans, with much of the current research relying on overseas datasets.

Developing a medical virtual human is a frontier endeavor that brings together information science, life sciences, medicine, mathematics, physics and chemistry. It requires multidisciplinary collaboration among experts from these fields to jointly build a comprehensive "Chinese medical virtual human".

The relevant authorities should organize universities, research institutes, hospitals and technology companies to establish a high-level collaborative network that integrates studies of human cells, tissues, organs and physiological systems while coordinating theoretical breakthroughs, technological innovation and demonstration applications.

Meanwhile, full use should be made of AI foundation models to build dedicated data and model centers, together with the computing infrastructure needed to support the development of medical virtual humans.

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VIEWS

Tommy Koh

China, ASEAN forging a brighter future

China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations celebrated the 35th anniversary of their dialogue relations in July, marking a significant milestone in what has been a very successful relationship. In 2021, this relationship was elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. On this momentous occasion, I would like to reflect on the past, assess the present and share my aspirations for the future.

Global Lens

ASEAN was established on Aug 8, 1967, during a period when China's relations with Southeast Asia were complex. Initially, China was cautious about ASEAN, perceiving the grouping as aligned with Western interests.

However, under the leadership of the late leader Deng Xiaoping, China adopted a more constructive approach toward ASEAN. Deng introduced a new forward-looking policy that positioned China as a "good neighbor, good friend and good partner" of ASEAN. This vision laid the foundation for decades of cooperation and mutual benefit between China and ASEAN.

What is the state of the China-ASEAN relationship today? The short answer is that it is in good order. In fact, it is one of ASEAN's most consequential dialogue partnerships.

ASEAN is important to China for several reasons. First, the group has overtaken the European Union and the United States to become China's largest trading partner. ASEAN boasts a market of around 700 million consumers, with rising incomes and purchasing power.

Second, ASEAN welcomes investment from China. In 2024, China was the third-largest investor in ASEAN, behind the US and the European Union. There is potential for China to invest more in ASEAN.

Third, ASEAN is a major source of raw materials for China. It also supplies components for China's manufacturing industries.

Fourth, some of the world's most important sea lanes, such as the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, lie in the region. Access to these sea lanes is critical for China.

Fifth, both China and ASEAN share a commitment to upholding the rules-based regional architecture. They are working toward an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. While differences remain, the CoC negotiations provide an invaluable platform for sustained dialogue and confidence-building.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

Sixth, ASEAN maintains friendly relations with China and has refused to participate in any anti-China coalition or grouping. This is especially important given the heightened geopolitical rivalries and the increasingly challenging external environment.

Emerging areas of cooperation, such as the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement and the ASEAN Power Grid, offer further opportunities.

For ASEAN too, China is equally important. Trade is the lifeblood of the region, and China is the largest trading partner for ASEAN countries, besides being a source of investment and frontier technologies. China is also the largest source of tourists for a region where tourism is an important pillar of the economy.

China has helped ASEAN member states upgrade their infrastructure and enhance regional integration and connectivity, with initiatives such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Belt and Road Initiative playing key roles. Emerging areas of cooperation, such as the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement and the ASEAN Power Grid, offer further opportunities.

Moreover, China has consistently supported the central role that ASEAN plays in convening and chairing the various forums of the region, such as the East Asia Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum, and ASEAN Plus Three. It is important that China continues to work with ASEAN in advancing the ASEAN Outlook on the "Indo-Pacific", as this will help build strategic trust and ensure an open, inclusive regional architecture.

The future of China-ASEAN relations is bright. The two sides should expand their cooperation agenda to include new areas such as the green economy, the digital economy, supply chain resilience and artificial intelligence. They should continue to expand flight connectivity to facilitate closer people-to-people links. Building on this, both sides should also enhance their existing cooperation in education, training, cultural exchange and people-to-people exchange. Many more ASEAN students should be studying in China and Chinese students studying at universities in ASEAN.

Both sides should also work to build mutual trust. Trust is very important, because it can make many joint endeavors possible. Without trust, even well-intentioned cooperation will struggle to succeed.

A final word about the role of Singapore. In 2027, Singapore will serve as the chairman of ASEAN.

We will use our chairmanship to raise ASEAN's engagement with external partners to an even higher peak, including the China-ASEAN relationship.

The author is an ambassador-at-large at Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Ma Zhongfa

What the LV case means for trademark protection

A trademark dispute now before the Beijing Intellectual Property Court (BIPC) could help clarify one of the most important questions in China's trademark system: Where should the boundary lie for the registration and protection of commercial brands derived from public cultural elements?

On July 16, the BIPC heard an administrative trademark lawsuit filed by Louis Vuitton Malletier against the China National Intellectual Property Administration, with Huang Minyao, a clothing business operator from Shantou, Guangdong province, as a third party.

A four-petal floral design trademark that Huang applied for is deemed by LV to be confusingly similar to its iconic monogram pattern.

The dispute arose after CNIPA rejected LV's challenge to the petal-shaped trademark registered by Huang.

It is the sixth trademark lawsuit LV has filed against CNIPA, having won three and lost two of the previous five cases.

Unlike the earlier high-profile dispute between LV and Shenzhen-based Molly Tea Catering Management, this is not an infringement case but an administrative lawsuit that challenges the legality of a regulatory decision.

The two cases are deeply connected in legal principle, but administrative trademark disputes differ fundamentally from infringement lawsuits in nature, subject matter, and standards of proof.

Infringement litigation determines whether conduct falls within the scope of an exclusive trademark right, whereas administrative litigation examines the legality of decisions made by trademark authorities on registration applications, oppositions, or invalidation requests.

This means BIPC will not rule on whether Huang infringed LV's rights, but will review whether CNIPA properly applied the current Trademark Law provisions concerning distinctiveness, similarity, well-known trademark protection, and public interest reservations when it rejected LV's plea for invalidation.

Regulators must prevent market players from privatizing commonly available design resources through registration and obstructing other operators' fair use of cultural elements.

This requires the court to return to the authorization conditions under the Trademark Law.

Under the current provision, signs consisting solely of generic names, graphic elements, place names, or other features lacking inherent distinctiveness — including public cultural resources such as traditional patterns, natural imagery and geometric designs — shall not be registered unless they have acquired distinctiveness through use and become readily identifiable with particular goods or services.

If the disputed trademark involves public cultural elements such as traditional patterns or natural floral designs that typically possess weak inherent distinctiveness, the court will focus on whether CNIPA fully considered this factor and rigorously examined evidence of acquired "secondary meaning".

Public reaction to the LV-Molly Tea infringement case has already demonstrated widespread concern over attempts to register and monopolize traditional motifs such as the four-petal flower or Baoxiang patterns.

At the authorization stage, the issue is even more fundamental: If public cultural elements inherently lack distinctiveness and the applicant fails to prove that the symbol has acquired an independent identity distinct from its public-domain meaning, is administrative approval justified in the first place?

Trademark law is not meant to enclose public cultural resources as private property through registration, but to protect commercial identifiers that distinguish goods or services and thereby promote fair competition.

For traditional cultural elements that have public interest, trademark examination should adopt a prudent stance.

Regulators must prevent market players from privatizing commonly available design resources through registration and obstructing other operators' fair use of cultural elements.

On the other hand, they must respect the goodwill accumulated by enterprises through creative transformation and sustained commercial use.

The key lies in balancing "distinctiveness" against "public domain preservation" without lowering examination standards for auxiliary graphic elements simply because an applicant has a formidable reputation in other product categories.

In this case, LV may argue that its well-known trademark deserves cross-class protection.

However, China's Trademark Law and related judicial interpretations clearly state that the recognition of a well-known trademark should follow the principles of "case-by-case determination" and "protection as needed".

Cross-class protection is justified only if there is evidence that the public would be misled and the registrant's interests are likely to be damaged. In this administrative proceeding, the court needs to determine whether CNIPA correctly applied this standard.

It is worth noting that the protection of well-known trademarks cannot extend indefinitely.

Even if some LV trademark symbols enjoy extremely high reputation, it does not automatically mean that every separately registered graphic element — particularly those resembling public cultural motifs — enjoys the same level of protection across all categories.

Judicial review should guard against "goodwill spillover", whereby a brand's overall reputation is indiscriminately poured into each registered element, thereby improperly extending the exclusivity of the trademark.

Although this is an administrative case, its ruling will have a significant effect on similar cases in the future.

The judgment should accomplish three objectives: First, it should strictly examine the source of distinctiveness of the disputed mark, distinguishing inherent distinctiveness from acquired distinctiveness, and ensure that the natural recognizability of public cultural elements is not mistaken for the trademark owner's original contribution.

Second, it should accurately apply the principle of "protection as needed" for well-known trademarks and prevent the abuse of cross-class protection.

Third, it should fully address public interest considerations in its reasoning, clarifying the protection boundaries for trademarks comprising public cultural elements and leaving adequate room for fair use by the public and other market entities.

A trademark right is essentially a tool for market identification, not a shackle on cultural resources.

As China continues strengthening intellectual property protection while fostering a fair and competitive business environment, safeguarding the public domain at the trademark authorization stage becomes increasingly important.

Traditional patterns, natural imagery, and geometric designs should remain part of humanity's shared treasury of creativity rather than become legal barriers enabling a handful of enterprises to monopolize markets.

The BIPC ruling may well provide a landmark answer on how China's trademark system can balance private incentives with public interest.

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

Li Tianguo

Aligning ambitions of economic integration in Asia-Pacific

Most cherry trees in China are dormant in the winter due to the cold. Yet supermarkets across the country are stocked with boxes of glossy, wine-colored cherries during the season.

The luscious fruit is imported in large quantities from Chile, about 20,000 kilometers away in South America, to fill the seasonal supply gap and drive down prices at that time of the year. The huge supply and relatively affordable prices make cherries a popular treat in China around the Spring Festival holiday.

The popularity of Chilean cherries in China is thanks to their bilateral free trade agreement, under which most goods enjoy zero-tariff treatment.

The journey of Chilean cherries across the Pacific reflects the vitality of free trade and economic integration in the Asia-Pacific. Interestingly, though China and Chile enjoy a high-standard bilateral free trade relationship, they are signatories to different regional trade agreements.

China is a member of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, while Chile is part of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

RCEP and CPTPP are two major pillars of the Asia-Pacific's economic and trade architecture. Many regional economies are part of either one or both agreements.

Within each trade pact, member economies have seen their tariffs slashed and the cost of cross-border trade and business reduced.

But the two trade agreements cover different regional economies and have distinct rule frameworks.

To promote a free flow of resources across the Asia-Pacific, it is necessary to integrate their rules and work toward a unified free trade area that covers more regional economies.

This has long been a goal of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

An important milestone was reached in 2014, when APEC members adopted a road map for the realization of the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific, or FTAAP, at the meeting of economic leaders in Beijing, turning the long-term vision into a concrete action plan.

For many enterprises, market access and operational efficiency are no longer the only concerns.

Two years later, APEC members endorsed the Collective Strategic Study on Issues Related to the Realization of the FTAAP.

Since then, economies have committed to bringing CPTPP and RCEP into force, while APEC has encouraged the two regional deals to remain open, transparent and inclusive, draw on each other's strengths, and jointly lay the groundwork for the eventual realization of the FTAAP.

In recent years, however, progress toward building the free trade area has faced growing challenges. Protectionism and unilateralism are on the rise, while geopolitical tensions have intensified.

For many enterprises, market access and operational efficiency are no longer the only concerns. The security and resilience of industry chains have become more important than ever. All these have slowed the progress toward the FTAAP, and delayed discussions on a potential negotiating framework.

Yet the evolving environment has only made the FTAAP all the more relevant. A unified Asia-Pacific market will help address the fragmentation of rules caused by overlapping free trade arrangements, help regional economies withstand trade protectionism and strengthen the regional supply chain. Its establishment will not only boost regional trade but also contribute to global growth.

It will take gradual and steady efforts to advance the FTAAP, which is faced with multiple hurdles. Geopolitical competition and significant development gaps among APEC member economies are some of the biggest obstacles.

The Asia-Pacific comprises both developed economies and a large number of developing economies. CPTPP's rules are of a higher standard, whereas RCEP emphasizes inclusiveness, flexibility and incrementalism.

Given that APEC members are at different stages of development, it is unrealistic to expect all economies to implement identical trading rules immediately.

APEC therefore needs to build a consensus among members and help them with capacity-building to speed up the economic integration of the region.

The forum can also facilitate dialogue and coordination between RCEP and CPTPP members to make relevant institutions more open, compatible and inclusive. This would lay a solid foundation for the future free trade area.

Efforts to align the two trade agreements should not begin with the most contentious issues, such as tariff concessions. Instead, priority should be given to harmonizing rules and standards for the digital economy, green and low-carbon trade and cross-border data flows.

Since the regulatory frameworks for these emerging sectors are still evolving, there is greater scope for developing unified norms.

China has actively contributed to this process. The country hosted a dialogue between members of RCEP and CPTPP during the APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting held in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, in May.

Representatives from 18 of the 20 economies participating in the two mega trade agreements attended the dialogue. Participants engaged in informal discussions on several issues, including regional economic integration.

In July, a Chinese business delegation hosted the third APEC Business Advisory Council meeting in 2026.

At the meeting convened in Bangkok, representatives discussed regional economic integration and other topics, and adopted a report to APEC economic leaders and other outcome documents.

Going forward, only by upholding the principles of pragmatic cooperation, inclusiveness and mutual learning, while continuing to improve institutional coordination and align interests, can Asia-Pacific economies build a truly unified, open and prosperous regional market.

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GLOBAL VIEWS



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

CARLY COWELL

Integrated plant conservation

China's experience offers adaptable biodiversity governance models for the Global South

Plant diversity is facing unprecedented pressure worldwide. According to the first Global Tree Assessment published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, approximately 38 percent of the world's tree species are threatened with extinction. For many countries across the Global South, the challenge is particularly acute. Rapid economic development, competing land use pressures, limited conservation resources and the increasing impacts of climate change create difficult choices about how biodiversity can be protected while supporting human well-being.



Yet conservation is not the exclusive domain of wealthy nations. Over the past several decades, China has demonstrated that meaningful progress can be achieved through long-term commitment, strategic investment and strong partnerships. Through Botanic Gardens Conservation International's (BGCI) collaboration with Chinese botanical gardens, research institutions, local authorities and conservation practitioners, we have witnessed the development of an approach that offers valuable lessons for countries facing similar challenges.

One of the most important lessons is that effective conservation requires integration. Historically, conservation efforts often focused on a single intervention, whether protecting remaining wild populations, establishing ex-situ or outside-the-original-location collections, or undertaking restoration activities. Increasingly, however, experience shows that these approaches are most successful when combined.

The conservation of Magnolia omeiensis illustrates this principle well. Since the species was rediscovered in the late 1980s, conservation efforts have involved extensive field surveys, ex-situ collections, propagation and reintroduction. Through collaboration between BGCI and the Emeishan Botanical Garden, new wild populations were identified, thousands of seedlings propagated and plants reintroduced to suitable habitats. In 2025, one of the reintroduced trees flowered significantly earlier than expected, demonstrating the value of long-term, coordinated conservation action. The success was not the result of a single intervention, but of a connected process linking research, conservation collections, propagation expertise and field implementation.

This integrated approach is increasingly reflected within China's wider conservation framework. The development of national biodiversity strategies, updates to protected species legislation and the establishment of a national botanical garden system all demonstrate how conservation can move beyond individual projects and become embedded within national planning. This institutional support is critical because plant conservation is inherently long-term. Many threatened species require decades of sustained effort before measurable recovery can be achieved.

Another important lesson from China's experience is the value of applied research in guiding action. Conservation resources are limited in every country, making it essential that interventions are informed by evidence rather than assumptions. Restoration and conservation cannot be reduced to simply planting trees. Successful outcomes depend on understanding species biology, habitat requirements, genetic diversity and the social and economic context in which conservation takes place. Across China, conservation programs increasingly combine ecological research with practical implementation. This emphasis on generating and applying knowledge before scaling up interventions helps avoid costly mistakes and increases the likelihood of long-term success. For many countries in the Global South, where resources are often stretched, investing in research and planning at the outset can provide significant returns over time.

China's growing role in regional and international conservation cooperation also highlights the importance of knowledge exchange. Conservation challenges rarely stop at national borders. Many threatened plant groups occur across multiple countries and require coordinated action.

A good example is the conservation of dipterocarps, the dominant tree family of Southeast Asian tropical rainforests. These species are ecologically important and economically valuable, yet many are under increasing threat. In 2025, researchers and conservation practitioners from across Asia gathered in China for the Global Conservation Symposium for Dipterocarps. The meeting brought together expertise from multiple countries, identified shared priorities and strengthened regional collaboration. Such initiatives demonstrate how countries can move from being participants in conservation efforts to becoming regional centers for knowledge sharing and capacity development.

At the heart of all successful conservation, however, are people. Conservation outcomes are most durable when local communities are involved as active participants rather than passive beneficiaries. Building local capacity, supporting livelihoods and fostering a sense of stewardship are essential components of effective conservation programs.

This principle is evident in the conservation work for *Euryodendron excelsum*, one of China's most threatened tree species. Through collaboration between BGCI and the South China National Botanical Garden, local stakeholders were engaged through training programs, technical workshops and participatory conservation activities. Practical skills such as seedling propagation, planting and post-planting management were shared with local communities, helping to strengthen both conservation outcomes and local ownership. This emphasis on capacity building extends far beyond individual projects. Through partnerships across China, BGCI has supported conservation initiatives for dozens of threatened tree species, trained conservation practitioners, and engaged students from rural schools and community members from remote mountainous areas in conservation education.

Investing in people creates the foundation upon which long-term conservation success depends.

Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of China's conservation journey has been the development of its botanical garden network. Today, China's nearly 200 botanical gardens collectively represent one of the largest plant conservation infrastructures in the world. These institutions function as much more than public green spaces. They serve as centers for research, conservation, education, restoration, and capacity building. For other countries in the Global South, botanical gardens represent a particularly effective investment. They provide a permanent institutional base for conservation activities, maintain living collections and seed banks, support restoration programs and create opportunities for public engagement. Importantly, they also act as hubs that connect local conservation efforts to national and international networks.

Through BGCI's global network, botanical gardens in China are linked with institutions across more than 100 countries. These connections facilitate the exchange of expertise, data and conservation resources, helping to strengthen collective action for plant conservation worldwide. The broader lesson emerging from China's experience is that conservation success depends on a combination of long-term planning, strong institutions, applied research, community engagement and international cooperation, which is a framework that can be adapted rather than simply copied. Global South countries often face different economic realities, governance structures and development priorities. Solutions must therefore be adapted to local contexts, but China's experience offers a valuable example because many of the challenges it has faced are shared by other developing nations. This work in China demonstrates that plant conservation can progress alongside economic development when supported by appropriate policies, partnerships and investment.

The partnership between BGCI and Chinese colleagues has reinforced another important principle: International cooperation is most effective when it is built on mutual learning. While BGCI contributes global expertise, international standards and opportunities for collaboration, Chinese institutions contribute practical experience, innovation and lessons derived from implementing conservation at scale. Both sides benefit from the exchange. As global biodiversity loss accelerates, there is an urgent need for conservation approaches that are practical, scalable and relevant to the realities facing countries across the Global South. China's experience demonstrates that such approaches are possible. Through sustained commitment, strong institutions, botanical garden networks and investment in people and knowledge, significant progress can be achieved.

The author is the secretary general of Botanic Gardens Conservation International. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

YANG XIAOBO AND LYU XIAOBO

Mangroves to the rescue

By giving nature the space to recover, these 'forests of the sea' can continue to shelter coastal communities and thrive alongside them for generations to come

Mangrove forests are distributed along tropical and subtropical shores. Though they occupy only a small fraction of the world's total coastal zone, they have long served as natural guardians of coastal communities, buffering the effects of typhoons while sustaining abundant fisheries.



Yang Xiaobo



Lyu Xiaobo

For many Chinese people who grew up beside mangroves before the 1970s, childhood was inseparable from these forests. They followed their parents into the mangroves to catch shrimp and crabs or gather clams from the tidal flats. They walked narrow stone paths winding through the forests from one village to the next, often trailing behind their mothers. Looking up, they watched the mangrove branches sway in the sea breeze; looking down, they saw fiddler crabs scurrying across the mud at their feet. Those memories remain vivid to this day.

But this began to change in the mid-1970s. As population growth intensified shortages of food and salt, many mangrove forests were cut down to make way for rice paddies and salt pans. In Sanjiang township of Hainan province alone, around 800 hectares of mangroves were felled between 1975 and 1976. The destruction accelerated in the late 1980s and early 1990s as booming coastal aquaculture drove the widespread conversion of mangrove wetlands into fish farms.

The Chinese government, however, did not stand idly by as the losses mounted. Systematic mangrove restoration began in the 1980s, alongside the establishment of the Dongzhaigang National Nature Reserve in Hainan in 1980. More protected areas were later established across the country. In 1998, Hainan became the first province to introduce regulations on the protection of mangroves, effectively bringing the widespread mangrove clearance under control.

Protecting mangroves has never been solely a challenge for China. It is a global imperative. In 2015, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization designated July 26 as the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem, often referred to as World Mangrove Day. Since then, the occasion has evolved from a symbolic commemoration to an opportunity for countries to reaffirm the ecological value of mangroves and strengthen the collective commitment to protecting them.

In China, over a decade of sustained investment and restoration efforts have steadily revived mangrove ecosystems that had once been lost to fish farms.

Since 2016, China has funded mangrove restoration through major programs such as the Blue Bay environmental improvement initiative and the coastal zone protection and restoration project. A key milestone was the Mangrove Protection and Restoration Action Plan (2020-25), under which about 18,800 hectares of mangroves have been restored through measures such as converting fish farms back into forests, recovering degraded habitats and strengthening long-term monitoring and management.

According to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, by February 2025, China's mangrove coverage had reached 30,300 hectares, increasing approximately 8,300 hectares from what it was at the start of the century.

Restoring mangroves is a complex, long-term process that requires scientific research, the removal of fish farms, the reshaping of tidal flats, seedling cultivation and planting, and years of monitoring and maintenance. In the Xiaohai coastal lagoon in Wanning, Hainan province, the restoration of mangroves has involved investment in removing aquaculture ponds, dredging waterways and rehabilitating tidal flats since 2019. Similar progress has been made in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and Guangdong and Fujian provinces. Across China, mangrove forests once in decline are making a remarkable comeback.

At the opening of the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 2022, China announced plans to establish the International Mangrove Center in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, marking China's transition from a participant in global conservation to a leading contributor. In July 2025, the center was officially endorsed as a Ramsar Regional Initiative for the 2026-28 period.

Operating as an independent, nonprofit intergovernmental organization under the Ramsar Convention, the International Mangrove Center, with 21 signatory countries as of June 2026, aims to promote international cooperation in mangrove conservation, restoration and sustainable use.

In 2025, the center organized a series of international training programs for government officials and experts from countries including Cambodia and Madagascar, sharing China's experience in mangrove restoration. Later that year, the China Meteorological Administration released a sectoral standard for estimating carbon stocks and assessing carbon emissions in mangrove and salt marsh wetlands, providing a scientific framework for measuring mangrove carbon sequestration.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate that China is not only restoring its own mangrove ecosystems but also contributing knowledge, technology and standards to global conservation efforts.

Going forward, mangrove restoration should place greater emphasis on ecosystem quality rather than simply expanding forest cover. This means maintaining an appropriate balance among mangrove forests, tidal flats and open water, preserving the ecological function of tidal channels, and restoring benthic biodiversity.

Encouragingly, mangroves are remarkably resilient. Once major disturbance factors are removed, many degraded ecosystems can recover naturally, with carefully targeted intervention helping to accelerate the process where needed.

It is also important to explore sustainable integrated mangrove aquaculture models to balance the needs for environmental recovery and economic development. By reconnecting mangrove forests with the livelihoods of coastal communities, we can help restore a landscape where people once again share winding mangrove paths with crabs and other wildlife.

By giving nature the space to recover, mangroves, the "forests of the sea", can continue to shelter coastal communities and thrive alongside them for generations to come.

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BUSINESS

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China's oil, gas output hits record highs

By ZHENG XIN
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China's domestic oil and gas production reached historic highs in 2025, providing a robust bedrock for national energy security as the country accelerates the construction of a resilient energy system to navigate escalating global market uncertainties and geopolitical turbulence.

An oil and gas exploration and development report, recently released by the National Energy Administration, revealed that domestic crude oil production surged to a record 216 million metric tons last year. Meanwhile, natural gas output maintained its robust momentum, expanding by over 10 billion cubic meters for the ninth consecutive year.

Combined, total oil and gas production equivalent soared to a new high of 420 million tons, significantly enhancing the nation's self-sufficiency and ushering the industry into a new phase of high-efficiency and green development, it said.

Industry experts believe the milestone marks the successful culmination of a sweeping seven-year action plan (2019-25) designed to enhance domestic exploration, as the fierce global competition over resources, transit routes and market rights is creating greater uncertainties for energy imports.

China is leveraging the "certainty" of its domestic energy development to counter various external risks and enhance the resilience of its production, supply, storage and sales systems, Wang Hongzhi, head of the NEA, said recently.

Building on the momentum of a record-breaking 2025, the sector has seen a robust start to 2026. Cao Jianjun, chief expert at the Sinopec Economics and Development Research Institute, believes that the continuous growth of domestic supplies serves as the ultimate insulator against external volatility.

"As uncertainty becomes the new normal, we must counter external instabilities with our own internal certainty," Cao said.

This resilience is further underpinned by a strategic petroleum reserve estimated at approximately 1.4 billion barrels, or 190 million tons, according to figures by Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy.

Advancements in exploration and production technology have played a central role in this self-sufficiency. Sustained investments by the country's three major energy giants — China National Petroleum Corp, China Petroleum and Chemical Corp, and China National Offshore Oil Corp — have led to significant discoveries across traditional and unconventional fields, said Lu Ruquan, head of the CNPC Economics and Technology Research Institute.

These efforts successfully reduced China's dependence on crude oil imports to 71.9 percent in 2024, demonstrating remarkable industry resilience, Lu added.

The NEA report also highlighted breakthroughs in unconventional resources. In 2025, shale oil output exceeded 8.5 million tons — more than 10 times the level in 2018 — while unconventional natural gas production climbed 7.7 percent year-on-year to over 110 billion cubic meters.

Furthermore, the oil and gas sector added over 9 gigawatts of wind and solar capacity last year, reflecting the government's call to double down on renewable expansion while ensuring fossil fuels serve as a reliable regulatory "baseline" for energy substitution.

To support this balanced transition, China aims to bring non-fossil fuels to 25 percent of total energy consumption by 2030, supported by a comprehensive national energy production capacity.

Looking ahead, the industry is rolling out a new strategic action plan for 2026.

The NEA expects domestic crude oil output to firmly remain above the 200-million-ton threshold, while deepening the integration of artificial intelligence, green energy and the large-scale application of carbon capture, utilization and storage to empower China's continued rise as a global energy powerhouse.

Heatproofing



Staffers from State Grid Yangzhou conduct maintenance on a fishery-solar mixed-use project in Gongdao town of Yangzhou in Jiangsu province, helping safeguard normal equipment operations during high temperatures and bolstering energy conservation and emissions reduction. REN FEI / FOR CHINA DAILY



A Galbot humanoid robot interacts with shoppers in Shanghai. CHEN YUYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Humanoid robots close to 'ChatGPT moment'

Executive: Would move new tech from niche circles into public consciousness

By MA SI
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The humanoid robot industry could hit its "ChatGPT moment" by the end of 2028, based on current data accumulation rates and model convergence trends, said Wang He, founder and CTO of Beijing-based Galbot Co Ltd.

The "ChatGPT moment" has become a popular metaphor in tech and investment circles to describe a sudden breakthrough that catapults a new technology from niche circles into the public consciousness, allowing ordinary people to viscerally feel its practical value.

Wang said a powerful pre-trained model combined with an efficient post-training paradigm is the key to unlocking this milestone, and embodied artificial intelligence foundation models trained on massive, comprehensive datasets could achieve a 70 to 80 percent success rate directly for tasks they have never been specifically trained for.

Galbot was among the invited enterprises to a private enterprise symposium hosted by Zheng Shanjie, head of the National Development and Reform Commission, in Beijing on Monday. The event focused on analyzing first-half economic performance and gathering suggestions for second-half economic work.

The policy attention comes as Galbot's technology is capturing the public imagination in tangible ways. At the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference, which concluded in Shanghai on Monday, crowds three or four layers deep gathered around Galbot's exhibition area. They were watching Galbot G1, one of the company's robots, make breakfast, toast bread and pour drinks with the smooth coordination of a seasoned short-order cook.

But what truly captivated the audience was not the actions themselves — it was what happened next. Spectators repeatedly moved the bread aside, shifted the kettle, rearranged cups and plates, and covered the cup lids with their hands, creating obstacle after obstacle. Yet the robot never wavered. It relocated its targets in milliseconds, reconstructed its path on the fly and completed every step without interruption.

Wang outlined a roadmap for general-purpose embodied intelligence foundation models. He said that building a unified "brain and cerebellum" — the embodied intelligence foundation model — to achieve a deep understanding of human movement and control mechanisms represents a critical technological pathway for pushing humanoid robots toward the "tipping point" of artificial general intelligence.

Just a day before the WAIC opened, Vice-Minister of Industry and Information Technology Ke Jixin revealed at the annual plenary session of his ministry's humanoid robot and embodied intelligence standardization technical committee in Shaoxing, Zhejiang province, that China's humanoid robot output reached about 20,000 units last year, surpassed 40,000 units in the first half of this year, and is expected to exceed 100,000 units this year.

This fivefold jump sends a clear signal: humanoid robots are accelerating from technological exploration toward standardized, large-scale development. But quantity expansion does not equal industrial maturity.

Xie Shaofeng, chairman of the ministry's technical committee and chairman of the OpenAtom Foundation, warned that the industry is currently "blossoming yet fighting separately". Behind the apparent prosperity are three major challenges: highly divergent technological pathways, a critical lack of product standards and mounting pressure from sustainable development requirements.

Ke said the next two to three years could be a critical turning point for the humanoid robot sector. Output growth is merely the surface — the deeper shift is that the industry is moving from single-unit prototypes and stage demonstrations toward batch deliveries, which dramatically raises the coordination requirements across research and development, production, testing, application and safety governance.

At the prototype stage, companies can solve interface, algorithm and hardware adaptation issues through customized solutions. But once production reaches the scale of tens of thousands of units, any interface incompatibility, inconsistent evaluation methods, or unclear safety boundaries will be magnified into cost, efficiency and market trust problems, experts said.

To a certain extent, the core of scaling is not just "expanding production capacity" but also enabling components from different companies to work together, allowing product performance to be compared and contrasted, thus giving users the confidence to buy and use products and providing a basis for after-sales maintenance, they added.

Ke called for leveraging the foundational, guiding and supportive role of standards, as well as accelerating the development of urgently needed standards for humanoid robot intelligence classification, data management and safety specifications.

Jiang Lei, deputy director of the technical committee, said hardware requires standards and models need "firewalls", adding that the committee expects to roll out the first batch of standards by the end of this year.

Equipment industry driving exports

China's equipment manufacturing sector became a major driver of export growth in the first half of 2026, with export delivery value of the equipment industry rising 18.2 percent year-on-year and contributing nearly 50 percent of the growth in industrial exports, official data showed.

In the first half of the year, the country's exports of wind turbine generators and lithium batteries increased 35.6 percent and 37.6 percent year-on-year, respectively, while automobile exports reached 5.096 million units, up 65.3 percent from a year earlier, according to Wang Weiming, chief engineer of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

China's shipbuilding sector also continued to strengthen its global competitiveness, with domestically built vessels accounting for more than 90 percent of the country's total completed ships, new orders and existing order backlog.

"Since the beginning of 2026, China's equipment manufacturing industry has demonstrated characteristics of a solid foundation, multiple growth highlights and strong external demand," Wang said.

The sector's value-added output increased 6.4 percent year-on-year in the first half, accounting for 20 percent of the total output of industrial enterprises above designated size. It contributed 23.5 percent to the growth of value-added industrial output, providing strong support for stable industrial growth, Wang noted.

In addition to the strong growth in exports of high-tech products such as industrial robots, high-end machine tools and aerospace components, shipments of consumer goods — including 3C electronics (computer, communication and consumer electronics), household items, fashion accessories and small home appliances — have emerged as an important driver of export expansion. Beyond hardware performance, strong modeling ecosystems and software capabilities have notably become key factors behind the overseas popularity of Chinese-made 3D printers.

New technologies such as electrification, automation and AI transformation will continue to reshape their product architecture and industrial ecosystems, opening up fresh growth opportunities for the country's equipment manufacturing industry.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Honda, GAC extend joint venture

Honda Motor and China's Guangzhou Automobile Group Co Ltd have agreed to extend their joint venture partnership until 2038, as the Japanese carmaker seeks to strengthen its position in the world's largest auto market. The ownership structure of the China joint venture, GAC Honda, will remain unchanged under the agreement, while the venture will accelerate its shift toward new energy vehicles and work to rebuild its competitiveness, according to the company.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 16 pips to 6.7933 against the US dollar on Wednesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Confidence returning to global art market

By LI JING
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China's art market is showing early signs of stabilizing after a five-year downturn, with auction prices edging higher and bidding activity returning close to historical averages, according to a report released on Friday, adding to evidence that a broader recovery is taking hold in the global art market.

The report, published jointly by the Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business and Italy's SDA Bocconi School of Management, found that the MM Chinese Art Price Index, which tracks auction prices, rose 1.7 percent during the spring 2026 auction season after slipping in the autumn 2025 auction season. At the same time, the MM Chinese Art Sentiment Index, which measures bidding intensity by comparing hammer prices with auction estimates, also improved and approached its long-term average, indicating stronger competition among buyers.

The rebound in the Chinese art market coincides with gains in the report's two other major global price benchmarks, with the MM Impressionist Art Price Index climbing 15 percent and the MM Contemporary Art Price Index rising 10.8 percent, the first time in years that all three major art price indexes increased simultaneously.

"The spring 2026 auction season suggests confidence is returning to parts of the global art market," said Mei Jianping, professor of finance at CKGSB and lead author of the report.

Chinese artworks remain the strongest-performing segment over the past 25 years, despite a deep adjustment in recent years amid the COVID-19 pandemic, China's economic transition and a global art market downturn. The report showed the MM Chinese Art Price Index has risen nearly sevenfold since 2000, delivering a compound annual growth rate of 7.8 percent, compared with 4.8 percent for the MM Contemporary Art Price Index and 3.5 percent for the MM Impressionist Art Price Index.

Mei said the global art market has significantly lagged the rapid expansion of global wealth over the past 25 years, particularly wealth generated by advances in artificial intelligence.

"This spring auction season indicates the onset of a market revival," Mei said. "Considering the massive wealth generated over the past quarter-century, especially by recent breakthroughs in AI technology, the current market may present a historic window of opportunity for collectors and investors."

The report also pointed to a growing divide within China's art market as collectors continued to favor works with broader international appeal, such as contemporary artworks and oil paintings. During this year's spring auctions, the MM Chinese Oil Painting Index jumped 21.9 percent and the MM Chinese Contemporary Art Index rose 18.6 percent, while the MM Chinese Ink Painting Index fell 4 percent and the MM Chinese Modern Art Index declined 4.7 percent.

Mei attributed part of the shift to the growing internationalization of collecting Chinese art since the early 2000s as overseas buyers have become more active, making the market more sensitive to global collecting trends.

Beyond China, the report found that European art also rebounded in the spring, with France posting a 24.7 percent increase and Britain rising 18.5 percent, although long-term returns remained modest. The researchers said that years of relatively weak performance could leave parts of the European market attractively valued for long-term investors.

Despite the rapid creation of AI-related wealth, Mei said much of that capital has yet to flow into art because investors continue to see better returns in technology assets.

"The opportunity cost is still high," he said, adding that many entrepreneurs and investors enriched by the AI boom remain focused on growing their businesses rather than building art collections.

Asked whether AI-generated artworks could become valuable collectibles, Mei said that such works are likely to have artistic value but are unlikely to command the same long-term significance as works created by human artists.

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BUSINESS

Tianjin Port upgrades enable more imported delicacies

First bulk shipment of certified Beef-on-Track from Brazil expected to arrive in August

By **YAN DONGJIE** in Tianjin
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Chefs and employees showcase certified Beef-on-Track from Brazil during the 4th Tianjin International Shipping Industry Expo in Tianjin on June 3. LIU NAIWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

China's first shipment of certified Beef-on-Track from Brazil arrived at Tianjin Port last month, with visitors to the 4th Tianjin International Shipping Industry Expo lining up to try the BOT steaks — and the reviews were glowing.

The Tianjin Meat Industry Association signed a cooperation agreement with Brazilian counterparts at the expo. The first bulk shipment of the beef is expected to arrive at Tianjin Port in August, eventually making its way to dining tables across the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

"China is our main export destination, accounting for roughly half of Brazil's total beef exports," said Marina Guyot, executive director of the Institute of Agricultural and Forest Management and Certification, at the signing ceremony.

Xing Yanling, president of the Tianjin Meat Industry Association, said that Tianjin Port, as the largest cold-chain gateway in northern China, has a well-established cold-chain storage, customs clearance and distribution system, handling nearly 60 percent of the country's Brazilian beef imports annually.

To source the beef, a team from the association traveled to Para state in Brazil in April, visiting the Fazenda Carioca ranch and the Mafrinorte slaughterhouse to inspect ecological farming practices, standardized slaughter processes and full-chain quality controls. They also held discussions with local prosecutors and the Brazilian Chamber of Commerce on regulatory and environmental compliance.

BOT is a sustainable beef certification initiative launched in 2019 by Brazil's Federal Prosecutor's Office and the Institute of Agricultural and Forest Management and Certification.

Under this framework, ranchers are required to commit to environmental stewardship — specifically, zero deforestation — to protect what many call the "lungs of the Earth". Pasture management is tightly controlled, with no more than eight cattle per 6.67 hectares of grassland. As a result, the beef carries a slightly higher production cost than conventional beef.

"We hope to bring premium protein from around the world to Tianjin Port, and from there to the wider Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region," Xing said.

Once a cold-chain container completes its weeks-long ocean voyage and arrives at Tianjin Port, it enters a streamlined clearance process. Paperless customs procedures ensure that compliant frozen goods pass through quickly. At the container terminal, smart loading and unloading equipment moves containers off the docks and into cold-chain warehouses with minimal delay.

For containers that need temporary port storage, thousands of shore power sockets provide uninterrupted electricity, keeping frozen goods at a constant minus 25 C. Port workers conduct regular inspections to check power supply and compressor status, ensuring cargo quality is maintained throughout.



Representatives from China and Brazil shake hands during the Brazil BOT Certified Sustainable Beef First Arrival Ceremony in Tianjin on June 3. LIU NAIWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

From the docks, containers are transported to cold-chain warehouses clustered around the port area. Tianjin currently has 155 registered cold-chain storage facilities with a total capacity of approximately 3 million metric tons. As one of China's primary frozen goods import hubs, the port handled about 2.3 million metric tons of frozen imports last year, valued at 61.39 billion yuan ($9.06 billion) — ranking second nationally.

Tianjin's 15th Five-Year Plan identifies cold-chain logistics as a key component of modern transport and shipping services, with plans to strengthen the sector as a strategic pillar.

Behind this infrastructure lies a simple reality: imported goods are finding their way into more and more Tianjin households. Recently, at a Sam's Club a few kilometers from the National Convention and Exhibition Center (Tianjin), a Tianjin resident named Zheng Xiaowen drove in circles around the car park of nearly 2,000 spaces and it still took her half an hour to find an available space.

The Sam's Club in Xiqing district is reportedly the highest-grossing in the country. Despite the complaints, Zheng — like tens of thousands of Tianjin families — makes the trip every weekend. "We come mainly for the high-quality imported meat and produce," she said.

From Chilean cherries and Peruvian blueberries to Thai durian, Norwegian salmon, Australian beef, US apples and New Zealand milk, imported food has become a staple in the shopping trolleys of Tianjin families.

Data from Tianjin Customs back this up. Last year, Tianjin imported 225,000 tons of aquatic products for consumption, valued at 6.3 billion yuan, up 27 percent year-on-year. Imports of fresh and dried fruits and nuts reached 141,000 tons, valued at 14.3 billion yuan, up 7.3 percent.

This enthusiasm for imported food has deep historical roots. Tianjin has long been an international consumer city. The Quanyechang Department Store, which opened in 1928, predates what is widely recognized as the United States' first modern shopping mall by nearly 30 years.

That tradition carried on in later decades in a different, more down-to-earth form. For today's young people, shopping globally is as simple as a few taps on a phone. But for Zheng's grandparents' generation, seeing the latest international trends meant making a trip to one place that everyone in Tianjin — and across northern China — knew well: the Tianjin Foreign Commodities Market.

A hallmark of Tianjin's "foreign goods economy" from the 1990s through the early 2000s, the market drew shoppers from across the country by the busload.

Where older Tianjin residents once had to make a dedicated journey to "hunt" for imported goods, Zheng today simply reaches for them off the supermarket shelf. The goods haven't changed — what's changed is the port infrastructure behind them, as Tianjin Port has developed its port-industry-city integration model and upgraded customs clearance efficiency under the city's free trade zone framework.

Chilean cherries once had to transit through southern ports on their way to Tianjin, adding days to an already long journey. Since 2023, when Tianjin launched its direct "Cherry Express" service from Chile, the port has steadily expanded its fresh produce import corridor. By the end of January this year, four vessels carrying roughly 30,000 tons of cherries had arrived as part of the 2025–26 cherry season.

Nearly 200 containers of fresh cherries made the journey from Chile's San Antonio Port directly to Tianjin, with a single sailing time of around 22 days — nearly a week shorter than traditional transit routes. Customs declarations are completed before arrival, so once a vessel docks, containers can be unloaded directly onto refrigerated trucks. From ship to supermarket shelf, the entire process now takes just a few hours — cherries that arrive in the morning are on sale by midday and on dinner tables by evening.

"We'll use international shipping combined with full cold-chain logistics to reach the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, and from there the whole of China — so that more consumers can enjoy fresh imported food," said Xing.

Cai Muzi contributed to this story.

Sourcing event boosts Sino-South African ties

CAPE TOWN — China Premium Textile South Africa and Allfashion Sourcing 2026, one of Africa's top textile and fashion trade exhibitions, took place in Cape Town from July 14 to 16, with participants from China and South Africa upbeat about expanding bilateral cooperation in the industry.

Held at the Cape Town International Convention Center, the annual event serves as a major sourcing platform for the textile, apparel, footwear and fashion industries, bringing together manufacturers, suppliers, designers, retailers, buyers and other industry stakeholders to explore business opportunities, forge partnerships and showcase future-oriented solutions.

This year's event featured around 150 exhibitors, with nearly half of them from China. The program also included fashion shows, thematic forums, panel discussions and industry talks.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Chinese Consul-General in Cape Town Ren Faqiang said South Africa is China's largest trading partner in Africa, while China has remained South Africa's largest trading partner for 17 consecutive years, with bilateral trade reaching $53.58 billion in 2025.

"The textile industry is a traditional area of China-South Africa economic cooperation, and also a key sector for industrial capacity coordination and market connectivity between the two sides," Ren said.

He added that China's zero-tariff policy for 53 African countries, including South Africa, took effect on May 1, covering South African-grown cotton, textile raw materials and other related products.

"This policy will substantially cut export costs for South African textile and garment manufacturers, expand their access to the Chinese market, unleash greater trade momentum, and inject robust impetus into China-Africa trade, investment, cooperation and Africa's development," Ren added.

One of the exhibitors, Ziev Shani, a young South African entrepreneur who is fluent in Chinese and runs a local company that sources products from China, provides private-label manufacturing services for South African businesses and helps connect companies from the two countries.



People visit the booth of a Chinese exhibitor at the China Premium Textile South Africa and Allfashion Sourcing 2026 expo in Cape Town, South Africa, on July 14. WANG LEI / XINHUA

Shani said he has worked with Chinese companies for five years, while his family's business ties with China date back to his father's generation.

"I believe that there are excellent prospects for Chinese companies and South African companies to work together for a win-win situation. There should be good collaboration, good partnership and just growth and prosperity for two great countries," he added.

Among the Chinese exhibitors, Hangzhou Golden Shell Import and Export participated in the event for the fourth time. Having cultivated the South African textile market for more than a decade, the company has continued to strengthen its local presence, underscoring its long-term confidence in the African market.

General Manager Chen Fangli said she is optimistic about the future of China-South Africa and China-Africa economic and trade cooperation. Supported by favorable policies and industrial upgrading, she believes Chinese textile enterprises, backed by integrated industrial chains, advanced manufacturing equipment and strong innovation capabilities, will further expand cooperation with South African partners.

"We have established a company in Cape Town and are exploring the possibility of setting up a factory in Durban. We hope to use South Africa as a base to gradually expand into the broader African market," Chen added.

Wang Lihong, general manager of first-time exhibitor Zhejiang Huida Textile and Garment, told Xinhua News Agency that she spent the morning of the opening day meeting potential clients and reached preliminary cooperation agreements with three South African companies, strengthening her confidence in expanding into both the South African and broader African markets.

Wang said Chinese textile manufacturers have long outgrown the stereotype of competing solely on low prices.

"People overseas used to associate Chinese products with good quality at low prices. Today, however, our competitiveness comes not only from affordability, but, more importantly, from reliable product quality and continuous innovation, which will create broad opportunities for development in South Africa and across Africa," Wang said.

XINHUA

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CHINA

Medical mission



The People's Liberation Army Navy hospital ship *Jixiang Fangzhou* (Ark of Good Fortune) departs from a military port in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Wednesday to begin Harmonious Mission 2026, its first overseas humanitarian medical mission. During the more than 200-day voyage, the vessel, China's third domestically built 10,000-metric-ton-class hospital ship, will visit countries in Africa and South Asia, providing free medical services to local communities. LIU ZAIYAO / XINHUA

Safety risks at the workplace under scrutiny

SPP urges businesses to fulfill their primary responsibility in campaigns

By YANG ZEKUN
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Chinese prosecutors approved the arrests of 4,181 people and prosecuted 16,648 others for crimes endangering workplace safety from January 2023 to June 2026, the Supreme People's Procuratorate said on Tuesday.

Although China's workplace safety situation has remained generally stable and continues to improve, risks persist in some industries, the SPP said.

Traditional high-risk sectors, including mining, hazardous chemicals, transportation and construction, remain vulnerable to major accidents. Some companies continue to prioritize production over safety, while increasingly complex working conditions make risks more difficult to control.

Prosecutors have also identified inadequate oversight of equipment and safety facilities as a major concern. Investigations have uncovered expired equipment, missing protective devices and faulty safety systems in many cases.

Fire hazards remain prominent at small businesses and public venues, including restaurants, hotels, workshops and entertainment facilities. Such premises are numerous and often located in urban villages, old town areas and rural communities, making regulatory oversight more challenging.

Unsafe electrical wiring, indoor charging of electric bicycles, aging gas hoses and improper storage of gas cylinders are among the major risks. Many accidents occur at night, with toxic smoke inhalation being a leading cause of death.

Meanwhile, new risks are emerging in sectors such as new energy, energy storage and urban gas, where rapid expansion has outpaced the development of some safety standards and risk-control measures.

The SPP cited several major cases to illustrate the consequences of safety violations.

The February 2023 collapse at the Xinjing coal mine in Alshaa League of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region was caused by operations that violated the approved mining design. The mine improperly combined excavation levels, creating an excessively high and steep slope that eventually collapsed, killing 53 people and injuring six.

At a Yellow River bridge construction site in Qinghai province, substandard materials and bolts were used in a supporting structure, while safety supervision was absent during high-risk nighttime operations. Part of the project collapsed in August 2025, killing 13 people with three still unaccounted for.

A gas explosion at a barbecue restaurant in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, in June 2023 was caused by an employee improperly removing a pressure regulator, resulting in a large liquefied petroleum gas leak. The blast killed 31 people and injured seven.

The SPP said prosecutors have maintained a tough stance on workplace safety crimes by directly supervising several major cases, while local procuratorates have prosecuted those responsible.

During the reporting period, prosecutors supervised the filing of 791 cases involving 881 people and pursued the arrest or prosecution of 534 suspects who had initially been omitted from investigations. They also recommended that administrative authorities transfer 872 suspected criminal cases for prosecution and filed 78 protests against court judgments involving errors in conviction or sentencing.

In addition, procuratorates have issued recommendations to address safety risks and regulatory gaps identified during investigations. They will strengthen coordination between administrative and criminal enforcement, make better use of public interest litigation and work with relevant authorities on targeted workplace safety campaigns.

The SPP also urged businesses to fulfill their primary responsibility for workplace safety by closely monitoring equipment, electrical wiring, hazardous chemicals, working environments and emergency exits.

Taiwan urged to lift mainland product restrictions

By LI SHANGYI
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As the Chinese mainland's motorcycle brand ZXMOTO went viral in Taiwan, a mainland spokeswoman urged the Democratic Progressive Party authorities on Wednesday to heed public opinion and remove restrictions on mainland products.

Zhang Han, a spokeswoman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said at a regular news conference that the mainland has always maintained a positive and open attitude toward cross-Strait economic and trade cooperation.

"It is the DPP authorities that are restricting and obstructing the entry of high-quality mainland products into Taiwan," she said.

As ZXMOTO motorcycles continue to deliver strong performances in professional competitions worldwide, they are attracting growing interest in Taiwan, where motorcycle culture is deeply rooted.

Zhang Xue, founder of ZXMOTO, said in a recent interview with United Daily News that he hopes to open stores in Taiwan next year. In response, the island's economic affairs department said that, under current customs import tariff regulations, complete motorcycles manufactured on the mainland are classified as "mainland goods prohibited from import" and therefore cannot be imported into Taiwan. The list of prohibited goods includes about 2,500 mainland goods, covering automobiles, motorcycles, agricultural products, metals and textiles.

Zhang Han criticized the DPP authorities for clinging to their separatist "Taiwan independence" stance, saying they have intensified discriminatory trade restrictions on the mainland, erected increasing barriers and undermined normal cross-Strait economic and trade exchanges and cooperation. Taiwan's traditional industries and small and medium-sized enterprises have long expressed dissatisfaction with such policies, she added.

She urged the DPP authorities to remove unreasonable restrictions as soon as possible and take concrete steps that serve the interests of the people of Taiwan.

"We are pleased to see Taiwan compatriots using high-quality products from the mainland and sharing in the development achievements of Chinese modernization," she said.

Turning to broader cross-Strait trade, Zhang dismissed claims by the island's authorities that Taiwan has reduced its reliance on the mainland market.

On July 15, Cho Jung-tai, head of the island's executive body, claimed that Taiwan has reduced its past reliance on the "single Chinese market" and shifted its focus toward Europe, the United States and countries covered by its "new southbound policy".

In response, Zhang said trade figures demonstrate that the industrial structures on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are highly complementary and offer broad prospects for cooperation.

According to statistics from the General Administration of Customs, cross-Strait trade reached $185 billion in the first half of 2026. The mainland imported $133.1 billion worth of goods from Taiwan, up 22.5 percent year-on-year, while exports to Taiwan totaled $51.9 billion, up 32.9 percent year-on-year.

She said strengthening cross-Strait economic and trade cooperation and deepening integrated development across the Strait serve the common interests of people and businesses on both sides and are the natural outcome of economic laws and market principles.

Describing cross-Strait cooperation as an unstoppable trend, Zhang criticized the DPP authorities for pursuing "Taiwan independence" by relying on external forces. She accused them of allowing external forces to hollow out Taiwan's competitive industries.

"Such actions are nothing less than harming Taiwan and bringing disaster to the island," she said.

She also referred to Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company's recent announcement of an additional $100 billion investment in facilities in Arizona, which has fueled concerns in Taiwan that the company is effectively becoming a US company.

Zhang said the DPP authorities' strategy of seeking "Taiwan independence" by relying on the US and "selling out Taiwan by kowtowing to the US" is the primary cause of the damage to Taiwan's economy and the gradual erosion of the island's competitive advantages.

First private rocket launched from East China Sea

By ZHAO LEI
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Orienspace, a private Chinese rocket maker, conducted the third flight of its Gravity 1 carrier rocket on Wednesday morning, marking the first time a private Chinese rocket has lifted off from the East China Sea.

The 30-meter-tall rocket blasted off at 10:54 am from a launch service ship off the coast of Shanghai and soon placed its payloads — nine satellites and one experimental device — into their preset orbits.

The mission marked the first launch by a private Chinese rocket from the East China Sea and the closest space launch to Shanghai to date.

Before the mission, the only rocket launch from the East China Sea took place in April 2022, when the State-owned China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp used a Long March 11 rocket to deploy five Earth-observation satellites.

405 metric tons
The liftoff weight of the Gravity 1 carrier rocket by Orienspace

In a statement, Orienspace said that the mission set a new national record for the combined payload weight delivered into orbit by a Chinese private rocket, but declined to disclose the exact figure, citing commercial confidentiality.

Founded in 2020 by a group of veteran researchers from State-owned space enterprises, Orienspace developed the Gravity 1 as a three-stage solid-propellant rocket with four side boosters. All of its engines are equipped with flexible swinging nozzles for attitude control.

With a liftoff weight of 405 metric tons and a liftoff thrust of 600 tons, the rocket is capable of sending payloads weighing up to 6.5 tons into low-Earth orbit or 4.2 tons into a typical sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 500 kilometers, according to the company.

Gravity 1 is currently the world's largest and most powerful solid-propellant launch vehicle, as well as the most capable rocket developed by a Chinese private space company.

Its liftoff weight and thrust surpass those of the European Space Agency's Vega-C, which was previously the world's most powerful solid-propellant rocket.

Gravity 1 is also the first and currently the only privately developed Chinese rocket equipped with side boosters. In addition, it has the largest payload fairing — the nose cone that houses satellites or other payloads — among China's private carrier rockets.

The rocket made its maiden flight from the Yellow Sea in January 2024, launching from a sea-based platform off the coast of Haiyang, Shandong province. The mission made Orienspace the fifth private Chinese company to successfully launch its own carrier rocket, following i-Space, Galactic Energy, Space Pioneer and LandSpace.

Its second flight took place from the same launch site in the Yellow Sea in October 2025.

Six of the nine satellites launched on Wednesday were jointly developed by Beijing MinoSpace Technology, a private satellite manufacturer, and Huantian Wisdom, a State-owned satellite operator based in Sichuan province.

The six satellites will join two previously launched optical satellites and two synthetic aperture radar satellites to form the Huantian Constellation, comprising four optical satellites and six radar satellites.

According to Beijing MinoSpace Technology, the expanded constellation will significantly improve data acquisition efficiency and spatial coverage, supporting remote-sensing applications across Southwest China in fields including land surveying and mapping, emergency response, agriculture, forestry and water conservancy.

Model carrier



Visitors view a six-seat electric vertical takeoff and landing model at the 2026 International Advanced Air Mobility Expo that opened in Shanghai on Wednesday. The event attracted over 400 domestic and international enterprises. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Last surviving female Long March veteran dies at 105

By ZOU SHUO
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Wang Quanying, the country's last surviving female Red Army soldier who took part in the legendary Long March, died peacefully in her sleep at 12:30 am on Wednesday at her home in Dujiangyan, Sichuan province. She was 105.

Multiple Chinese media outlets confirmed her death.

According to her family, Wang died without suffering, surrounded by her daughters and grandchildren. She had remained in generally good health after turning 105 earlier this month. However, she developed lung inflammation, progressive muscle atrophy, shortness of breath and difficulty expectorating in early July and was hospitalized on July 18. Her physical functions gradually declined until her passing.



Wang Quanying

Born in 1921 into a poor Tibetan family in Jinchuan county, Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture, Sichuan province, Wang endured a difficult childhood. She lost her parents at the age of 1 and was raised by her uncle until she was 5. She then worked as a child laborer for a local landlord, doing heavy farm and household work.

At the age of 14, she was deeply inspired by the disciplined and people-oriented conduct of Red Army soldiers after they arrived in Jinchuan in 1935. She volunteered to join the troops, undertaking logistical and medical duties, including guiding marches, cooking, transporting grain and caring for wounded soldiers during the Long March.

In March 1936, Wang became separated from the main force during fierce battles against Kuomintang troops in Danba county. Stranded with injured comrades, she tried to rejoin the troops by crossing snowcapped mountains barefoot and surviving on wild plants in freezing temperatures.

The ordeal left one toe on her left foot severely frostbitten, leading to its eventual amputation, causing her pain on rainy days for the rest of her life.

After wandering for more than a month, she settled anonymously in Wenchuan county in May 1936. For decades, she never spoke publicly about her experiences during the Long March. She married local resident Liu Fuguang and gave birth to five children, though only two daughters survived the harsh living conditions of the time.

Following the founding of the People's Republic of China, she changed her given name from Guixiang to Quanying, expressing her belief that "all Red Army soldiers across the nation are heroes". She was officially recognized as a Red Army veteran during a provincial verification campaign in the 1980s.

Even in her later years, Wang remained committed to preserving and promoting the spirit of the Long March. Until May this year, she continued weaving handcrafted futon cushions and donating them to local schools and red education bases.

Not long ago, officers and soldiers from a company of the PLA Ground Force visited Wang at her home, according to China Central Television. The centenarian changed into a Red Army uniform to greet them.

She admired one soldier's military cap and asked with a smile, "May I put it on? Does it suit me?"

"You look wonderful!" the soldiers replied.

When they unfolded the company flag, Wang's eyes filled with tears. She gently stroked the fabric as though reliving the turbulent years of war. She then slowly raised her hand and offered a solemn military salute to the flag.

Liu Guihua, Wang's eldest daughter, paid tribute to her mother on WeChat Moments, writing: "A heroic female soldier who crossed snowcapped mountains during the Long March; she concealed her achievements and remained true to her original aspiration throughout her life."

According to her family, Wang's only regret would have been that she did not live to see the 90th anniversary of the victory of the Long March, which falls later this year. In accordance with her final wish, her remains will be buried in Wenchuan county, where she settled decades ago.

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POLICY REVIEW

From being a 'fallback' to first choice

Economic and societal shifts fuel growing demand for vocational education places

By JI HAISHENG
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SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

In the early hours of May 10, parents joined long lines outside Beijing Changping Vocational School, with some even arriving the day before, eager to secure an enrollment interview slot for their children. By the afternoon, the school issued a notice declaring that admissions slots were already full — days ahead of schedule.

One parent who had camped out for hours said that if his 15-year-old son learns industrial robotics, he'll have a job waiting for him before he even graduates.

Across China, secondary and higher vocational institutions in manufacturing hubs like Shandong and Guangdong provinces are reporting unprecedented application surges, outstripping available spots.

The intense interest in vocational tracks reflects a shifting economic reality. As China's higher education system produces a record number of university graduates each year, the traditional white-collar job market faces friction. Desk jobs in tech, finance and administration have become fiercely competitive, leaving many young degree-holders underemployed. At the same time, China's push toward high-end manufacturing, robotics and artificial intelligence has created a shortage of skilled technicians.

"The surging popularity of vocational schools in recent years signals a fundamental shift in how Chinese society views skills-based education," said Wang Heye, founder of Beijing-based Liangyou Education, a consultancy specializing in vocational education.

For years, vocational education was often seen as a fallback option for underperforming students, but nowadays it is increasingly viewed as a viable and promising pathway to a successful career, Wang said, noting that he has witnessed the change firsthand.

He attributed the turnaround to a combination of robust policy support, industrial development, market demand for high-skilled talents, bright prospects for further education and jobs, and evolving public attitudes.

According to a 2025 report released by the Ministry of Education earlier this month, China has some 8,382 vocational institutions, including 6,741 secondary vocational schools, 1,554 vocational colleges and 87 vocational undergraduate universities. The total number of students enrolled in vocational institutions reached 29.37 million, the report said.

In late June, the State Council, China's Cabinet, released an outline plan for the development of the education sector during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), which made building a modern vocational education system a key priority.

The plan underscores the need to build more high-level vocational schools and programs to cultivate large numbers of high-skilled talents. Specifically, it aims to establish around 60 high-level higher vocational institutions and 160 high-level program clusters, with continuous efforts aligned with key industrial chains, the intelligent economy, and international economic and trade cooperation.

Li Chunqin, vice-principal of Rizhao City Science and Technology School in Shandong province, said that the policy document marks a pivotal transition for vocational education in China, signaling a new era where quality takes precedence over sheer scale.

"Rather than merely pursuing enrollment and program numbers, vocational schools should now focus on improving their educational capabilities and forging solid industry-education integration," Li said. He urged vocational schools to carve out their own niches and strengthen their core advantages.

For students, Li said the plan promises a more flexible and robust growth trajectory, as it advocates for seamless pathways connecting secondary vocational schools with vocational colleges and universities. Noting that his school enrolls nearly 1,000 students each year in its five-year secondary-to-higher vocational programs, he said that secondary vocational education, once seen as "a dead end", has now become "an expressway" for talent cultivation.

Li said he also sees the plan as a crucial step for promoting balanced resource distribution and serving local economies and regional industrial development, highlighting its push to channel higher vocational education resources to counties and smaller cities.

"High-quality vocational resources have long been concentrated in major cities, leaving a structural gap between the demand and supply of skilled talent at the county level," he said. "Bringing those resources down to counties will offer students access to quality vocational education at their doorstep and provide local businesses with talent nearby."

Zhou Zhemin, director of the Academic Affairs Office at Hunan Industry Polytechnic in Hunan's provincial capital Changsha, said the plan's call to steadily increase the number of vocational undergraduate institutions and expand enrollment will help forge a better-structured vocational education system.

Zhou dismissed concerns that expanding vocational undergraduate education would squeeze out vocational colleges, noting that the two have distinctly different training objectives. Vocational colleges focus on cultivating practical talents who can solve on-the-ground problems, while vocational undergraduate programs aim to produce technical and skilled professionals with innovation capabilities, he said.

"Over the next five years, vocational education is set for a deep overhaul in how we cultivate talent — shifting from teaching what schools have to teaching what the industry demands," he said.

Emphasizing deeper integration between vocational education and industrial needs, the outline plan sets out concrete measures, such as building around 100 industry-education alliances in various cities and about 20 national industry-education communities focused on specific industries, with support pledged to set up more training bases and centers and to upgrade training facilities.

Peng Fang, deputy general manager of China Construction Steel Structure Testing Technology Co, said many people used to assume that industry-education integration simply meant students doing a six-month internship before graduation, or agreements signed between schools and enterprises. "Such superficial collaboration can no longer meet the demands of today's industries," she said.

Peng added that schools used to design their programs and courses behind closed doors, while enterprises struggled to find qualified and capable talent. "Companies often receive graduates with little practical experience and have to invest heavily in training them from scratch," she said.

"Industry-education integration is not just about internships. It requires a systemic, whole-chain restructuring covering program design, curriculum reform, faculty deployment and training arrangements," Peng said.

Liu Dingding, deputy head of the industry-education integration department at Beijing Freedo Technology Co, said that the outline plan sets out concrete, measurable targets for boosting such integration, calling for solid progress.

Liu said his team acts as a bridge between schools and enterprises, filling gaps between talent cultivation programs and real needs. His team has launched integrated training programs and helped shorten the onboarding period for graduates at enterprises from six months to just two months, he added.

Over the past five years, Liu said he has witnessed visible changes in the depth of school-enterprise cooperation — from signing agreements and donating equipment, to jointly developing curricula and training programs, as well as offering classes tailored to enterprises' specific demands.

This marks an ever-deepening collaboration, Liu said, adding that policy support has made industry-education integration a key pillar of vocational education.

Policy Digest

Domestic service industry to be made more standardized

The Ministry of Commerce, together with eight other government departments, has unveiled a package of policy measures to promote the high-quality development of the domestic service industry.

The 19-measure policy aims to drive the standardized, professionalized and industrialized development of the sector, so as to better leverage its role in boosting consumption, improving people's livelihoods and stabilizing employment.

The measures cover five key areas concerning support for enterprises, pioneering practices, vocational skills training, credit information management and fundamental underpinnings.

In terms of enhanced policy support, the measures back domestic service providers in innovating service models, exploring smart service scenarios and expanding home-based elderly care and childcare services, with an aim to foster a group of leading brands in the sector.

The policy also calls for clearly defining the rights and obligations of domestic service enterprises, online platforms and domestic service practitioners.

According to corporate information provider Qichacha, China is home to more than 3 million registered domestic service enterprises.

Departure tax refund services to go paperless for travelers

China has rolled out more measures to deliver smarter, more streamlined departure tax refund services for overseas visitors shopping in China, according to a notice issued by the State Taxation Administration.

The notice said the STA is pushing forward the intelligent upgrade of departure tax refund services by rolling out fully paperless processing, under which electronic data of refund applications and sales invoices are transmitted online.

In addition, the STA is promoting pilot programs for tax refunds to eligible overseas tourists who shop at online stores and advocates for cross-regional mutual recognition of the "refund-upon-purchase" scheme, the policy document said.

A nationally unified tax refund service code will be rolled out, enabling tourists to enter information, track processing progress, and check reimbursement status simply by scanning a QR code, the notice said.

Meanwhile, tax authorities will strengthen risk prevention and control to crack down on illegal activities including fraudulent proxy purchasing and the smuggling of tax-refunded goods back into the domestic market.

College graduates called up to serve in grassroots posts

Nine central authorities led by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security have launched the fifth round of one of China's major grassroots service programs to engage more university and college graduates to work at the grassroots level.

According to the implementation plan, 36,400 graduates will be recruited every year from 2026 to 2030 to serve at the grassroots level in education, agriculture, medical care and rural vitalization. Each service term lasts two years.

First introduced in 2006, the Sanzhi Yifu — or "three supports and one assistance" — program runs on a five-year cycle. The previous four rounds have mobilized a total of 640,000 college graduates to serve community-level posts across the country.

Over the years, the program has effectively optimized grassroots talent structure, bolstered local economic development, and enhanced grassroots social governance capacity.

CHINA DAILY

AI integration, digital twins revolutionize classroom learning

By JI HAISHENG

At Jilin Polytechnic of Water Resources and Electric Engineering, students wearing virtual reality headsets stand before a digital twin of a massive dam. With a flick of their fingers, they unleash a simulated flood — water cascades down the valley, alarms flash, and the pressure feels almost real.

As sensors flicker, an artificial intelligence-powered system scores every decision they make in real time. The feedback is instant: adjust the sluice gate, optimize the discharge curve, try again.

What once took months of on-site training and carried significant safety risks can now be practiced repeatedly in a digital twin environment — a digital replica of a physical object or system.

"Now, students usually practice in digital twin environments before moving to on-site operations. This efficient and cost-effective approach has significantly improved their proficiency, allowing them to master such skills three to four times faster than before," said Liu Dingding, deputy head of the industry-education integration department at Beijing Freedo Technology Co, a digital twin and spatial intelligence company.

Liu's team has helped establish numerous digital twin platforms across sectors such as electric power, water conservancy, transportation and energy. He said that digital twins are rewriting the rules of vocational training, predicting a future where 70 percent of a training program will be virtual and only 30 percent hands-on.

Liu said that with the rise of advanced technologies like digital twins and AI, there will be strong demand for talent in related fields.

"Vocational schools now have a window of opportunity to cultivate professionals such as AI prompt engineers, digital twin scenario designers, and specialists in intelligent equipment maintenance and spatial intelligence applications," he said.

He called on vocational schools to seize these new directions during the transition period by setting up new majors and training programs.

In April, five ministries, including the Ministry of Education, jointly issued the "AI Plus Education" action plan, calling for full integration of intelligent technologies across all aspects of education. In July, the ministry added 27 new vocational majors, including embodied intelligence computing and humanoid robot engineering.

"The policy message is clear — AI integration into vocational education is no longer an 'elective' but a 'required course'," said Zhou Zhemin, director of the Academic Affairs Office at Hunan Industry Polytechnic in Changsha, Hunan province.

Zhou described the impact of AI and other advanced technologies on vocational education as "disruptive", saying they are redefining what vocational institutions should aim for. "In the past, vocational students were trained to be operators who could follow instructions and perform repetitive tasks. But AI is taking over precisely those tasks," he said.

According to a McKinsey & Company report, the rise of generative AI is propelling the era of automation to arrive a decade earlier than anticipated. In China, around 50 percent of work activities are projected to be automated before 2030, and about 200 million workers — equivalent to 30 percent of China's total workforce — will need to reskill or upskill, the report said.

Despite the overwhelming impact of AI, Chinese vocational institutions should not steer students away from it — instead, they should equip students to harness it, Zhou said.

For these institutions, it is imperative to shift focus to cultivating versatile technical talents with hands-on experience, innovation capabilities and AI expertise, he added.

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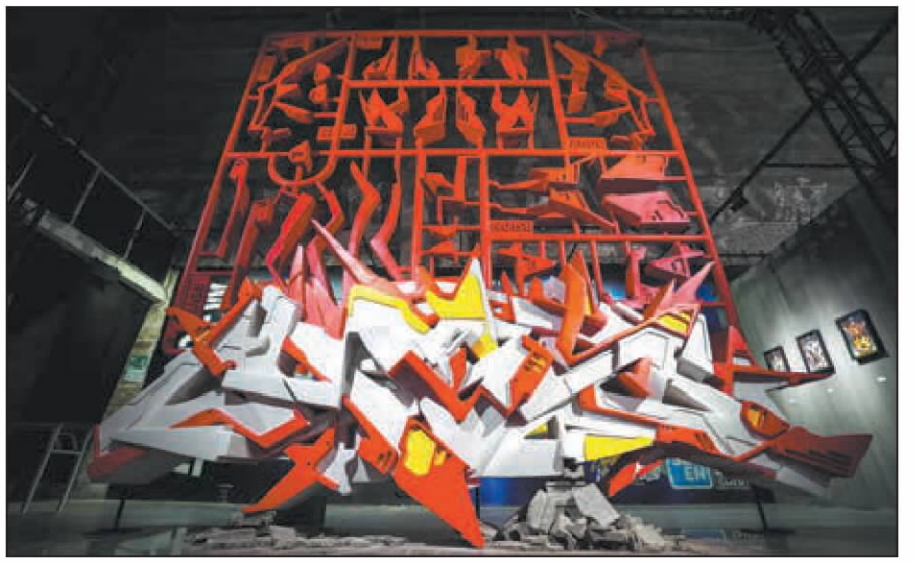
LIFE



Straight Build A-01, a large-scale graffiti sculpture created by Xu Yan and Ye Shu in 2022 for an exhibition in Beijing, using fiberglass and spray paint. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Bending the structural rules

Graffiti artist balances street writing with traditional calligraphy in his newly released Chinese typeface, in which he sees a future in cultural collaborations, **Li Yingxue** reports.

When a broad-edged marker touches a surface, a Chinese character begins to move beyond the familiar order of horizontal and vertical strokes.

As a dip pen moves, the line sharply shifts between thick and thin. Each turn carries the energy of street graffiti while echoing the precision and ornamentation of Gothic calligraphy.

The traditional Chinese character *fa*, meaning "to prosper" or "to flourish", appears bold and forceful while remaining unmistakably Chinese. It seems to have grown out of traditional calligraphy while retaining the visual intensity of street art.

This fusion of writing traditions lies at the heart of ABS Street Ink, a newly released Chinese typeface by graffiti artist Xu Yan, who blends Gothic calligraphy with the visual language of street graffiti.

Built on the use of broad-edged markers and flat-nib dip pens, the typeface gives Chinese characters a strong sense of movement and tension without sacrificing legibility. It also represents an exploration of how Western lettering traditions can be adapted to the structural logic of Chinese characters.

Xu, 38, is a co-founder of ABS Crew and an early practitioner of graffiti in China. He first encountered graffiti in 2005 while in high school, when the art form remained a niche culture largely introduced through foreign documentaries, magazines and hip-hop culture.

Xu and his classmates began writing their names on walls near their school. For them, graffiti was not simply drawing but a way of expressing identity through writing.

"The simplest way to describe graffiti is writing your own name," Xu says. "In essence, it is writing — and making that writing visually appealing."

Graffiti artists often call themselves "writers", emphasizing the construction of letterforms and personal style. This understanding connected naturally with Xu's childhood training in Chinese calligraphy.

He began practicing brush calligraphy in primary school and later studied printmaking at the Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts and public art at the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology. In 2011, Xu and his team won both the China and Asia championships at Wall Lords, an international graffiti competition in Asia, and ABS Crew later became involved in street art projects and commercial collaborations.

Between thick and thin

The origins of ABS Street Ink can be found not only on city walls but also at the calligraphy desk.

Xu has long been fascinated by Gothic calligraphy, a Western lettering tradition known for angular structures, dense compositions and decorative forms. Written with broad-edged pens, Gothic script creates dramatic contrasts between thick and thin strokes.

Graffiti tools, including broad markers and wide brushes, share similar qualities. Their flat edges allow artists to vary stroke width through changes in angle and direction.

"I use dip pens and flat nibs," Xu says. "The nib is like a thin piece of metal. Its flat shape naturally creates a strong contrast between thick and thin strokes."

This similarity led him to consider whether Gothic writing techniques could be adapted to Chinese characters.

His first experiments date back to 2012, when he explored Gothic-inspired Chinese lettering in his graduation work. Years later, after connecting with FounderType, the idea developed into a complete typeface project.

Xu was already known for his Gothic-inspired "*Gong Xi Fa Cai*" (meaning, wish you good fortune) lettering, which appeared on hats, footwear, scarves, mahjong sets, and enamel cookware, including collaborations with brands such as Nike.

But that project involved only a few characters. ABS Street Ink required thousands of Chinese glyphs.

Xu created each glyph on a digital tablet, adjusting brush settings to reproduce the marks of a flat nib while preserving the rhythm of handwriting.

"Each character was written directly in one go, rather than created by drawing an outline and filling it in," he says. "Every stroke came from the act of writing."

The biggest challenge was consistency. Chinese characters vary greatly in complexity, and Xu had to ensure that thousands of glyphs formed a unified system — with simple characters not appearing too empty and complex ones remaining clear.

For more than a year, he wrote roughly 10 characters a day and repeatedly revised earlier work.

Typeface designer Xing Hangke says the project demonstrates the difference between creating individual lettering pieces and building a functional typeface.

"A poster or logo can bend structural rules for a particular visual effect," Xing says. "A typeface must remain consistent and recognizable when thousands of characters are entered, combined, and used in different contexts."

Xing compares professional type designers to dancers in shackles, creating to their will within strict constraints.

A distinctive stroke may work well in the first few dozen glyphs but later create problems among similar characters. Designers must constantly adjust forms to maintain the overall system.

"In the end, you have to follow its rules," Xing says. "Some artistic expression will inevitably have to be reduced."

For Xing, ABS Street Ink succeeds because it avoids becoming either loose graffiti lettering or a simple imitation of Gothic script.

"It uses Gothic structure as the skeleton and graffiti strokes as the surface," he says.

Sharing a sense of flow

Adapting Gothic calligraphy to Chinese writing involves more than adding Western decoration.

Chinese characters have their own internal architecture, including structural balance, spatial relationships and the distribution of empty space. Excessive ornamentation can damage recognition.

"Western audiences may not understand the Chinese characters, but they can still recognize the Gothic style," Xu says.

He previously participated in a calligraphy exchange connecting Beijing and Berlin, in which artists wrote together via live projections. Even without understanding the content, participants could sense the rhythm and energy of the writing.

In graffiti culture, this quality is called "flow". In Chinese calligraphy, it resembles the continuous movement that carries the brush's energy from one stroke to the next.

For Xu, this shared sense of movement connects the two traditions. Graffiti may be associated with rebellion and freestyle, but at its core is the creation of a distinctive personal writing style. Chinese calligraphy likewise reflects the personality and rhythm of the writer.

One evolved on paper; the other found its expression on walls and in public spaces.

ABS Street Ink is designed for visually driven applications rather than long passages of text. Xing expects it to appear in fashion branding, music festivals, posters, street culture packaging, film and television titles, esports, and digital media.

In these contexts, typography is not meant to disappear. Instead, it establishes visual identity and emotional tone.

"The fact that this typeface serves a niche audience is precisely what can make it central to a particular field," Xing says.

Common Chinese text typefaces, including Song-style and sans-serif designs, dominate long-form reading because they allow readers to focus on information rather than form. Display typefaces like ABS Street Ink serve a different purpose: to attract attention and carry cultural meaning.

Xing describes the project as "type design driven by graphic thinking": a typeface with the visual impact of an image while remaining a functional writing system.

Chinese type design is increasingly developing at the intersection of culture, technology and visual experimentation.

AI tools, automated font-generation systems and variable fonts are changing production methods, but Xing believes technology alone cannot determine the lasting value of a typeface.

"Technology defines the floor, while culture defines the ceiling," Xing says.

"I hope to see more people using it, rather than limiting it to the way I use it," Xu says. For him, a typeface is complete only when it leaves the designer's hands and enters wider circulation — appearing on posters, packaging and screens, where it continues to develop new meanings in different cultural contexts.

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Clockwise from left bottom: In 2010, a cultural event in Beijing featured a public showcase of Gothic-inspired Chinese lettering. One of Xu's early works exploring the fusion of traditional Chinese cultural elements and Gothic aesthetics. The original design draft for the "*Gong Xi Fa Cai*" series, and "*san* (three), *liu* (six), *jiu* (nine)" (2012). The design draft for a silk scarf by Xu and Wang Weixuan.

Books find new home at mobile library in Myanmar

YANGON — Students eagerly browse bookshelves filled with 536 titles on Chinese culture, literature, science, technology, and storybooks as a newly launched mobile library launched on Saturday at Bowen Chinese School in Yangon, Myanmar.

The initiative, launched by the China Cultural Center in Yangon, marks the first step in a program that will later expand to other Chinese schools and relevant organizations nationwide, according to the center.

For 18-year-old Yoon Mi Mi Kyaw, the mobile library offers an opportunity to strengthen her Chinese language skills while learning more about the culture.

"We can learn about Chinese culture and society through books without even visiting China," she says.

"Since we are learning Chinese, having these books at our school creates a Chinese-language environment and helps us stay connected with the language," she adds.

"As a student attending Myanmar, English and Chinese schools, finding time to visit a library has always been difficult," she says. "Now we don't have to spend extra time going to a library because we can study Chinese and enjoy reading at school."

> "Reading a physical book gives a different feeling. The library provides a peaceful environment where I can concentrate better."
>
> **Aye Myat Thiri,** 17-year-old student

Seventeen-year-old Myat Yati, who prefers reading novels, says the mobile library has given her access to a wider variety of books.

"I usually read storybooks at home, but now I can read at our school," she says. "I'm excited to learn about different cultures through books."

Another student, 17-year-old Aye Myat Thiri, says she prefers reading print books to reading on a mobile phone.

"Reading a physical book gives a different feeling," she says. "The library provides a peaceful environment where I can concentrate better," she adds.

Cho Cho Myint, principal of Bowen Chinese School, welcomed the initiative, saying it would save students time while encouraging reading.

"Our students no longer need to visit a separate library," she says. "There are many types of books here, so they can choose what they like to read and learn."

The mobile library is not only a collection of books but also a bridge connecting them with new knowledge, languages and cultures, she says.

The initiative aims to help students learn more about Chinese culture and literature beyond the classroom while fostering a stronger reading culture, says Han Jiajun, director of the China Cultural Center in Yangon.

"The books will be replaced every six months so students can continue exploring new reading materials," he says, adding that the mobile library will also be open to people learning Chinese outside the school.

He hopes that the mobile library will encourage students to develop stronger reading habits, improve their Chinese language skills, and achieve better academic results.

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LIFE

Landscapes from the top

In Xizang's 'miniature Earth', a nature station-turned-micro-museum transforms a quick stop into a nine-zone ecological journey, **Yang Feiyue** reports.



The warm, humid monsoon winds that sweep up from the Indian Ocean don't stop at the Himalayas. They find their way through the Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon, the world's deepest gorge, and pour into the mountains of the southeastern part of the Xizang autonomous region.

They leave behind an extraordinary landscape that compresses several climate zones into just a few dozen kilometers of horizontal distance.

From the tropical monsoon rainforest of Metog county at 155 meters above sea level to the permanent snows of Namcha Barwa Peak at 7,782 meters, the region known as Nyingchi contains nine significant altitudinal natural zones — a "miniature Earth" that has drawn biologists and explorers for decades.

Recently, a new visitor attraction, a nature station, opened in Gongbo Park in the heart of Nyingchi. It debuted at the fifth China Xizang Trans-Himalaya Forum for International Cooperation and attracted instant attention from guests from more than 20 countries. Developed by the Chinese National Geography, the Nyingchi nature station aims to help visitors understand the landscape before them.

Step inside, and a 3D-printed topographic map of the Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon reaches waist height. Press a button, and its rivers glow blue. Pull open a drawer beside it, and you'll find profiles of the region's great peaks: the 7,782-meter Namcha Barwa, the eastern anchor of the Himalayas, and its neighbor Gyala Peri.

Elsewhere, visitors can spin a cylinder to watch the Asiatic golden cat transform through five color morphs. Nearby, a button triggers birdcalls that move through the forest in a "bird wave" — yellow-throated fulvettas and other birds, each playing a role as callers, followers or lookouts.

Climbing the stairs to the second floor feels like ascending 4,800 meters in elevation, from tropical monsoon rainforest to alpine scree. At the top, a viewing window frames a snowy mountain.

Guo Yingqian, general manager of the Chinese National Geography Camp, describes the station as a kind of micro-museum in nature.

"Traditional stations were places to rest," she explains. "Tourist centers are reception and display buildings for scenic areas. Our nature station resembles a compact, open structure that uses interactive installations and scientific exhibits to interpret the local natural ecology and cultural stories."

The Nyingchi station is designed as an urban installation that systematically interprets the concept of an ecological community encompassing mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grasslands, deserts, and glaciers.

The camp team plans to divide China into roughly 50 unique geographic units based on six natural zones and eight ecosystems, and establish nature stations or centers in each.

"Nyingchi is in southeastern Xizang and has the world's most complete natural mountain vertical zones," Guo says. "The landscapes are extremely dramatic — Namcha Barwa and the Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon — and it's also one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. It really captures the diversity we're trying to showcase," she explains.

The station's 26 interactive exhibits follow a simple but powerful idea: a vertical ascent.

The ground level, surrounded by exhibits on Mountain, Water, and Forest elements, aims to present Nyingchi's ecological foundation.

A hand-drawn map shows how the collision of the Indian and Eurasian plates 65 million years ago created the Yarlung Zangbo suture zone, making Nyingchi one of the planet's most geologically active mountain regions.

The staircase connecting the two floors is itself an exhibit. As visitors ascend, they pass through representations of each vertical zone — from tropical monsoon rainforest below 1,100 meters to alpine scree at 4,800 meters, with animal silhouettes and interactive photo points marking each transition.

The second floor shifts focus to Farmland, Grassland, Lake, Glacier, and Sand, along with the human and ecological relationships that define life at higher elevations.

A display on rice cultivation in Metog and Zayul counties, a rotating column illustrating eight hardy meadow plants, and a section on the region's remarkable glaciers are among the highlights.

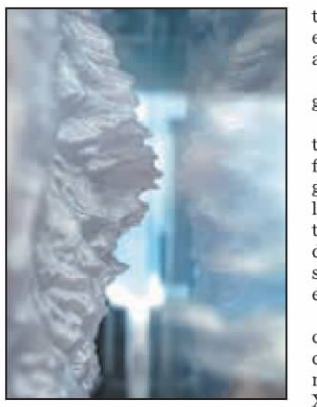
The station's true innovation lies in the small things.

For the "10 Questions About Glaciers" display, a flipboard answers questions about why glacial meltwater is not always safe to drink, as well as how glaciers have changed over recent decades.

"We're trying to take authoritative scientific knowledge and turn it into fun experiences," says Gai Yifang, a member of the station's lead design team.

"Through science-plus-art, we transform it into interactions where visitors can press buttons and listen. For tourists, it's more engaging and less like being lectured."







Top: The split-level design of the Nyingchi nature station creates a playful landscape. **Middle left:** A visitor turns an interactive exhibit to learn about the station's photovoltaic system. **Middle right:** A view of Nyingchi's topography. **Above:** Children learn about native plants through scientific illustrations. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The team works closely with the Chinese Academy of Sciences to ensure accuracy.

Then they distill.

"For animals, we avoid long taxonomic descriptions and morphological characteristics," Gai says. "Instead, we highlight one memorable fact that visitors might find interesting — always based on scientific fact — and pair it with professional photography and scientific illustrations."

The station is powered by solar panels paired with an integrated battery storage system, enabling it to operate its lighting and interactive exhibits off the grid under normal conditions.

But the team didn't stop at the technical side. They turned nature itself into a teaching tool. Displays explain how mycorrhizal fungi lock carbon in forest soils, how serpentinite rocks absorb carbon dioxide and turn it into carbonate minerals, and how glaciers regulate global climate.

"Nature is itself a zero-carbon textbook," Gai says. "Visitors discover that zero carbon is happening around them every day."

The Nyingchi station is part of a growing national network.

In April 2024, the first nature station opened in Metog, with a bird-focused theme. Butterfly, giant tree, geology, cat, and orchid stations followed. In September 2025, four themed stations appeared in Bomi, dedicated to the region's glaciers, spruce forests, wildlife, and unique ecological systems.

Guo, general manager of the camp, says the network currently comprises 24 nature stations nationwide, with footprints in Xizang, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, Shenzhen of Guangdong province, Chongqing and Wuxi in Jiangsu province.

The latest addition of the Nyingchi station to this growing network plays a special role.

"Previous stations were focused on individual themes — a single species or resource type. This station, however, presents a systematic geographical narrative of Nyingchi as a whole," Guo explains.

"It provides an overarching scientific context for other Nyingchi stations."

Functionally, its central location in Nyingchi makes it an ideal first stop, giving visitors an overall understanding of the region before they venture further.

"Tourists no longer just take a photo and leave. They can follow the stations' guidance and spend more time systematically exploring the land. This helps position Nyingchi as a world-class destination for ecological and cultural tourism."

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Chinese food week stirs interest in Estonia's historic border city

NARVA, Estonia — On July 17, in the dining room of the Inger Hotel in central Narva, an unusual aroma hovered in the air. Mixed with the familiar scents were the earthy tang of soy sauce, the warmth of star anise, and a hint of ginger. For one week, this popular lunchtime spot became a culinary meeting point, introducing diners to a menu of Chinese specialties.

Chinese cuisine week grew out of one local entrepreneur's nostalgia. An Estonian businessman, who requested anonymity, had operated a Chinese restaurant in Narva before it closed during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This summer, he proposed a revival with a fleeting taste.

"We naturally agreed," Olesya Morozova, the hotel restaurant's manager, says with a smile. "We are always happy to offer our guests something new."

That new experience came with Chef Mu Xiaofeng, who flew from China to lead the kitchen. Each day, the restaurant served a set lunch: soup, salad, and a main course, with the menu rotating daily to showcase variety. There was hot-and-sour soup, crispy spring rolls and stir-fried noodles with vegetables.

The biggest conversation starter, however, was a dish rarely found on Estonian menus: simply prepared stir-fried squid with scallions, ginger and salt.

During a visit to the kitchen, Chef Mu was seen preparing the dish from start to finish. He deftly sliced the squid into delicate crosshatch patterns before tossing it into a blazing wok with scallions and ginger. Within minutes, the specialty was plated.

"It caused quite a stir," Morozova admits. "Not everyone understood or appreciated the taste, of course. We received many positive reviews, but some guests found the flavor unfamiliar." Still, she defended the choice: "When such an opportunity arises, it is certainly worth trying something truly different."



During Hainan province's peak travel season, international tourists taste local specialties at a Haikou night market on July 17. GUO CHENG / XINHUA

Even sourcing the squid became part of the story. When Morozova contacted her usual suppliers, their reaction was disbelief. "'What is going on over there?' they asked," she recalled with a laugh. "I think that was when publicity for our Chinese cuisine week really began."

News of the event quickly spread through Narva, a city of just over 52,000 people on Estonia's eastern border with Russia. Phone calls, text messages and social media posts buzzed with questions: When is the event? What will be served?

"It shows that the city needs more projects like this," Morozova says.

The enthusiasm was perhaps less surprising given Narva's existing culinary landscape. A short walk from the Inger Hotel, WokkIN Narva has built a loyal following by serving Chinese-inspired dishes. Customers frequently praise its generous portions, affordable prices and flavors they describe as authentically Chinese.

Against that backdrop, the hotel's special week felt less like a bold introduction than a welcome deep-dive into Chinese cuisine.

Language proved no barrier in the kitchen. Using a translation app on a mobile phone, Chef Mu, who speaks only Mandarin, communicated with the hotel's Russian-speaking staff while demonstrating Chinese cooking techniques of velveting meat and balancing five-spice powder.

Diners enjoying more familiar offerings, like sweet-and-sour chicken and egg-drop soup, offered brief but enthusiastic praise. "It was excellent," several diners agreed with a smile before quickly returning to their meals.

Encouraged by the response, Morozova says the restaurant hopes to keep several of Chef Mu's recipes on the menu after the event concludes. "We will try to continue preparing these Chinese dishes," she says.

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LIFE



Mental health enters a new frontier

Beijing Huilongguan Hospital's family-oriented ward tackles gaming addiction, reflecting a shift in how psychology is addressed in China's society, **Xu Fan** reports.

As children across China have begun their summer vacation, many parents are bracing for a familiar battle: competing with smartphones and video games for their children's attention.

That anxiety is precisely what Pixar's latest animated blockbuster *Toy Story 5* captures in one memorable scene. A group of toys climbs onto rooftops and peers through windows, only to find children in every home glued to screens, their thumbs constantly scrolling while the toys sit forgotten in the corner.

For many Chinese families, that fictional scene feels increasingly close to reality.

To help parents cope with the challenge, Beijing Huilongguan Hospital — the first hospital in China to establish a family-oriented ward dedicated to treating gaming disorders — published a science-based guide on its official WeChat account on July 2, encouraging parents to read it before the summer break.

The move reflects the growing recognition of excessive gaming as a mental health issue. In 2018, the World Health Organization released the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), recognizing gaming disorder as a behavioral addiction.

According to the WHO, the ailment is identified as a condition that must be severe enough that it results in significant impairment to a person's functioning in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas, and would normally have been evident for at least 12 months.

In other words, excessive gaming is not simply a matter of poor self-control. For some people, it is a medical condition that requires professional treatment.

For An Jing, a housewife in Hebei province, that distinction is painfully personal. Her 16-year-old son has become completely immersed in the online world, eventually taking a year off from school. He has reversed his day-night schedule, developed irregular eating habits, and spends nearly all his waking hours playing games, watching TV, or scanning smartphones. "When I see children carrying schoolbags on the street, I can't help but cry. But little by little, I've gotten used to it," An says.

Although many parents like An feel they are confronting a relatively new problem, the medical community began taking it seriously years ago.

Yang Kebing, chief physician and director of the hospital's Addiction Medicine Center, tells China Daily that he vividly remembers the period when the WHO gathered experts from around the world to evaluate whether gaming disorder should be included in the ICD-11.

"As discussions intensified, we realized this was becoming an increasingly serious issue," Yang says.

Drawing on years of clinical observation and research, the hospital opened China's first specialized behavioral addiction ward on May 21, 2019 — four days before the ICD-11 was formally adopted by the 72nd World Health Assembly.

Located near the hospital's north gate, the facility — also known as Inpatient Ward 29 — hardly resembles a traditional psychiatric ward. Reminiscent of the courtyards nestled in Beijing's hutongs, this single-story compound features a ping-pong table and four swing chairs, creating a relaxed atmosphere. The patient rooms are arranged around the courtyard, while the treatment rooms feel more like recreation spaces, such as a board game room and a mini karaoke booth.

"Normally we have 13 beds, but the ward can accommodate up to 15 or 16 patients if necessary," Yang says.

The ward evolved from an alcohol dependence unit established in 2008. As internet use became widespread and gaming-related problems increased, the hospital expanded its focus to behavioral addiction.

"Based on our clinical experience, about half of our patients are addicted to the internet or online games, and most are between 12 and 20 years old. The other half are mainly patients with other addictions such as alcohol dependence," Yang says.

One teenager left a lasting impression on him. Obsessed with online games, the boy repeatedly fought with his parents, shouted at home, disturbed neighbors, and eventually dropped out of school. His parents ultimately brought him to the hospital against his will. After spending two weeks in a closed ward to disconnect from the internet, he was transferred to the behavioral addiction ward for psychotherapy and medication.

Yang also recalls one of the ward's most successful recoveries — a 32-year-old man who lost his job because of excessive mobile gaming. Admitted shortly after the ward opened, he gradually regained control of his life through treatment.

Years of clinical practice have also reshaped Yang's understanding of the disorder. "Pure gaming disorder is actually uncommon. About 70 percent of our patients also have other psychiatric conditions, such as depression, bipolar disorder, ADHD, or anxiety disorders," he adds.

For Yang, however, the work brings more responsibility than recognition. He entered the Department of Mental Health at Beijing Medical University — now Peking University Health Science Center — in 1994, receiving comprehensive training in internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, neurology, and psychiatry before joining Huilongguan Hospital in 1999.

Looking back over more than two decades, he has witnessed a quiet but profound shift in public awareness of mental health.

"When I first came here, we saw only a few dozen outpatients a day," he says. "Now, treating more than 1,500 patients a day has become routine at our hospital."

As the interview draws to a close, two nurses hurry over, carrying a new case file. Before there is time to exchange a proper goodbye, Yang is already discussing the patient's condition. It is a brief but telling scene: in the time it takes to say farewell, another family's struggle has already become his next mission.

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Top: A sandplay therapy room at the Addiction Medicine Center of Beijing Huilongguan Hospital functions as a non-verbal space that enables children to express their emotions.
Above: The center receives families who are battling problems such as addictions to screens and games.
Left: A yard at the center where patients and their companions can do exercise, such as playing table tennis.
PHOTOS BY XU FAN / CHINA DAILY

Guardians of the plateau help revive Xizang's wildlife and ecosystems





Left: A female Tibetan antelope nurses its calf in Nagchu, Xizang autonomous region. **Right:** Migratory birds at the Lhalu Wetland National Nature Reserve in Lhasa, Xizang. PHOTOS BY LI LIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

LHASA — At daybreak on the northern plateau of Southwest China's Xizang autonomous region, the wind moves first. It comes out of seemingly empty country, passes over lakes and meadows, and blows toward the snowy mountains in the distance.

Through his binoculars, Kalzang Lhundrup can often see Tibetan antelopes lowering their heads to drink and wild kiangs moving slowly along a ridge. His motorcycle leaves only a shallow track on the patrol road, a faint line across the vast landscape.

On other patrols, he has seen wild yaks and black-necked cranes appear more frequently — signs to him that the plateau is recovering.

For nearly a decade, Kalzang Lhundrup, head of the Norbu Yugyel wildlife conservation station in Nyima county in Nagchu, has been reading these signs. In his world, the return of wildlife is not an abstract measure of ecological recovery. Instead, it appears through hoofprints, migration routes and fleeting images captured by trail cameras.

Patrolling this area is hard work. The altitude is close to 5,000 meters, and roads are long, while the wind and snow can be punishing. There is also the loneliness of the wilderness, which is very much part of the job. Kalzang Lhundrup and his colleagues patrol five or six times a month, riding motorcycles in summer and driving off-road vehicles in winter. A single day on patrol may cover more than 200 kilometers.

Along the way, they record the species and numbers of wild animals they see and watch out for those that are injured or separated from their herd. In recent years, this station alone has rescued over 40 wild creatures.

"There are more animals now and, in a way, that gives us more work," he says. "But it is good work. It means the land is healthier than before, and it means our patrols are worth it."

The station is named after Norbu Yugyel, a police officer who sacrificed his life while apprehending poachers in northern Xizang. From earlier wildlife protectors to the hundreds of rangers now working across the plateau, conservation there has often been a quiet and demanding inheritance.

A herder born on this land, Kalzang Lhundrup sees the change through a lens of personal pride. "I was born here. To be able to protect this land is my greatest happiness."

Monitoring data tell part of the story. Populations of rare wild animals in Xizang have shown a clear recovery trend. Tibetan antelopes have increased from just more than 70,000 at the end of the 20th century to over 300,000 today, while wild yak numbers have grown from several thousand to more than 20,000. The number of black-necked cranes has also risen from fewer than 4,000 to over 10,000.

Across Xizang, the human footprint on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is being managed more carefully. The region has built a nature reserve system with national parks as the mainstay. It now has 47 nature reserves and 97 protected natural areas in total, as well as 73 wildlife protection stations.

Conservation in Xizang is not only about keeping people away from nature. It is also increasingly focusing on teaching people how to live near it.

In Lhasa, the same idea appears in a different form at Lhalu Wetland National Nature Reserve, often called the "lung of Lhasa". On summer days, birds skim the water or rest in the shallows. Beyond the reeds and footpaths rise the Potala Palace and residential buildings, bringing the wetland into the everyday life of the city.

Ngawang Tashi, deputy head of the administration bureau of the reserve, says the wetland was not always so healthy. Since 1995, years of protection, restoration and monitoring have helped revive its ecological functions.

In recent times, Lhasa has invested 728 million yuan ($107 million) in two phases of restoration work, helping bring the wetland back to life. Its vegetation coverage has risen to more than 95 percent, and the reserve currently supports 174 bird species, with more than 10,000 birds living and breeding there.

Parts of its patrol paths have been opened to the public in an orderly manner. Residents now go there to walk, take photographs, and watch birds. For many children in the city, this wetland may be where they first learn the name of a black-necked crane.

The water that nourishes Lhalu Wetland eventually flows into the Lhasa River and then into the Yarlung Zangbo River, which runs eastward toward Nyingchi, where ecology has become a livelihood.

Tashi Drolma, a homestay owner in Bomi county in Nyingchi, grew up watching her mother run a family inn more than 20 years ago. As a child, she did not think much about the peach trees in the yard. Only later did she understand that the blossoms had become part of a new economy.

"When I was young, I didn't know peach blossoms could be so valuable," she says. "After I grew up, I realized they are our way to a better life."

In 2025, Nyingchi received 17.4 million tourist visits, and its tourism revenue reached 16.3 billion yuan. The city also creates more than 10,000 ecological jobs each year, helping increase annual per capita income by 3,500 yuan.

Back in northern Xizang, Kalzang Lhundrup still sets out on patrol. The work remains cold, lonely and physically demanding. But each return of the antelope, each crane landing in a wetland, and each village finding income in clean mountains and rivers tells the same story: On the plateau, protecting nature has become another way of keeping life moving forward.

XINHUA

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SPORTS

2026 WORLD CUP

Viewing the positives of super-sized Cup

From record TV ratings, to gripping Cinderella stories, for FIFA, the good outweighs the bad and the ugly





Left: US striker Folarin Balogun fouls Bosnia and Herzegovina's Tarik Muharemovic (4), which led US President Donald Trump to intervene to have Balogun's one-game ban for the resultant red card suspended. **Right:** Cape Verde and Argentina produced one of the all-time classic World Cup matches, providing a strong case that the expanded 48-team format has been a success. AP

There are a lot of things that could have gone wrong during this summer's World Cup — a complicated logistical undertaking that included three host nations, 16 stadiums, 48 teams, 104 games and endless opportunities for controversy on and off the soccer field.

But in retrospect, a lot of things went right.

The United States, Canada and Mexico spent nearly six weeks hosting soccer's biggest showcase and — at least for the most part — the action stayed on the field.

US broadcaster Fox said Tuesday that the final, contested by Spain and Argentina, drew 38.9 million domestic viewers — including a peak of 51.7 million — which easily set the record as the most-watched English-language soccer telecast in US history, according to Nielsen Media Research. Spain won the final 1-0 in extra time.

Telemundo's preliminary numbers for its Spanish-language broadcast said the game had a total audience of 22.6 million, putting the total number of viewers in the US at more than 60 million.

Fox broadcast all 104 games in English on its platforms and television ratings remained high in the US even after the US team was eliminated by Belgium in the round of 16.

Spanish broadcasts on Telemundo were also a popular option — even for non-native speakers.

Fox averaged 7.7 million viewers for the 104 broadcasts on Fox, FS1 and Tubi — up from 3.58 million in 2022 and 2.77 million in 2018.

Though Nielsen's viewership numbers give a window into the World Cup final's widespread popularity, it's a challenge to reflect how many people actually watched since some viewed the game in group settings, such as watch parties.

In 2025, Nielsen expanded its out-of-home measurement system to try and get a more accurate count.

Attendance was good

Star players like Argentina's Lionel Messi, France's Kylian Mbappe and Norway's Erling Haaland became household names across North America, and, despite a few early hiccups and high ticket prices, most games featured packed stadiums with strong attendances throughout the US, Canada and Mexico.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino offered effusive praise to the host countries on Sunday.

"We have had a record number of spectators in the stadiums, almost seven million," Infantino said.

"We will have had, I mean the official figures will come out soon, but probably over six billion people watching it from home."

The weather cooperated

Fans and players from other countries found out what Americans, Canadians and Mexicans have known for a long time — it can get pretty hot in the summer, and climate change isn't helping matters.

But Mother Nature could have been a lot meaner than she decided to be.

Even so, there were a handful of games that featured particularly hot and muggy conditions.

The best example was a knockout-round game between Paraguay and France on July 4 in Philadelphia, when temperatures hovered around 38 C.

The World Cup final on Sunday also dodged a potential problem, when smoke from Canadian wildfires that wrapped the Northeast in haze had mostly cleared from the New Jersey area just in time thanks to some well-timed thunderstorms.

Size doesn't matter

This year's 48-team World Cup field was the biggest in history, and many thought it would water down the competition.

That wasn't the case.

Cape Verde held eventual champion Spain to a draw in its opening game, advanced to the round of 32 and gave Argentina a scare before losing 3-2 in extra time in a World Cup classic. The Democratic Republic of Congo also advanced beyond the group stage and pushed England all the way before losing late on, while Curacao was still in with a chance of making the knockouts going into its final group match.

After all the Cinderella stories were over, it was FIFA's top four ranked teams — England, Argentina, Spain and France — left to contest a heavyweight-packed semifinal round.

Politics can't be ignored

The World Cup is famously a petri dish for political conflict, and this year's edition provided its fair share.

Iran's participation in the tournament amid the war in the Middle East was a particularly thorny issue and the team had to move its base camp from Arizona to Mexico. The Iranians' participation was overshadowed by travel complaints and visa issues, with the US refusing visas to several members of Iran's delegation.

US President Donald Trump's relationship with Infantino was scrutinized after US striker Folarin Balogun's one-game ban for a red card was suspended ahead of the team's round of 16 game against Belgium.

Travel restrictions prevented fans of certain countries from traveling to the US, but there were no reports of the aggressive immigration enforcement that some had feared could take place around World Cup stadiums.

Infantino brushed aside most of the controversies, instead focusing on the positives. While the FIFA president has a vested interest in painting a rosy picture of this year's World Cup, there's little doubt that, from a soccer perspective, the tournament was a hit.

"I think we have to invent a new vocabulary, new words to define the success of this World Cup," Infantino said.

AP



The World Cup final set the record as the most-watched English-language soccer telecast in United States history, according to Nielsen Media Research, drawing a peak domestic TV audience of 51.7 million. AFP

Arrogance or pride? Argentina grapples with villain label

BUENOS AIRES — Critics blasted Argentina for dirty tactics and poor sportsmanship during its 1-0 loss to Spain, cementing the country's status as a World Cup villain that grew throughout the tournament.

But Argentines argue they are just passionate and misunderstood.

"I think we deserve some credit for not being very well-liked, because of this tendency to be arrogant and look down on most people from a pedestal," said Leo Simone, a 55-year-old lawyer, from his home north of Buenos Aires.

"They confuse arrogance with pride," his wife chimed in, preferring not to give her name.

While star Lionel Messi is beloved around the world, anti-Argentina sentiment grew as critics argued the team was FIFA's darling and received favorable refereeing calls, such as penalties, VAR decisions and cards shown to opponents.

Then came the final, replete with fouls, brawls on the pitch, and Argentine players turning their backs when Spain received the World Cup trophy.

The New York Times called it a "tetchy, petulant and distasteful performance."

Former Germany player Thomas Hitzlsperger wrote on X that Argentina's players were "disgusting sportsmen", and British television personality Piers Morgan said "they basically just went around whacking as many Spanish players as they could."

Near Ezeiza Airport, where thousands of fans welcomed the players returning to Buenos Aires on Monday night, Maximiliano Heredia, a 35-year-old construction worker, said: "We've always been criticized, we're used to it, but we always give it our all."

'We love it'

Many Argentines online wore the criticism as a badge of honor.

"There's something about Argentine irreverence that they can't tolerate. Our rebelliousness irritates them, enrages them. They call us cocky, cheaters, dirty, and we love it, it fills us with pride," journalist Pedro Rosemblat posted to Instagram.



Argentina's Leandro Paredes grabs the throat of Spain's Eric Garcia after the final whistle of the World Cup final on Sunday. AP

Sports journalist Ezequiel Fernandez Moores told reporters that some criticism was justified: "Sometimes we think we're the center of the universe, that God and our own navel are Argentine."

He said local soccer codes of provocation, mockery and boasting did not translate to a global audience.

"We can't expect the world to understand us, our way of being, feeling and expressing ourselves," he said.

Nevertheless, the team turning its back on Spain as it received the cup was "not right", he said.

The lawyer Simone rejects the notion that physical play makes Argentina a violent team.

"Argentina is a team that fights hard, like almost all South American football, but Spain also resorted to tactical fouls," he said.

"It's football: if you don't like being hit, play volleyball."

For Evelio Rubio, a 47-year-old Venezuelan neurologist who has lived in Argentina for a decade, it is impossible to understand from outside how "football is experienced here".

For a Venezuelan accustomed to his national team not winning titles, experiencing that passion from within "is spectacular".

Racism accusations

Argentine fans and some players have also faced accusations of racism — such as a chant sung by the team in the past mocking the black players on the French team as not being really French.

There is also a long history of club-level fans throwing bananas on the field or making monkey gestures at Brazilian fans or black players.

During this World Cup, FIFA condemned racism in a statement after an Argentine supporter told a black US influencer known as iShowSpeed to go "cry at the zoo" during a livestream.

American actor Samuel L Jackson stirred controversy when he urged black people in an Instagram story not to support Argentina, which he dubbed one of "the most racist countries in the world".

Sociologist Ivan Schuliaquer of the National University of San Martin said people should not take racism related to soccer and apply it generally to Argentine society and history.

This racism exists and should not be denied, he said.

"But, in many cases, these labels come from colonizing countries that have not yet fully resolved the issue of racism."

AFP

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CHINA DAILY
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Robotics boom fueling nation's tech ambitions

Beijing conference showcases strengths while Unitree debut signals industry's hopes

By **CHENG YU**
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More than 3,000 cutting-edge robots and related products packed the 2026 World Robot Conference, which opened in Beijing on Wednesday, the same day that Unitree Robotics made its debut on the STAR Market in Shanghai and surged 629.44 percent to 1,100 yuan ($163) per share from its initial public offering price.

As the conference showcased China's strength as the world's largest producer of robots and a supply-chain hub for the industry, Shanghai's capital market bet on what comes next — whether that industrial muscle can drive faster innovation, lower costs and, ultimately, expand share in the global robotics market, experts said.

That bet played out vividly on Unitree's first trading day. At its peak, a single winning IPO allotment translated into a paper profit of up to 474,600 yuan. Although the shares retreated, they still closed at 845 yuan, up 460.3 percent, valuing the company at 341.77 billion yuan.

Pan Helin, a member of the expert committee for information and communication economy of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said the surge reflects robust investor confidence in China's embodied artificial intelligence industry. "Despite the share price retreating from its opening high, Unitree's performance far outpaced expectations," he said.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, President Xi Jinping made multiple visits to robotics companies. At the 2026 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai last month, Xi said that AI is moving from the digital world into the physical world, and he called for greater efforts to advance technological innovation, industrial development and scenario-based applications.

Robotics sits at the heart of this transition, serving as the primary vehicle for bringing AI tech into the physical realm. The Beijing conference has brought together more than 300 Chinese and overseas companies with over 3,000 products, ranging from humanoid, industrial and medical robots to core components.

Galbot unveiled a humanoid capable of learning to play tennis. Unitree demonstrated its H1 humanoid, which hit a peak speed of 10 meters per second, rivaling the pace of elite human sprinters.

Inside
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Xin Guobin, vice-minister of industry and information technology, said that revenue from major robotics companies reached 165.5 billion yuan in the first half of 2026, up 24.5 percent year-on-year.

China will focus on overcoming bottlenecks in core robotics components and embodied AI, he said, adding that the country also aims to expand the integration of robots into agriculture, healthcare, elderly care and emergency response.

Xu Xiaolan, president of the Chinese Institute of Electronics, said embodied AI is entering a key window for large-scale adoption. "Public and commercial services are leading the way," she said. "In China, robots are being deployed in traffic guidance, at tourist attractions, in shopping malls and in education, leveraging capabilities such as autonomous positioning, dynamic obstacle avoidance and question answering."

JPMorgan has forecast that global humanoid shipments will climb from an estimated 18,000 units in 2025 to 60,000 this year, before surging to 1.75 million by 2030. China is expected to account for more than half of global demand, it said.

The National Development and Reform Commission said that eight out of every 10 humanoid and quadruped robots sold worldwide are made in China.

Zhang Yiming, chief analyst for the machinery sector at Guosheng Securities, said humanoids are emerging as a key arena in the tech rivalry between China and the United States, making Unitree's market performance a potential bellwether for the broader industry. "China's advantage lies not just in building sophisticated robots, but in its ability to manufacture them at scale," he said.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said that hard-tech companies such as Unitree reflect a broader shift in how China's capital market values technology. "Investors are now willing to price technological capability and future growth potential over current profitability," he said.

However, an IPO is not the finish line, Wang said, warning that Unitree's elevated price-to-earnings ratio also points to valuation risks. "What ultimately matters is whether a company can deliver technology, products and business models that stand the test of the market," he added.



A technician debugs a robot at the 2026 World Robot Conference, which opened on Wednesday in Beijing. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

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Left: The ZQ 3 Y2 rocket blasts off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China at 7:35 am on Wednesday. Soon after liftoff, the rocket's first and second stages separated, with the latter flying upward to place a satellite into a preset orbit. LONG YUN / FOR CHINA DAILY
Right (from top): The first stage reenters the Earth's atmosphere and is spotted at 7:41 am on Wednesday. The booster continues to make a smooth, speedy descent. It lands on four legs on a concrete pad in Minqin county, Gansu province, 390 kilometers from the liftoff site. XINHUA

Country achieves its first rocket recovery on land

By **ZHAO LEI**
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In a landmark moment for China's space sector, a reusable rocket booster touched down on Wednesday on its predesignated landing site in a northwestern desert, marking the nation's first such controlled recovery on land, following a similar achievement made on a platform at sea last month.

A video clip from LandSpace, a Beijing-based private rocket manufacturer, showed a white speck appearing in the sky above a desert at 7:41 am as the first-stage booster of the ZQ 3 Y2 carrier rocket returned to Earth, descending smoothly and steadily about six minutes after the launch vehicle lifted off from a nearby spaceport.

Footage from surveillance drones flying near the landing trajectory showed that during the final phase of its descent, at an altitude of roughly 3 kilometers above ground, the booster ignited an engine at the center of its base for propulsive deceleration.

Shortly before touchdown, the booster deployed its four legs, which firmly supported the more than 40-meter-tall booster as the engine shut down upon landing on a concrete pad in Minqin county, Gansu province.

The achievement made China the second country in the world, after the United States, to have successfully conducted both land- and sea-based rocket recovery.

LandSpace is the second Chinese enterprise to ever recover a reusable rocket booster.

On July 10, State-owned conglomerate China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp achieved the nation's first such successful recovery when it captured a Long March 10B rocket booster in the South China Sea using a cable system mounted on a special vessel platform off the coast of Hainan province.

On Wednesday, the ZQ 3 Y2 rocket — standing tall at 66.1 meters and primarily made from stainless steel — blasted off at 7:35 am from its dedicated service tower at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China, about 390 km from the predesignated booster landing and recovery site.

The rocket's second-stage booster separated from its first stage about two minutes after liftoff and continued flying upward to transport the Honghu 03 satellite to a preset orbit.

The first stage then entered its return phase following a preprogrammed flight procedure. It sequentially completed a series of critical maneuvers — high-altitude return attitude adjustment, reentry powered deceleration, aerodynamic glide control, pre-landing powered deceleration and deployment of landing legs — before touchdown.

In December 2025, the ZQ 3 Y1 — the first launch vehicle in the ZQ 3 series — became China's first reusable rocket to reach orbit. However, the recovery attempt failed as the first-stage booster burst into a fireball over the landing site in Minqin in the final seconds of descent.

Shen Chao, deputy chief designer of the ZQ 3 variants, said the recovery process for any reusable rocket poses several major technical challenges.

*See **Rocket,** page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.

China offers new vision of global diplomacy

WORLD WATCH
By Andrei Chevelev

As a diplomat with 40 years of experience, I have observed Chinese President Xi Jinping's vision of international relations and his contributions to global governance.

Over the past decade, Xi has championed a harmonious approach to international cooperation, bringing new momentum to this traditionally conservative field.

Students of political science would be familiar with Carl von Clausewitz's famous dictum that war is merely the "continuation of policy by other means". But Chinese diplomacy has long advocated a different vision of international relations — one that seeks to prevent conflict through dialogue and mutual understanding before violence begins.

History shows how misunderstandings can escalate into crises, crises into armed conflicts, and conflicts into devastating wars. Diplomacy seeks to interrupt this chain before violence erupts.

Chinese diplomacy offers a renewed vision of international relations itself.

I had the privilege of witnessing Xi's historic first visit to UNESCO. In March 2014, a year after he became president, he visited the UNESCO headquarters in Paris for an in-depth exchange of ideas, presenting his vision of international relations and cultural heritage.

The approach was both novel and unexpected at the time. During the meeting, Xi said he wanted to understand how China could contribute more effectively to UNESCO and the international community.

He then delivered his first address within the UN system to ambassadors from all over the world.

*See **Relations,** page 3*

QIXI CUSTOMS SPUR FRESH CONSUMPTION TRENDS

Cultural night tours, heritage crafts and immersive exhibitions boost festive spending

By **LI HONGYANG**
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The Qixi Festival, China's equivalent of Valentine's Day, was celebrated on Wednesday amid a surge in festive spending on cultural night tours, immersive exhibitions and intangible cultural heritage experiences. Experts said the boom reflects a deeper sense of cultural identity and evolving consumer demand.

The festival, which is celebrated on the seventh day of the seventh month on the Chinese calendar, is rooted in the legend of the cowherd and the weaver girl who are separated by the Milky Way, and who meet once a year on this day, spanning the galaxy via a bridge formed by magpies.

In Beijing, the Nanchizi Museum hosted the "Magpie Bridge Night in Garden" ahead of the festival, featuring a special exhibition that blended traditional astronomy with contemporary art.

As part of the festivities, the museum also hosted a fan-making session for visitors on Saturday and has scheduled two more similar sessions on Saturday and Aug 29, from 6 pm to 9 pm.

A Qixi-themed intangible cultural heritage display and experience zone is open to the public at the central hall of the Chinese Traditional Culture Museum until Sunday, featuring eight traditional crafts, including incense making, tie-dye and velvet flower making.

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See more by scanning the code.

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INDEPTH



The flooded downstream areas of the Liulan reservoir are seen after it was breached due to heavy rains in Hengzhou, Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on July 6. A snake farm was destroyed by the flood and an estimated 800 to 900 snakes escaped. CAO YIMING / XINHUA

THE GREAT SNAKE ESCAPE

Rapid response organized to capture serpents flushed by floodwaters into rural villages

By **ZHANG XIAOMIN**
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As floodwaters receded and the arduous work of post-disaster reconstruction began, an equally urgent and perilous task unfolded in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region last month.

Residents near Hengzhou city, Nanning who had survived the flood faced an unexpected reptilian threat.

When the levee of Liulan reservoir gave way under the onslaught of Typhoon Maysak, the torrential floodwaters destroyed a local snake farm downstream in Dengxu village of Yunbiao. An estimated 800 to 900 snakes including venomous cobras, king rat snakes and non-venomous rat snakes were released into the murky waters.

"Clearing the mud is just a matter of shoveling, but snakes are different. You don't know where they're hiding, or when they might emerge," one villager said.

At least two residents of Dengxu village were bitten by snakes after the flood.

Middle-aged woman Lu Cuilian was bitten by a cobra that was swept into her home by the flood. Her nephew told reporters that the snake first bit her on the neck, and as she tried to pull it away, it bit her arm.

With roads cut off by the flood and the nearby clinic's antivenom supply washed away, she could not reach a hospital in time. She held on for two days, and then died.

The following day, an elderly man surnamed Qin was bitten but survived after being sent to the hospital and receiving antivenom.

The village quickly organized a special patrol team, while multiple official and volunteer snake-catching squads scoured the area, armed with tongs, collection bags and headlamps.

Containing threat

The snakes' escape terrorized the local populace, who for days were afraid to go out at night and constantly scanned their surroundings while cleaning.

In the wake of the snake escape, local authorities moved swiftly to contain the threat.

Under the coordination of Guangxi regional emergency headquarters, regional, municipal, and county-level health commissions implemented a multipronged response encompassing snakebite treatment, hazard checks, and public awareness campaigns.

Experts from across the region and Nanning were sent to assist with snakebite treatment in Hengzhou, and the local hospital's antivenom supply was increased. A special emergency green channel for snakebites was established to minimize treatment time.

Local health authorities also conducted training for front-line medical staff on wound cleaning, proper treatment protocols, rapid assessment and pre-hospital emergency responses.

Meanwhile, officials issued safety advisories through village broadcasts, WeChat groups, and door-to-door notifications, urging residents to avoid nighttime outings, steer clear of grassy areas, ditches, and flooded zones where snakes might hide, and take precautions both indoors and outdoors.

Wu Zhi from the Dengxu village committee told local media that more than 10 villagers from neighboring hamlets that were not affected by the flood had spontaneously formed a civilian snake-catching team.

They ventured into affected areas, going door-to-door to catch snakes and prevent further injuries.

According to Wu, the team members mainly used fishing tools and electrofishing equipment for their operations.

The village committee also issued notices, warning residents without professional skills not to catch snakes themselves and to report sightings to authorities.

Local media outlet "Huaxiang Yinxiang", a WeChat official account of the Hengzhou converged media center, published an emergency guide for snakebite prevention and treatment during the flood.

It warned that the lingering floodwaters had forced snakes like kraits, green pit vipers, and cobras to move into homes, stairwells, and corners, and advised against using incorrect first-aid methods like burning, cutting, or sucking venom from the wound.

The local forestry bureau mobilized its own snake catchers and volunteers, according to the Beijing News.

One local team of seven to eight people reportedly caught over 2,000 snakes in just two days, most of them non-venomous rat snakes. A team member surnamed Zhu said after the flood, snakes mostly hid in corners.

Twenty-a-day man

Among the snake catchers, one volunteer stood out — Chen Peixin, a 33-year-old with more than 600,000 social media followers.

For him, catching a snake with his bare hands is as natural as picking up a rope — he grabs the tail with practiced ease and bags it safely.

Driven by a sense of duty, Chen traveled over 1,000 kilometers from his home in Zhangzhou, Fujian province, to Hengzhou. He spent about two weeks there, catching an average of 20 snakes a day.

"Snakes aren't as terrifying as people imagine," Chen said.

"After the flood, some die. A surviving snake's first instinct is to hide and stay alive," he said, adding most snakes attack only when they feel threatened or provoked.

Chen, a member of the Zhangzhou Liming rescue team and a popular science blogger known as "Yuri" online, first learned of the crisis through news reports. "I'd never been anywhere else to catch snakes before," he said. "But when I saw what was happening, I couldn't just stand by."

He offered to help through his social media account. The response was overwhelming. He received numerous messages and over 10,000 likes.

On July 11, he and an assistant drove for more than 10 hours to Hengzhou, the world's largest jasmine planting base, which had been hit hard by the floods.

Upon arriving in Yunbiao town, he immediately began scouting for snakes by rivers and in jasmine fields, which were now largely destroyed. The small shelters scattered in the fields had become prime hiding spots for snakes.

Following local leads, he focused on Wuzhai village, where there was another snake farm. "Only when I got there did I realize how serious it was," he recalled. "I made up my mind: catch as many as I could, and do everything possible to help the villagers."

Back home, his rescue team usually handles one snake at a time, but this time, there were hundreds, or possibly thousands, Chen said.

The work was grueling. Wading through thick mud in boots, he had to clear debris, not just wood and bamboo, but vines, thorns, and broken tiles, before he could even get to the snakes.

His mission had an early setback when a thorn pierced his left hand. He initially ignored it, but the wound became infected. "The bacteria in the floodwater caused it to swell, and I couldn't bend my thumb. It's impossible to catch snakes with one good hand," Chen said.

He was forced to return home to recover.

But his followers were not willing to let the effort end. After he confirmed he would return, they raised over 3,000 yuan ($445) to support his trip back. His rescue team also contributed.

Four days later, on July 17, Chen was back in Yunbiao.

One video he posted on July 18, a five-minute compilation of his work, garnered over 440,000 likes and 40,000 comments.

"So snake catching is as easy as catching mud fish, just grab the tail and shake it!" one user commented, joking he wanted to try it himself.

Others empathized with the cameraman: "The cameraman's heart was saying 'Stop asking me to get closer'."

Chen's first assistant declined to return, so this time he brought along his longtime friend Lai Yanquan. Lai admitted he was scared the first time he saw so many snakes. It took several days for him to even dare to film close-up.

Chen's biggest catch was a 2.5-kilogram cobra, which he found in a greenhouse.

Many online commenters urged him to wear protective gloves, but Chen said bare hands are essential for speed and dexterity. "Gloves get muddy and slippery; they affect my feel," he explained.

To him, the most dangerous part of the hunt was not the confrontation, but the "ambush".

In one instance, while pursuing a cobra in a cluttered corner, he was surprised by two more that suddenly rose up, staring straight at him.

Fortunately, they didn't all attack at once, and Chen managed to catch them one by one. "If they all attacked at once, I wouldn't be afraid either," he said. "I'd just tap their heads."

For Chen, the most important tool isn't technique, but staying alert and composed.

The intense physical work, in Guangxi's high temperatures, took a toll. "Several times I almost got heatstroke," he said. "Only when I sat down to rest did I realize how exhausted I was."

He would take a dose of *huoxiangzhengqi* water, a traditional Chinese herbal remedy for heatstroke, and press on.

During his time in Hengzhou, Chen was bitten only once, by a non-venomous rat snake.

Chen spent more than 10 consecutive days catching snakes in Hengzhou, moving from village to village.

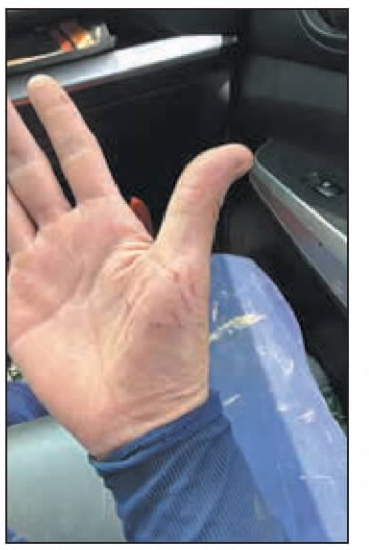
At one school, he captured over 30 rat snakes, which are non-venomous. However, he caught even more cobras, each about 1.5 meters long and weighing around 1 kilogram.

Before his departure on July 29, Chen livestreamed online. Some locals came to present him with homemade wine, chickens, gifts and banners expressing gratitude.

"The villagers are so warmhearted. It made me feel that my efforts were truly appreciated," he said, adding that he would definitely come back for a visit if he had the chance.



Chen Peixin, a member of the Zhangzhou Liming rescue team, explains a snake's fangs and habits to his online followers after catching it. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Chen shows his palm, which was scratched by the fangs of a non-venomous rat snake. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY





Left: Chen attempts to catch a cobra during his mission in Hengzhou in July. **Right:** A villager bids Chen farewell with a bottle of homemade wine. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Farming wake-up call

Guangxi, which is the world's largest source of snake raw materials, had over 30 million snakes in captivity as of 2025, accounting for 80 percent of the total snake farming in China. Hengzhou is one of the three major snake farming counties in the region, according to the Beijing Youth Daily.

In Hengzhou, species like cobras and rat snakes are raised primarily for their medicinal and cosmetic value.

A local breeder surnamed Huang, who has 16 years' experience in the industry, told Jiupai News that snakes are kept in temperature- and humidity-controlled places fitted with wire mesh. Escapes only occur when floodwaters destroy the structures, Huang said.

"After the flood, many farmers' snakes were drowned. Only a very small number escaped," she said.

The incident has drawn renewed attention to the vulnerabilities of snake farming during extreme weather events.

Huang Song, a professor of ecology at Anhui Normal University, told CPPCC Daily that while current industry access policies are relatively well-regulated, flood safety risk assessments for snake farms have long been neglected.

He recommended that farm site selection be incorporated into a flood risk assessment framework, emergency containment plans for extreme weather events be established, and that post-disaster public education on snake avoidance be strengthened to enhance people's awareness of proactive self-protection.

Xu Xudong, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and dean of the school of life sciences at Central China Normal University, told CPPCC Daily that the convergence of natural disasters and specialty livestock farming poses new challenges to the biosafety and public health emergency response systems.

"For venomous snake farming and other specialty livestock operations, we cannot simply manage them as small-scale industries," he said.

He recommended they be registered with authorities responsible for emergency response work, public health, and ecological and environmental protection. "Risk assessments should be conducted at the outset of operations, and they should receive supervision, guidance, and services throughout the farming and management process," said Xu.

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TOP NEWS

Rocket: Test results to decide reusability

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"For example, during atmospheric reentry, multiple onboard systems must precisely coordinate with each other, with extremely tight sequencing and a very high degree of synchronization. Also, as the booster descends at an extremely high speed, it requires attitude control and engine thrust adjustments to be completed within a very short window," Shen told reporters at a briefing in Minqin several days ahead of Wednesday's mission.

To tackle these hurdles, the Y2 has received targeted upgrades over its predecessor, Shen said. "Its propulsion system has been refined to reduce the number of engines that fire during the return flight, in order to cut structural complexity and control difficulty. The Y2 also features improved flight safety control programs that can autonomously determine the landing point in real time and execute safety measures. Its base heat protection measures have also been optimized," he added.

Shen explained why LandSpace chose Minqin for the recovery mission. "First, the site's position aligns with our rocket's launch azimuth (the compass bearing of a rocket's ground track during ascent) and is compatible with its lift capacity parameters. Second, the facility sits in a sparsely populated area, and it also has good transportation access, being close to a paved road, which is convenient for bringing the recovered booster back to the manufacturing base. Third, Minqin's climate is well-suited for recovery missions, and the local government has been highly supportive of the project," he said.

Future endeavors

On whether the recovered Y2 booster will be reused in a subsequent launch, Huang Cheng, deputy project manager for the ZQ 3 series, said the decision will depend primarily on its structural integrity and overall airframe safety after recovery.

"Engineers will conduct an initial inspection at the landing site. The booster will then be transported back to LandSpace's manufacturing facility in Zhejiang province for disassembly, where its engines will be removed for comprehensive examination and testing. Necessary component replacements will be carried out during the process," he said, adding that the final decision on reusing the booster will be made after all test results are reviewed.

According to Huang, the ZQ 3 production facility in Zhejiang is highly automated and features China's first laser welding system capable of putting together rocket bodies. Once mass production is ramped up, the facility will have an annual production capacity of eight to 10 rockets in the ZQ 3 series.

In the near future, the ZQ 3 will facilitate China's efforts to build its massive space-based internet networks and other commercial constellations, he said.

Technical specifications from LandSpace reveal that the Y2 rocket used during Wednesday's mission had a diameter of 4.5 meters and weighed about 570 metric tons when fully fueled.

Its first stage was propelled by nine TQ 12A methane engines, while the second stage ran on a TQ 15A methane engine, boasting a liftoff thrust of nearly 770 tons — enough to transport heavy satellites to low-Earth or sun-synchronous orbits. Compared with traditional types of rocket engines that can function only once, a methane engine is reusable and more environmentally friendly.

LandSpace started its research and development of the ZQ 3 model in August 2023, intending to build a reusable liquid-fueled launch vehicle boasting strong carrying capacity but at the same time being low in cost. The company conducted the world's first orbital mission of a methane-propelled launch vehicle in July 2023 with the second flight of its ZQ 2 carrier rocket from the Jiuquan spaceport.

Steered by women



Women drivers pose for a group photo beside vehicles of the "Pink Bus Service" launched on Tuesday in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi government has started the dedicated bus service for women, operated and managed by women drivers, to ensure safe and comfortable journeys for female commuters. Authorities said the service will eventually cover major cities and towns across the country. ABDUL GONI / ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

UAE embargoes Iran over alleged attacks

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

The conflict between the United States and Iran has entered a new phase of political attrition. The United Arab Emirates on Tuesday announced the suspension of all trade and financial dealings with Iran after alleging that two Iranian missiles targeting maritime navigation fell into the sea, a claim immediately rejected by Tehran.

Tuesday's announcement marked the latest UAE countermeasure against Iran, following its ambassador's recall earlier. The move also came after months of relative calm within UAE territory.

"In light of regional escalations ... all trade, commercial exchanges and financial transactions with Iran have been halted until further notice," said Afra Al Hameli, communications director of the UAE's Foreign Ministry, while reaffirming Abu Dhabi's commitment to dialogue-based solutions for regional peace.

The UAE on Tuesday accused Iran of firing two ballistic missiles toward the country, the first such reported incident since May. It later said that the salvo was directed at shipping vessels, as Tehran denied firing missiles at the neighboring country.

"UAE air defenses detected two ballistic missiles launched from Iran toward the country, with the first falling outside the country's territorial waters, while the second fell within the territorial waters," the UAE military said in a statement posted on social media.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei later "categorically dismissed the UAE's claim that Iran had launched a missile toward that country", calling the allegation "harmful" to regional trust and security efforts.

Ali Abdollahi, chief of staff of Iran's armed forces, warned Gulf states on Wednesday against assisting the US military, saying that nothing is "hidden from our eyes".

When the conflict began on Feb 28, the UAE bore the brunt of Iran's attacks, with nearly 3,000 missiles and drones directed at it — more than any other regional country.

The US and Iran remain at odds over the Strait of Hormuz and the terms for ending the conflict, with the future of the talks uncertain after a 60-day negotiating period set under a memorandum of understanding ending on Monday.

In Washington, US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that no Iran-US talks were in the pipeline. He shared a map labeling the strait "NEW US Territory", even as he insisted that the vital waterway remained "open and operating".

Citing multiple US administration officials, CNN reported that Trump had instructed his negotiating team — including Vice-President JD Vance, and envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner — to hold off on engaging with Tehran, despite reports of preliminary positive-toned exchanges.

However, Iran said that it will not reopen the strait until Washington meets a sweeping list of demands, including ending the US blockade of Iran's ports, lifting oil sanctions, unfreezing Iranian assets and paying for war damages.

"I want to state clearly that the Strait of Hormuz will not be opened until the American commitments stipulated in the memorandum of understanding ... are implemented," Speaker of the Iranian Parliament Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said in a speech broadcast on state television.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that the US is now "begging" to negotiate on Tehran's conditions after failing to force it to surrender.

Control of the waterway, which Iran has effectively closed since the conflict began, remains at the heart of the deadlock between Tehran and Washington. In peacetime, nearly a fifth of the world's oil passes through the chokepoint.

Trump threatened on Monday to "bomb" US ally Oman if it interfered with a deal on the Strait of Hormuz.

Contact the writers at cuihaipei@chinadaily.com.cn

Relations: All human civilizations are equal

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At the time, Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, which argued that future conflicts would be fought between civilizations rather than states, was highly influential.

"History tells us that only through exchanges and mutual learning can a civilization be filled with vitality," Xi said. "If all civilizations can uphold inclusiveness, the so-called 'clash of civilizations' will be out of the question, and the harmony of civilizations will become a reality."

Xi's speech made a significant impression on those involved in international policymaking. The message was strong and clear, and was widely heard.

Today, as the world faces growing divisions rooted in profound misunderstandings, Xi's message continues to be relevant. These divisions often stem from the inability of the former "global center" to recognize the emergence of a new multipolar world in which every country has a voice.

UNESCO was founded in 1945 on the conviction that wars begin not only on battlefields. Its Constitution states: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." If ignorance, intolerance and hatred contribute to conflict, then education, science and culture must become instruments of peace.

While political agreements may be negotiated within months, changing mentalities requires generations. Xi's message at UNESCO was not only an invitation to dialogue, but also a call to embrace several fundamental principles: "Civilizations are equal, and such equality has made exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations possible. All human civilizations are equal in terms of value. They all have their respective strengths and shortcomings. There is no perfect civilization in the world. Nor is there a civilization that is devoid of any merit. No one civilization can be judged superior to another."

Xi has developed a cohesive system of approaches and solutions through his four global initiatives (the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative), forming a coherent concept of international relations.

The Global Civilization Initiative, first proposed in 2023, promotes cultural exchange, mutual learning and the rejection of attempts to impose development and governance models based on Western ideology. It proposes cooperation among civilizations as the foundation of a more stable international order.

On the eve of the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China, on Sept 30, 2024, after the ceremony at which I received the Chinese Government Friendship Award, I had the privilege of attending Xi's address in the Great Hall of the People. His message was directed not only to the Chinese people, but to the international community as a whole. Xi stressed that humanity lives on the same planet and that all nations of the world have an equal right to determine the future of the planet and share the achievements of global progress.

These principles were encapsulated in the Global Governance Initiative announced on Sept 1, 2025.

As Xi stated, "All countries, regardless of size, strength and wealth, are equal participants, decision-makers and beneficiaries in global governance. There should be no double standards, and the house rules of a few countries must not be imposed upon others."

For a country that has emerged as a global leader in economic and social development, advocating equality rather than privilege reflects both confidence and responsibility. On the other hand, the United States' approach to international cooperation is fundamentally different.

This year's US Presidential Memorandum directed federal agencies to stop participation in and funding for 31 UN entities considered contrary to US interests.

Xi's historic visit to UNESCO in March 2014 paved the way for cultural protection and dialogue among civilizations. This year, Xiamen, Fujian province, will host the 21st session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage from Nov 30 to Dec 5, reflecting China's growing contribution to global governance.

The author is former head of the Asia-Pacific Unit, Sector for Priority Africa and External Relations at UNESCO and a recipient of the 2024 Chinese Government Friendship Award. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

More firms to benefit from AEO program

Importance of certification for smoother cross-border trade highlighted at seminar

By ZHONG NAN in Dalian, Liaoning *zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn*

China will expand its pool of companies certified under the Authorized Economic Operator program and broaden mutual recognition arrangements with Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation economies to help more businesses benefit from streamlined cross-border trade procedures, customs officials said on Wednesday.

Speaking at a seminar organized by the General Administration of Customs during the ongoing third APEC Senior Officials' Meeting in Dalian, Liaoning province, they said these measures would make AEO certification a stronger tool for supporting smaller businesses, boosting participation in trade and fostering a more open, inclusive and resilient Asia-Pacific trading environment.

The AEO program, promoted by the World Customs Organization, is designed to strengthen international supply chain security and facilitate the movement of legitimate goods.

Under the program, customs authorities work with businesses to streamline customs procedures and improve the efficiency of international trade.

Lazzat Daniyarova, a technical officer at the Brussels-based World Customs Organization, said that integrating more small- and medium-sized enterprises into AEO programs would make the system more inclusive and give smaller businesses greater access to secure trade and sustainable growth opportunities.

Lin Jiantian, director of the GAC's department of enterprise management and audit-based control, said China will pursue mutual AEO recognition with more economies to enable businesses across the Asia-Pacific to benefit from faster and more efficient customs clearance.

All APEC economies except Papua New Guinea have AEO programs in place. China has established mutual recognition arrangements with 10 of them, including Australia, Singapore and South Korea.

China's AEO-certified companies recorded 16.76 trillion yuan ($2.49 trillion) in foreign trade in the first seven months of 2026, accounting for 44.2 percent of the country's total, up 5.77 percentage points from a year earlier.

Meanwhile, their trade with other APEC economies rose 21.87 percent year-on-year to 9.19 trillion yuan.

The GAC said Chinese customs officials will also hold discussions with their counterparts from Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam, as well as representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat, to accelerate AEO mutual recognition and identify priorities for the next phase of cooperation.

Olgun Basel, supply chain director at Einhell Germany AG, a German industrial goods trading company based in Shanghai, said the company's import clearance times have fallen by 80 percent since it gained AEO certification in February.

Basel said that preparing for AEO certification also prompted the company to improve internal controls, documentation and risk management, helping to optimize its operations and build trust with customers in overseas markets.

China had more than 15,450 AEO-certified companies as of the end of July and has signed 34 mutual recognition agreements covering 60 countries and regions.

China is hosting the third APEC Senior Officials' Meeting in Dalian from Monday through Aug 28, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Newlyweds attend a group wedding ceremony during the Qixi Festival on Wednesday in Qujing, Yunnan province. SUN WENLAI / XINHUA

Qixi: Different age groups add to the spending spree

From page 1

A free group wedding was also organized in Gusu district in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. The event offered free styling, photography and a traditional ceremony.

The district also rolled out a series of romantic experiences to fuel the "sweet economy", according to the Jiangsu provincial civil affairs department.

At the Suji Ancient Town in Leshan, Sichuan, on Saturday, visitors tried their hand at a Qixi needle-threading ritual.

He Qicong, an associate professor at Beijing Normal University's Institute of Culture Innovation and Communication, said traditional festivals have always provided an opportunity for people to connect with their cultural roots.

"Emulating ancestors is not just a revival of old customs," she said. "What lies beneath this value system is the ancient view of life."

Nighttime outings have become one of the most popular ways to celebrate Qixi. According to Tongcheng Travel, an online travel agency, evening ticket sales at domestic scenic spots on Qixi day rose more than 50 percent compared with the daily average.

Qixi also prompted many to head out on weekend trips. Online travel agency Tuniu said that families accounted for more than 60 percent of travelers.

Tongcheng Travel revealed that since the beginning of August, travelers age 55 and above have accounted for nearly 40 percent of package-tour bookings on its platform, up about 6 percentage points year-on-year.

He of Beijing Normal University said the festival resonates with people of all ages.

"To young couples, Qixi symbolizes enduring love. For women, Qixi carries the tradition of seeking skills. For the elderly, Qixi evokes a vision of family harmony. A festival that touches every generation, arriving in splendid midsummer when the land is lush, spurs consumption across all age groups," she said.

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WORLD

Analysts see opportunities for ASEAN

Forum discusses potential benefits for region amid geopolitical rivalry

By **YANG WANLI** in Bangkok
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The global order is entering a period of profound transformation, marked by intensifying geopolitical rivalry, economic fragmentation, and the rise of the Global South, which offers challenges and opportunities for Southeast Asia, according to a recent seminar.

Experts said the key question for the region is how the Association of Southeast Asian Nations can preserve its centrality and turn disruption into an opportunity to shape a more inclusive regional order.

They were speaking at the 13th Chula-ASEAN Dialogue — themed "The Once and Future ASEAN: Global Shifts, Institutional Agility, and the Path to 2045" — on Tuesday at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand.

"The decline of Western dominance is inevitable and not synonymous with the end of Western civilization," said Amitav Acharya, distinguished professor of international relations at the School of International Service at American University.

Rather than viewing the transition as a contest between the West and the rest, Acharya argued that the changing balance of power could be an opportunity to build a more pluralistic international system drawing on the contributions of different civilizations.

"The contemporary world order is a shared creation across multiple civilizations, not dominated by any single country or region," Acharya said, emphasizing that interdependence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, institutions and free trade have evolved as globally shared principles rather than the exclusive products of the West.

That perspective is particularly relevant to ASEAN, a region positioned at the intersection of major powers and increasingly influenced by the rise of emerging economies.

"For ASEAN, the more consequential question is whether a fragmented world can still sustain cooperation, and how to maintain strategic autonomy while avoiding a fragmented regional environment in which countries are pressured to choose sides," he said.

Piti Srisangnam, executive director of the ASEAN Foundation, described the current environment as one of unprecedented uncertainty driven by geopolitical rivalries, economic fragmentation, supply-chain restructuring, climate disruptions, and rapid digital transformation.

"Rather than resisting change, we anchor our resilience in openness, inclusivity, and cooperative frameworks," Piti said, arguing that ASEAN's strength lies in its ability to remain cohesive, relevant, and forward-looking.

He said the emphasis on openness comes as globalization itself becomes increasingly fragmented.

At the same time, other experts argued that Southeast Asia's economic integration has become more complicated as some countries deepen their ties with major partners while navigating competing regional frameworks.

Suthiphand Chirathivat, former executive director of the ASEAN Studies Center at Chulalongkorn University, said: "Many ASEAN countries are pursuing a 'dual-track' strategy, seeking market access and investment without fully aligning with either side (China and the US)."

Arthayudh Srisamoot, a former adviser to Thailand's minister of foreign affairs, said ASEAN should strengthen both internal cohesion and its external strategic presence.

Rather than replicating the European Union's model of deep integration, he said the bloc should focus on practical connectivity, intra-regional trade, and unified positions on regional frameworks and agreements such as the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

"ASEAN must strengthen both internal cohesion and external strategic presence," Arthayudh said, adding that the bloc needs faster and more coordinated mechanisms to address nontraditional threats such as climate change, transboundary environmental problems, and public health crises.

Broadening partnerships

Experts said ASEAN's future prosperity will also depend on how successfully it broadens its economic partnerships.

The traditional markets of the US, the European Union, and Japan will remain important, Arthayudh said.

However, he also urged ASEAN to actively engage emerging partners — including China, Russia, India, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America — through targeted investment, technical cooperation, and infrastructure development.

Meanwhile, for China — a major country in the Global South and one of ASEAN's biggest trading partners — the changing world order presents both a responsibility and an opportunity, according to Acharya.

He suggested that China should serve as a constructive bridge between the existing international order and an emerging, more pluralistic one.

Acharya said this should involve not only infrastructure initiatives, but also help in contributing ideas, strengthening global governance, supporting humanitarian efforts, and expanding participation in multilateral institutions.

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Cultural bridge



A visitor views an artwork at an exhibition held at the National History Museum of the Kyrgyz Republic in Bishkek on Tuesday. The exhibition, which opened this month, will run until November. XINHUA

Malaysian PM backs one-China principle

By **ZHANG YUNBI**
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As Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim voiced unequivocal support for the one-China principle and China's reunification in a recent media interview, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said that China "commends" the Malaysian leader's remarks.

In a video interview with Al Jazeera released on Sunday, the Malaysian leader said, "I see Taiwan as part of China, period … It is one China. It is accepted by all."

When asked about his view on China not committing to renouncing the use of force, Anwar responded by drawing an analogy with Malaysia.

"If one province decides to break away, do we use force?" Anwar was quoted as saying. "I think I will protect the sanctity and unity of the nation."

At a daily news conference in Beijing on Wednesday, Lin, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, said, "China commends Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's remarks."

"Upholding the one-China principle is where public opinion trends and the right thing to do," he said in response to a question about the interview with Anwar.

"The international community's commitment to the one-China principle is not to be shaken," he added.

In the interview, the Malaysian prime minister also lashed out at the double standards adopted by some Western countries against China.

"When it comes to China, it's hypocrisy. You don't talk about many countries in Europe breaking up, or within the US, or Africa … but you focus only on China," he said.

Condemning the attempts to lend support to "Taiwan independence" forces, Anwar criticized such a way of "condoning an attempt to break up a legitimate independent country". "I don't accept that," he said.

On Wednesday, Lin, the spokesman, stressed at the news conference that "there is but one China in the world, and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory".

"China must and will achieve reunification. This will not be stopped," he said.

Medical bond



A Chinese doctor talks with Cameroonian medical staff members at the Yaounde Women's and Children's Hospital in Cameroon on Tuesday. Since 1975, North China's Shanxi province has sent 25 medical teams totaling 811 medical personnel to Cameroon. XINHUA

Joint effort sought for Libya resolution

By **SHI GUANG** in New York
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A Chinese envoy to the United Nations said that the international community must work toward a comprehensive and fundamental solution to the issues facing Libya and its long-delayed elections.

"Sincere dialogue is needed to break the political deadlock," Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said at a Security Council briefing on Libya on Tuesday.

Elections in Libya have been continuously postponed over the past years due to fractures in government institutions that have triggered ongoing conflict over legitimacy and authority.

"The Libyan parties concerned should fully recognize that the division of state institutions and repeated postponement of elections are detrimental to the country's long-term development and the vital interests of the Libyan people," Fu said.

"China calls on all parties, with the support of the United Nations, to intensify consultations, bridge their differences, and reach agreement as soon as possible on the relevant matters set out in the road map, thereby paving the way for national elections," he said.

The UN-recognized Government of National Unity, based in the capital, Tripoli, has been locked in conflict with a rival authority based in the east of the country, backed by the House of Representatives and the Libyan National Army.

Fu said that the United Nations Support Mission in Libya should maintain dialogue between the country's major political factions.

"The United Nations should continue to play a central role in mediating the Libyan issue. Efforts by countries outside the region should uphold the Libyan-led and Libyan-owned principle, and fully respect Libya's national conditions and the will of its people," Fu said.

The ceasefire deal from nearly 6 years ago between the parties needs to be preserved, Fu said, despite recent outbreaks of violence and targeted drone attacks on oil refineries.

"This not only threatens the safety of civilians, but could also disrupt energy supplies and affect people's lives and livelihoods. China is deeply concerned about these developments. We urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint and cease all violent attacks. We support the Libyan authorities in investigating the relevant attacks and holding those responsible accountable," Fu said.

"Civilian safety and the security of critical infrastructure, including energy facilities, must be effectively protected. The 2020 ceasefire agreement remains an important foundation for maintaining Libya's overall stability. The parties in eastern and western Libya should fully implement the agreement, strengthen dialogue, consolidate mutual trust, and advance the unification of military and security institutions of the eastern and western sides," he said.

Public governance

Public governance must be improved to enhance people's well-being, Fu said, adding that the country continues to face significant challenges, including fiscal deficits, inflation and fuel shortages, which are detrimental to sound economic development and lasting social stability.

"Libya stands at a critical crossroads. The international community should genuinely respect Libya's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, uphold objectivity and impartiality, step up mediation, and play a constructive role with a genuine commitment to Libya's peace, stability and the well-being of its people.

"As a good friend of Libya, China stands ready to continue working with the international community to make greater contributions to advancing a political settlement of the Libyan issue and promoting lasting peace and stability in Libya," Fu said.

China calls for unity, improved methods at UNSC

By **MINLU ZHANG**
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China on Wednesday called on members of the UN Security Council to "strengthen unity and cooperation, build broader consensus and improve the council's working methods" so that it can more effectively fulfill its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

Speaking at a Security Council meeting on working methods, Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said the effectiveness of the council bears directly on the authority and credibility of the United Nations as well as the prospects for international peace and security.

"Working methods are an important safeguard for the Security Council in fulfilling its responsibilities and have never been merely a technical issue," Fu said, adding that they should be continuously improved from the broader perspective of maintaining international peace and security.

"Unity and cooperation are the source of vitality for multilateral mechanisms and should always remain the most fundamental working method of the Security Council," Fu said.

Whether dealing with substantive or procedural matters, council members should "respect one another, engage in full consultations, properly manage differences and make every effort to seek consensus", Fu said.

Fu warned against pushing draft resolutions to a vote when major disagreements remain. "(This) not only deepens divisions within the council, but also greatly weakens the political weight and effectiveness of the resolutions themselves," Fu said.

On sanctions, peacekeeping and other tools available to the council, Fu said their value should ultimately be measured by whether they contribute to political solutions.

"The effectiveness of Security Council meetings, outcomes, and tools such as sanctions and peacekeeping should be judged by whether they proceed from realities and constructively advance the political settlement of hotspot issues," Fu said.

The council should also fully respect the sovereignty and ownership of the countries concerned and exercise caution in the use of coercive measures, including sanctions and the use of force, Fu said.

On UN political and peacekeeping missions, Fu said they should focus on their core mandates, maintain close cooperation with host countries and adjust their mandates and deployments according to conditions and needs on the ground.

"The transition and withdrawal of missions should be carried out in a smooth and orderly manner so as to avoid shocks to the situation on the ground," Fu said.

Fu also called for more practical steps to improve the efficiency of the council, including reducing repetitive meetings, making greater use of informal consultations where appropriate, and producing more concise and focused outcome documents.

Fu also urged the council to improve the selection of civil society briefers to ensure that their participation is objective, impartial and substantively useful to discussions.

Fu reiterated the Security Council's central role in the international collective security architecture, saying its status and role are "irreplaceable".

"A united and effective Security Council meets the needs of world peace and stability and serves the common interests of the broad membership of the United Nations," Fu said.

He urged the international community to oppose "illegal unilateral actions that bypass the Security Council and undermine the role of the United Nations".

Permanent members of the Security Council, in particular, should take the lead in upholding fairness and justice and "demonstrate the responsibility expected of major countries", Fu said.

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WORLD

US-ROK drills halved after Trump order

Exercises cut to 5 days, signaling possible shift in White House's approach to DPRK

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong
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The Republic of Korea and the United States have cut the duration of their annual joint military exercise roughly in half following an order from US President Donald Trump.

The Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise, originally scheduled to run for 11 days through Aug 27, will now last five days and conclude on Aug 21 at the request of the US, Yonhap News Agency reported on Wednesday, citing the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff.

UFS is a summertime exercise involving command post and field training. The two countries label it as an effort to strengthen their combined defense posture and response capabilities.

The scale of this year's drills will also be adjusted, Seoul said.

"The ROK and the US agreed to discuss and carry out various measures going forward to achieve the objectives of the UFS exercise and establish a robust combined defense posture," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

On Sunday, Trump said he had instructed Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth to "substantially reduce" the joint military exercises with the ROK, citing his friendly relationship with Kim Jong-un, top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The US Department of Defense said the adjustments would not degrade the exercise's training objectives.

ROK Foreign Minister Cho Hyun said on Wednesday that the government had not been informed in advance of Trump's directive to scale back the drills. However, he said the move did not amount to a unilateral notification as the defense minister had been involved in the discussions.

Chung Dong-young, the ROK's unification minister, also expressed support for Trump's order. "I hope this leads to dialogue between the US and the DPRK and further extends to improved inter-Korean ties," he was quoted by Yonhap as saying.

Lam Peng Er, head of the Korea Centre and principal research fellow at the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore, told China Daily that Trump was essentially sending Kim a strong signal in hopes of reviving their in-person engagement.

Trump's desire to re-engage with the DPRK leader is also driven by his eagerness for a major foreign policy breakthrough in his second term, especially amid his frustration over the situation in the Middle East, Lam said.

During his first term from 2017 to 2021, Trump met Kim three times: in Singapore in 2018 for their historic first summit, in Vietnam in 2019, and at the Korean Demilitarized Zone later that year in an impromptu third meeting.

Following the 2018 summit, Trump also suspended and scaled back joint military exercises with the ROK.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday that Trump is pushing aides for a meeting with Kim as soon as this fall. Trump has privately discussed holding the meeting during his next trip to Asia, which "could happen in November", the Journal reported, citing US officials.

Stronger position

However, with the DPRK now in a stronger economic and diplomatic position than during Trump's first term, Lam said the US will need to offer more tangible incentives to bring Pyongyang back to the negotiating table, including lifting sanctions.

It will also be important for the US to work with China and Russia in the process, he said.

Park Won-gon, a professor of DPRK studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul, told Agence France-Presse that scaling back the exercises could improve prospects for US-DPRK dialogue.

Suspending US-ROK joint exercises has always been a prerequisite for the DPRK to engage in dialogue with the US, he said.

In February, Kim said his country could get along with the US if Washington respects its current status and drops the "hostile policy".

While the DPRK has made no official statement on Trump's overture, the Korean Central News Agency commented on Wednesday that the UFS exercise poses the most immediate and open threat to the DPRK and regional security.

The DPRK will continue to exercise its right to self-defense and counter "threatening maneuvers", it said.

Highland harvest



Sheep farmers gather at an auction for the sale of hill ewes and wether lambs on Tuesday in Lairg, Scotland. The annual event is one of Europe's largest one-day sales of hill sheep. JEFF J MITCHELL VIA GETTY IMAGES

Trump's 3-day tariff pause a reprieve, not a solution, experts say

By **YANG GAO** in Toronto
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US President Donald Trump's decision to pause new 50 percent tariffs on Canadian goods for three days offers Canada temporary relief but is unlikely to resolve deeper trade tensions between the two countries, experts said.

Trump said on Tuesday night that Canada and the United States had reached a deal, subject to the finalization of documents, and that he had paused the tariffs that were due to take effect on Wednesday.

The move came as the two countries remained engaged in intensive trade negotiations, with Canada seeking relief from existing US tariffs while Washington pushed for greater access to the Canadian market.

Ronald Stagg, a history professor at Toronto Metropolitan University and an expert on Canadian-American relations, said the emerging deal would likely address several issues that have drawn the Trump administration's attention.

He said the issues could include access to Canada's alcohol market, greater access for US dairy products, and potentially restrictions on Canadian vehicles and vehicle parts entering the United States.

"The latest 'deal,' as Trump would call it, should it be finalized, will likely address some of the sectors that most annoy the Trump government," Stagg told China Daily.

In return, Canada would likely seek reductions in US tariffs on steel, aluminum and softwood lumber, as well as some relief for its auto industry, he said.

But Stagg said Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's government was facing a difficult balancing act as it sought to reach an agreement with Washington without appearing to give too much ground at home.

"The Carney government is walking a fine line in these negotiations," Stagg said. "While hoping to give enough to please the American government, it must be seen by the Canadian people to have achieved a fair deal for Canada."

> "No longer can Canada count on the United States as a friendly trade partner."
>
> **Ronald Stagg,**
> history professor at Toronto Metropolitan University

He said there was already a perception in Canada that the country had "given up a substantial amount to the Americans".

Julian Castro-Rea, a political science professor at the University of Alberta, said the dispute reflected broader challenges in Canada-US trade relations.

He argued that Trump's tariff policy had disrupted a deeply integrated North American production and investment system.

"He threw a monkey wrench into a trade, production and investment system between the two countries that was working reasonably well," Castro-Rea told China Daily.

Castro-Rea also challenged the argument that Canada was taking advantage of the United States through its trade surplus, saying that many Canadian products sold in the United States contain US-made components.

"The argument that Canada is taking advantage of the US by enjoying a trade surplus — the main motivation for the tariff dispute — is ludicrous, since most 'Canadian' finished products sold in the US incorporate a large number of components made in the US," he said.

He pointed to the auto industry as a particularly clear example, noting that vehicles assembled in Canada depend heavily on parts produced in the United States and Mexico.

"Therefore, the issue of tariffs is raised for political reasons alone, as an attempt to score points for Trump's MAGA coalition political brand," Castro-Rea said.

Castro-Rea said the measures would hurt targeted Canadian industries but also create costs for Americans because tariffs are paid by US importers.

"It highlights the paradox of the tariff war launched by Washington: increased tariffs hurt the Canadian economy but also the US economy," he said.

"For starters, increased tariffs are paid by US importers, not Canadian exporters. Those extra costs are then transferred to US consumers, thus making ordinary citizens in that country pay for the trade war," he said.

He added that the integration of the two economies meant some US industries would also be directly affected by higher tariffs.

Both experts noted that the three-day pause should not be viewed as an end to the broader dispute.

Stagg said it was "highly unlikely" that any agreement would resolve all the issues between the two countries.

"Donald Trump is likely to continue saying that Canada is 'ripping off' the United States, while Canada is going to want to eliminate most American tariffs.

"This deal is likely to be seen by both governments as an interim solution. Friction will remain," Stagg said.

Castro-Rea was even more skeptical about the durability of any agreement reached under the Trump administration.

Nothing is a lasting solution under the Trump administration in any policy field, including foreign and defense policies, he said.

"Experience has shown by now that any government decision can be reverted or changed under the authority of this unpredictable leader," Castro-Rea said.

Stagg said Canada's approach to trade with Washington had already changed fundamentally under Trump.

"No longer can Canada count on the United States as a friendly trade partner," he said.

Canada cannot simply walk away from its largest trading partner, however, he said.

"While the Canadian government tries to reorient as much trade as possible, it is going to have to live with the new uncertainty in dealing with the United States," Stagg said.

Castro-Rea, however, viewed the longer-term impact differently.

"I believe the current tariff controversy is only a temporary blip in Canada-US trade and economic relations," he said.

China auto giant Chery expands in UK market

By **JONATHAN POWELL**
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Chinese automaker Chery plans to open a research and development center in the United Kingdom for passenger vehicles, expanding the market footprint of its Omoda and Jaecoo brands.

The move comes as the company accelerates its push into Europe, with demand for its vehicles continuing to surge.

Chery rolled out the Lepas brand in February, developed specifically for European buyers. In June, it signed a deal with Nissan to assemble its vehicles at the Japanese carmaker's plant in Sunderland, England.

The company confirmed on Wednesday that its new research and development center will be based at UTAC Millbrook — the vehicle development and testing hub in Bedfordshire, England — and is slated to open later this year.

Chery said the center's initial work will focus on fine-tuning the company's cars for UK driving conditions, expanding over time to autonomous driving and AI. The Bedfordshire area is a hub for engineering and motorsport, hosting several automotive R&D centers.

Gary Lan, chief executive of Chery International UK, said the launch of a passenger car R&D center would be a key milestone in localizing operations, with UK manufacturing to follow.

"We waited over 20 years for the right time to enter this market, and our ambition has always gone much further than simply bringing vehicles here," Lan said in a statement.

"UTAC Millbrook allows us to turn UK customer insight into product development, from ride and steering to active safety systems," he added.

The group did not specify how much it would invest in the facility, or how many jobs may be created, but said it has long-term plans to hire local talent and create new, high-skilled roles at the center.

Kirsty Andrew, vice-president of UTAC UK, said: "This is about much more than testing individual vehicles. We see this as the sustained momentum of a long-term engineering relationship with Chery Automobile."

Last month, Chery sold roughly 280,000 vehicles worldwide, with exports of about 202,000 — up 70 percent year-on-year — making it the first Chinese automaker to ship more than 200,000 in a single month.

Deadly blaze



Civil defense personnel stand at the site of a hotel fire on Wednesday in Kolkata, India. The blaze broke out around 2:50 am on the second floor of the hotel, killing nine people, including a child, according to fire authorities. DIBYANGSHU SARKAR / AFP

Briefly

CROATIA

Ukrainian arrested over Nord Stream sabotage

A Ukrainian man was arrested on Wednesday in Croatia in connection with the 2022 undersea explosions that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines between Russia and Germany, German prosecutors said. Ukrainian national Vladimir Z., whose last name was not given in line with German privacy rules, was arrested in Pula, Croatia, by local police acting on a European arrest warrant. The trained scuba diver "is strongly suspected of jointly causing explosions", prosecutors said. The man was part of a group that sabotaged the pipelines near the Danish island of Bornholm, they alleged.

INTL CRIMINAL COURT

Washington criticized for sanctions on court

The International Criminal Court on Wednesday slammed the latest United States sanctions targeting senior ICC staff, including its president, calling them a "flagrant attack" on the court's independence. The US imposed sanctions on ICC President Tomoko Akane of Japan and senior trial lawyer Abdoulaye Seye of Senegal on Tuesday, as part of Washington's campaign against what it calls a "corrupt and fatally politicized" body. "These sanctions are a flagrant attack against the independence of an impartial judicial institution," the court, based in The Hague, said. Japan's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday described the US move as "very unfortunate". In twin statements on X, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa said they "stand firmly" with the ICC's president and top officials, which "must be able to act independently and without external pressure".

AGENCIES — XINHUA

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COMMENT

Editorials

Real story isn't individual breakthroughs, it's the whole ecosystem that cultivates them

It is an incontrovertible fact that China is becoming increasingly adept at translating technological ideas into real-world applications. This was underscored on Wednesday by three concurrent developments: Unitree Robotics' stock market debut in Shanghai, the opening of the 2026 World Robot Conference in Beijing, and the first successful land-based recovery of the first stage of the reusable Zhuque-3 rocket.

Interestingly, ahead of its listing, a report by Reuters framed Unitree's success as the result of allegedly "using" US military-funded research. Reuters touted itself as the first outlet to "detail connections" between Unitree's designs and a US Army program.

According to US researchers and former officials who spoke to Reuters — without offering any verifiable technical proof — some of Unitree's robots allegedly "draw on" breakthroughs in quadruped movement financed by the US DEVCOM Army Research Laboratory and other military programs.

That is precisely where the story takes an intriguing and questionable turn. China's advantage is not in "copying". It is an entire ecosystem: enormous manufacturing capacity, dense supplier networks, huge domestic market, abundant engineering talent, affordable component costs, patient capital and a government willing to make long-term inputs.

That ecosystem also has an unusual feature: It was built under pressure.

For years, some Western governments have restricted Chinese access to advanced semiconductors, equipment, software and other technologies. The response was not the intended technological paralysis. It was accelerated localization, diversification and improvisation. Pressure has made China's innovation system more adaptive and resilient.

At this week's 2026 World Robot Conference, more than 300 exhibitors are showcasing more than 2,000 products, with more than 150 making their global debut. Many of them are Chinese. The Chinese robotics industry is moving from robot gymnastics to practical applications in factories, warehouses, logistics and services. Unitree itself has become a symbol of that transition.

The same pattern is visible in AI. Alibaba's new lightweight AI model Qwen3.8-27B has matched much larger near-frontier rivals while being able to run on everyday hardware. The Qwen3.8-27B, a small model with 27 billion parameters, performed on par with OpenAI's GPT-5.6 Luna, which was billed as the most cost-efficient model in the US lab's latest flagship series, benchmark firm Artificial Analysis said on Monday.

Hugging Face's latest analysis points to Chinese models becoming influential in the global open-model community. Qwen has reportedly accumulated more than 151,000 derivative models on Hugging Face — far more than the combined derivatives of Meta's models. The point is that more and more developers treat Chinese models as building blocks rather than merely products to be consumed.

The AI revolution itself is making the old logic of technological containment harder to sustain. Open-source models spread. Engineers collaborate. Developers modify other people's work. Breakthroughs increasingly emerge from networks rather than laboratories operating behind walls. China is simply becoming very good at making innovations and promoting applications in the new technology revolution.

The country's paradigm combines market incentives with public investment and long-term industrial strategy. Its success comes from connecting research, manufacturing, capital, talent and markets at extraordinary scale.

There is also a larger philosophical question. Technology can be treated as a weapon, a monopoly or a public resource. China has presented openness and cooperation as part of its technological strategy. The global adoption of Chinese open-source models demonstrates that the approach has real appeal.

The real story of China's breakthroughs is the whole ecosystem that connects robots, rocket recovery and AI models.

Western countries may attempt to slow individual Chinese breakthroughs through export controls and technology bans. But they cannot cripple the Chinese innovation ecosystem itself, because its underlying engine — economies of scale, engineering talent, industrial depth, market demand and relentless iteration — will only grow more adaptive and more powerful under pressure. When the going gets tough, the tough get going.

The sensible response is not denial or panic. It is cooperation and competition.

Smearing every Chinese breakthrough as a "theft" or "threat" does not make the breakthrough disappear. It only makes the person doing that look increasingly out of touch with the future.

Mexico should handle trade issues prudently

The Mexican government is reportedly exploring the possibility of further expanding the trade restrictions and raising tariffs on certain imported goods, while continuing case-by-case investigations into alleged "dumping" by China and other countries. In January, Mexico imposed tariffs of up to 50 percent on approximately 1,500 products from nations with which it does not have a free trade agreement, a policy that has directly impacted China.

Bilateral economic cooperation is based on international rules and market principles, with mutual benefit as its defining characteristic. Politicizing economic issues serves no one's interests. Mexico should think twice before moving forward with the new trade restrictions.

The move comes as Mexico is seeking to persuade the United States to lower tariffs on its automotive and steel products and to secure more favorable rules of origin during the ongoing review of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. By increasing trade barriers against Chinese goods and strengthening origin and anti-transshipment controls, Mexico aims to demonstrate to Washington that it is not a "backdoor" for Chinese products entering the US market, thereby enhancing its bargaining power in the USMCA negotiations.

The proposed tariff hikes seem like an attempt to appease the US, while targeting Chinese goods perceived to be direct competitors to domestic industries. But Mexican manufacturing is highly dependent on Chinese intermediate goods, components and equipment. If Mexico raises import tariffs on Chinese goods and expands trade remedies such as "antidumping" and "countervailing" duties, the cost of Chinese goods entering the Mexican market will rise further, potentially leading to a contraction in the bilateral trade volume.

Mexico would be effectively shooting itself in the foot to please the US, only to find that the bullet is paid for by higher costs for its own consumers and a less competitive export sector.

Tariff protection alone does not automatically translate into stronger domestic competitiveness. Mexico's real bottlenecks are its domestic supplier base, technological capabilities, energy and power infrastructure, shortage of skilled labor and weak research and development capacity.

Beijing has consistently maintained that trade wars benefit no one while repeatedly emphasizing that China and Mexico are partners not rivals. China is Mexico's second-largest trading partner, while Mexico ranks as China's second-largest trading partner in Latin America. In recent years, the economic relationship has deepened from the trade in goods to industry chain collaboration and production capacity cooperation.

Even if Mexico yields to US pressure and works hand in glove with it to target Chinese industries, there is no guarantee it will gain more leverage in the USMCA negotiations. This week's tough tariff negotiations between the US and Canada have laid bare a stark truth: the US views its two neighbors not as partners, but as free-riders who have been taking advantage of it for too long.

China reserves the right to take corresponding measures to safeguard its interests. A trade and investment barrier investigation launched by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce in September last year concluded in March that Mexico's tariff policies constitute investment barriers that restrict market access for Chinese enterprises.

China opposes unilateral tariff hikes in all forms, and has urged Mexico to correct its wrong practices of unilateralism and protectionism at an early date. The path forward lies not in erecting barriers, but in embracing openness, cooperation, and a competitive dynamism that drives genuine industrial progress.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Some in Australia trying to shoo its golden goose away

Australia, under the Anthony Albanese government, is proving to be a textbook case of what happens to countries when anxiety masquerades as strategy. The latest symptom is Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong's intervention to pressure the Australian National University and the University of Queensland to sever academic ties with Shandong University and the Chinese Academy of Sciences respectively.

Given the Pentagon's recent campaign to pressure universities in the United States to cut research collaborations with China, it is highly questionable whether Canberra's latest action is entirely its own — or whether it reflects pressure from Washington.

This is reminiscent of a scene in the Australian satirical sitcom *Utopia*, in which officials are discussing spending billions to protect Australia's trade routes, only to acknowledge that the country's biggest trading partner is China. "So we're spending close to $30 billion a year to protect our trade with China ... from China?" asks a bewildered character.

The problem is that Canberra seems increasingly determined to turn this joke into policy. Wong, once regarded as a pragmatist, is now helping dismantle Australia's academic links with China — amid a political climate in which "national security" has become a blank check for bureaucratic vandalism. Is Australia protecting its economic interests by frightening its golden goose away?

Chinese students are a financial pillar of the university sector in Australia. Statistics show that Chinese enrollments reached 192,225 in 2025, accounting for 23 percent of Australia's international students, generating A$12.7 billion ($8.98 billion) in economic activity. Across New South Wales, without Chinese enrollments, the sector's A$583 million surplus would be a A$1.754 billion deficit.

Between January and April 2026, Chinese applications for degree-level student visas fell 32 percent from the average for the same period in 2023-25. Higher-education applications plunged 39 percent, reaching their lowest level in nearly 12 years, according to media reports. Canberra's response? Further alienate Chinese students and researchers by dismantling institutional ties. The message is difficult to misunderstand: Chinese people are welcome as revenue streams, but increasingly suspect as intellectual partners.

The academic squeeze is part of a wider pattern. Take the Port of Darwin. In 2015, the Northern Territory government granted China's Landbridge Group a 99-year lease for A$506 million. The port was loss-making; Landbridge invested heavily and expanded capacity from 16 million to 30 million tonnes. Security reviews found no national-security threat, and a 2023 review saw no need to cancel or alter the lease. Yet in January 2026, citing "national security", the Albanese government announced that Canberra would terminate Landbridge's operating rights.

Washington's subsequent allocation of $1.2 billion to upgrade military facilities at the port only makes the politics more conspicuous. Landbridge has since initiated arbitration at the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes.

Meanwhile, Australia is deepening military cooperation with Japan and the Philippines, including hosting Japanese hypersonic-missile tests on Australian ranges and its participation in the Philippines' largest Balikatan military exercises with the US in decades.

It is crystal clear that Canberra is moving closer to a US-led containment strategy while assuming its economic relationship with China will somehow remain insulated. That assumption is rather *Utopia*-like.

After years of damage by the pro-US Scott Morrison government, China-Australia relations had finally begun to recover thanks to joint efforts by the two sides. Bilateral trade reached A$309 billion in 2025, Chinese tourists returned in force and high-level dialogue resumed. Now Canberra risks squandering that hard-won capital.

Australia's economic interests with China are not something that can be wished away with strategic rhetoric. Iron ore, liquefied natural gas, beef, universities and tourist operators cannot simply be redirected because Washington is pressuring Canberra to choose sides. Nor can US military cooperation compensate for the economic value of a stable relationship with Australia's largest trading partner.

Australia lectures China about a "rules-based order" while repudiating a legally binding 99-year lease. It invokes academic freedom while pressuring universities to sever legitimate partnerships. It worries about foreign influence while deepening dependence on a US security architecture whose strategic priorities are not always in Australia's interests.

A serious national-security policy distinguishes between evidence and suspicion, between espionage and scholarship, between strategic prudence and political theater. Canberra would do well to remember that stable China-Australia relations are not a concession to Beijing. They are an expression of Australian self-interest. The choice is between strategic autonomy and strategic reflex.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Beautiful China plan highlights green governance

Editor's note: *China has released a plan for building a Beautiful China during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period. China Economic Times spoke to Zhou Hongchun, a researcher at the Development Research Center of the State Council, on the significance of the plan. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

As the first five-year plan to focus explicitly on building a Beautiful China, it moves beyond the previous approach that concentrated primarily on pollution control. The plan introduces a new model of coordinated governance covering all regions, environmental elements and stages of development.

In terms of tasks, the focus has shifted to an integrated approach that advances carbon reduction, pollution control, green development and economic growth. The goals have expanded from cleaner air, greener land and clearer water to areas that directly affect people's quality of life and health, including emerging pollutants, noise, ecological security and environmental problems in communities. The emphasis is on comprehensive improvement rather than simply meeting individual standards.

A key objective is to reverse the growth in fossil fuel consumption and promote simultaneous reductions in major pollutants and carbon emissions. The plan envisions a symbiotic relationship between development and environmental protection, using high-quality environmental protection to bolster high-quality development, and vice versa. This integration of the two goals creates a mutually reinforcing virtuous cycle.

From an economic perspective, the new quality productive forces emerging in ecological and environmental protection are themselves a form of green productivity. From being seen as a cost constraint, environmental protection is shifting to become a growth engine. Mechanisms such as carbon markets and green finance can help put this principle into practice by making carbon emissions costlier and carbon reduction more economically rewarding.

There are many opportunities to achieve synergies between pollution reduction and economic growth in the treatment of air, water and soil pollution. The key lies in rethinking these challenges and leveraging innovation, especially disruptive technologies.

Currently, businesses face challenges such as high initial investments, long payback periods, limited returns and policy uncertainty when participating in ecological development. These issues need to be addressed through stronger policy support and well-designed market mechanisms to create long-term incentives for businesses to participate in ecological civilization efforts in ways that are economically viable for them.

Additionally, efforts should be made to remove obstacles that hinder the realization of the value of ecological products. Turning the value of ecological products into tangible economic value is an effective way to shift businesses from passive compliance to active participation in building a Beautiful China.

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VIEWS

Li Jia

Elder-care robots need to start with people

Imagine the future of elder care and it is easy to envision a robot. Perhaps it is humanoid, standing patiently beside an old person, helping the senior get out of bed, carrying a tray, cleaning the floor or leading a morning exercise session.

In a country where the population is growing older and families are getting smaller, this image has obvious appeal.

China is turning that vision into a thriving industry. The country's aging population has created a vast market called the "silver economy", attracting attention from investors and technology companies. Rehabilitation robots help people with limited mobility exercise, while transfer robots handle the heavy lifting that exhausts caregivers.

Other machines clean homes, provide entertainment, play sports with older people or offer massage and other wellness services.

While technology is advancing rapidly, the question is whether our understanding of old age is moving in tandem.

For years, making technology "age-friendly" meant modifying existing products to make them less challenging for elderly users — larger fonts, fewer buttons, higher volume.

Essentially, products designed for everyone else were slightly adjusted before being handed to seniors. This approach now looks outdated.

Seniors don't necessarily need simplified versions of products designed for 30-year-olds. They may need entirely different products. Consider the difference between making a robot easy to operate and making it truly useful in an elderly person's daily life.

An old person may move more slowly, tire more easily or have difficulty with certain kinds of instructions. A caregiver may perform physically demanding tasks several times in a day. A robot that ignores these realities may work perfectly in a laboratory and still fail in a home.

This is where the industry faces a less glamorous challenge than artificial intelligence or advanced robotics: listening.

Surprisingly, we still lack systematic knowledge about what seniors and their caregivers actually need from machines.

Research on everyday care scenarios is limited, and very few engineers have a deep understanding of aging.

There is a simple reason for this: we have all been young, but nobody experiences old age until they reach it.

That creates a peculiar blind spot in product design. Engineers can study how a robot moves, how much weight it can carry and how accurately it recognizes an object.

It is much harder to teach a machine — or its designer — what it feels like to hesitate before standing up from a chair, to feel embarrassed about needing help, or to rely on someone for basic mobility.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

This is why elder-care robotics needs more than better hardware. It demands better fieldwork. A robot intended for a nursing home should not be treated as the one intended for a family apartment.

Companies should spend more time observing actual care delivery, breaking down everyday tasks into their smallest movements and talking to both older people and caregivers. Surveys and interviews are important, but so is observing how people get through an ordinary day.

Rehabilitation robots help people with limited mobility exercise, while transfer robots handle the heavy lifting that exhausts caregivers.

The fundamental questions for companies should be: Who will use this machine? What problem will the robot address? What makes that problem challenging? Is a robot really the best solution?

Answering these questions could save the industry from the expensive mistake of producing impressive machines that search for a market.

Getting a robot into production is only half the job. An elder-care robot is not a refrigerator that can be delivered, plugged in and forgotten.

It enters a person's home, sometimes at a moment of considerable physical vulnerability. An old person needs to know how to use it, caregivers need to know how to maintain it and homes and nursing facilities may need rearranging for the machine to function safely.

Then there is the human aspect. As robots become more capable, some families may start relying on them for tasks once performed by relatives or professional caregivers. This can be useful, but it can also be unsettling.

A machine can remind an old person to take a walk, assist with an exercise routine, or carry something too heavy to lift.

But it should not pretend to be a daughter, a son, a nurse or a friend.

This distinction matters because elder care is not just about physical tasks. It is also about dignity, reassurance and human interaction. The industry will need clear guidelines on privacy, data and the limits of what machines do.

A robot operating in someone's bedroom or living room is not merely an appliance. It has access to intimate details of a person's life.

This is not an argument against robots. In fact, it is quite the opposite. If designed well, robots could make an enormous difference, particularly as societies struggle with fewer caregivers and longer life spans.

But the industry should resist measuring progress by how humanlike a robot looks or how many tasks it can perform.

The more meaningful question is a simpler one: Does the robot make an old person's day easier?

If the answer is yes, elder-care robots have a promising future. The most successful ones will not be the machines that replace people. They will be the ones that quietly take the hardest jobs off their hands, giving caregivers more time to care — and seniors more time to live their lives on their own terms.

The author is deputy head of the Aging Society Research Center at the Pangoal Institution.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Rizwan Basir

Climate adaptation as the next frontier for China

China has done more than any other country to cut the emissions that cause climate change. Now it's time for the country to move to the next chapter of its climate ambition. While there is a flourishing market for mitigation technologies, the world does not have a similar market for adaptation.

Typhoon Bavi made that case in concrete terms this month. As one of the strongest storms to hit China this year, it made two landfalls in Zhejiang province, tore down trees in Yueqing, flooded farmland, and sent boulders crashing onto mountain roads.

People were evacuated, most from one of China's most economically dynamic provinces. In Shanghai, transport was severely disrupted, with some trains and flights canceled.

China's response was swift and effective. The government activated a national emergency response, deployed task forces across affected provinces, and allocated 100 million yuan ($14.76 million) from the central budget for repairs of roads, water infrastructure, schools and hospitals.

Indeed, China's capacity to manage the aftermath of a disaster is formidable. But the crucial question is whether the country is developing the tools to mitigate the severity of such events in the first place.

On cutting emissions, China's record is extraordinary. By the end of 2025, China's total installed renewable energy capacity had reached 2.34 billion kilowatts, and hit its 2030 target of more than 1.2 billion kilowatts of installed wind and solar capacity six years ahead of schedule.

Global Lens

Developing countries from Bangladesh to Brazil are able to deploy clean energy technologies that would have been out of reach without China's contribution.

The country accounts for over 80 percent of global battery production capacity. CATL and BYD together command more than half the global battery market.

This has had a transformative effect on global energy costs. Solar module prices have fallen to levels that seemed implausible a decade ago, largely because of China's manufacturing scale.

Developing countries from Bangladesh to Brazil are able to deploy clean energy technologies that would have been out of reach without China's contribution.

But mitigation is only half the climate equation. The other half is adaptation: the infrastructure, systems, and technologies that enable people and economies to withstand what warming has already made inevitable. This includes flood-resilient construction, early warning systems precise enough to protect lives, climate-smart agriculture and large-scale coastal protection.

On this side of the ledger, the world is underequipped.

China accounts for around 37 percent of global mitigation finance, while adaptation remains significantly underfunded worldwide. Mitigation technologies attract private capital because they generate returns.

Adaptation technologies often produce public goods that are harder to monetize. The scarcity of investment is reflected in the technology pipeline.

The financial impact is visible in China itself. Natural disasters caused 241.6 billion yuan in direct economic losses in 2025.

The case for investment in adaptation requires no external persuasion. The world does not yet have a China-scale manufacturer of flood-resilient infrastructure systems. There is no adaptation equivalent of CATL.

Early warning technologies, climate-hardened building materials, and flood-barrier systems remain fragmented markets, expensive at scale, and largely out of reach for developing countries with the greatest exposure to extreme weather events.

China's success in mitigation offers a blueprint for adaptation. Scale drove down the costs of solar infrastructure, manufacturing concentration accelerated battery innovation, and coordinated five-year planning brought new sectors to maturity faster than fragmented market forces could.

China has already shown what is possible with ambition. The question is whether adaptation technology will be the next sector to adopt this approach.

The foundation is already in place.

China's National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2035 sets targets for climate resilience across cities, agriculture, ecosystems, and public health.

A national disaster monitoring platform is being built, incorporating predictive models, remote sensing, and drone-based real-time assessment.

These provide a solid base for the industry. What is now needed is investment that matches the ambition, and builds on what China has already achieved.

Typhoon Bavi was just one storm. Scientists have warned that El Nino conditions this year may drive more intense typhoon seasons, shifting tracks westward toward China's coast and compressing the time available to prepare.

China changed the economics of clean energy by treating it as a strategic industrial priority. The case for doing the same with adaptation is at least as strong.

The world was able to accelerate the transition to cleaner energy faster because of China's efforts. It could close the adaptation gap just as quickly for the same reason.

The author is a sociologist who works as a climate finance specialist at the Climate Resourcing Coordination Center in Islamabad, Pakistan.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Tseng Taiyuan

Western Gen Z is embracing Eastern rhythms

Scroll through TikTok or Instagram today, and the algorithmic feed of the average Western teenager reveals a quiet cultural tide rising amid a chilling geopolitical climate. The endless loops of US consumerism are fading into the background.

In their place, a 20-year-old in Ohio extols the virtues of drinking hot water, a London fashion influencer unboxes a Labubu doll and a European tech enthusiast marvels at the seamless pulse of a Chongqing monorail.

Welcome to the era of "Chinamaxxing".

Borrowed from the gaming lexicon, "maxxing" signifies optimizing a build or a strategy. Here, the term encapsulates a rapidly growing subculture of Western youth actively embracing Chinese lifestyle norms, dietary habits and wellness philosophies.

While the trend is going viral on social media, its deeper significance is profound: it reflects a grassroots re-examination of lifestyle, personal well-being and governance in an era of global uncertainty.

To dismiss this phenomenon merely as a social media fad is to miss its deeper significance.

Movements such as "Chinamaxxing" highlight a growing international fascination with China's technological and social trajectory. At a structural level, this shift stems from a quiet, weary response to the internal discord in Western societies.

While some Western politicians attribute this trend to foreign communication strategies, the reality is quite straightforward: Western youth are responding to the internal anxieties at home, allowing China's orderly everyday life and public safety to speak for themselves.

Global Lens

Inbound international visits surged, with millions taking advantage of visa-free access.

For a generation grappling with economic uncertainty, partisan strife and fragmented healthcare systems in the West, the rhythm of Chinese daily life offers an appealing sense of balance and well-being.

This manifests in the "Chinese baddie" aesthetic. Western slang is repurposed by Gen Z creators to describe a holistic lifestyle rooted in Eastern wellness and understated elegance. Across Western feeds, influencers are normalizing boiled apple water, red-date tea, and warm soups as rational alternatives to commercialized wellness culture.

Even global consumer culture is changing. The worldwide success of *Black Myth: Wukong* and Pop Mart's collectible figures signals a shifting tide. Where cultural trends once flowed predominantly from Western cultural capitals and Hollywood, today's youth increasingly look toward Shanghai and Beijing for fresh creative energy.

When basic public transit and healthcare feel fraught with anxiety in Western urban centers, the convenience of Chinese city life — accessible wellness, efficient infrastructure, and hassle-free lifestyle — presents a compelling vision of modern governance.

Ironically, a key catalyst for this cultural bridge was the US government's own stance against Chinese digital platforms. Regulatory friction surrounding TikTok created a classic "forbidden-fruit" dynamic and pushed millions of Western "digital refugees" to explore RedNote, China's leading lifestyle-focused social platform.

This digital migration allowed Western youth to look directly into the daily lives of their Chinese counterparts.

Rather than rhetoric, they discovered unscripted glimpses of daily urban life: well-lit city streets at 3 am, affordable smart technology, and sophisticated high-speed trains connecting distant places.

While Western youth have organically generated these trends, China's proactive openness initiatives have translated online interest into real-world interaction. By expanding its visa-free transit policy to 240 hours (10 days) and granting visa waivers to numerous international partners, Beijing sent a clear, confident message to global travelers: Come and see China for yourself.

The policy bore immediate fruit. Inbound international visits surged, with millions taking advantage of visa-free access. Foreign visitors have taken to social media to share authentic travelogues, expressing genuine delight at China's mobile payment convenience, efficient urban infrastructure and services, and welcoming public environment.

As geopolitical friction persists on the global stage, official relations between major powers remain complex. Yet at the grassroots level, a meaningful re-coupling is taking place.

Whether seen as an embrace of Chinese lifestyle habits or a thoughtful reflection on Western domestic challenges, the message from young people worldwide is clear: while political barriers may be erected, the younger generation will always seek practical ways to connect and learn from one another.

Ultimately, global public perceptions are shaped not by political grandstanding, but by shared human experiences and tangible social outcomes.

Millions of young Westerners are now sipping hot water, stepping into indoor slippers, and quietly discovering new perspectives on what an orderly, modern life can look like.

The author is a professor of English at Sanda University in Shanghai.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

HECTOR VILLAGRAN CEPEDA

Practical development approaches

China's economic and social experience offers Ecuador valuable lessons in pursuing inclusive growth and modernization



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

As Ecuadorian President Daniel Roy-Gilchrist Noboa Azin began a state visit to China on Sunday, coinciding with the 10th anniversary of the China-Ecuador Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, attention has once again turned to the growing relationship between the two countries and the opportunities for deeper cooperation in trade, investment and development. Beyond the immediate outcomes of high-level exchanges, the visit offers an opportunity to consider a broader question: What lessons can Ecuador draw from China's modernization and poverty reduction experience as it seeks to address its own development challenges?



China's modernization is widely regarded as one of the most remarkable development stories in modern history. Over the past four decades, the country has transformed itself from a largely rural and low-income economy into the world's second-largest economy and one of the leading global powers in manufacturing, technology, infrastructure and innovation. This transformation began with the reform and opening-up policy introduced in 1978 under Deng Xiaoping, which shifted China toward a socialist market economy while encouraging foreign investment, industrialization and greater participation in international trade. Since then, China has experienced rapid economic growth, expanded its infrastructure on an unprecedented scale, modernized its industries and significantly improved the living standards of hundreds of millions of people.

Perhaps the most internationally recognized outcome of China's modernization has been its extraordinary poverty reduction experience. According to the World Bank, China has lifted nearly 800 million people out of extreme poverty since the beginning of its economic reforms, accounting for the majority of global poverty reduction during this period. In 2021, the Chinese government announced that all 98.99 million rural residents living below the country's current poverty threshold had been lifted out of poverty. This achievement was not the result of a single policy but rather of a combination of long-term planning, sustained economic growth, investment in rural development, infrastructure expansion, educational opportunities, healthcare improvements and employment creation.

One of the defining characteristics of China's poverty reduction strategy was its targeted approach. Rather than applying identical policies across the country, the authorities identified the specific needs of different communities and households.

Shibadong, a remote village in Hunan province inhabited by the Miao, one of China's ethnic minority groups, where the approach was first proposed in 2013, illustrates how this worked. Following household-level assessments, officials combined improved roads and public services with locally suited industries, including tourism, kiwifruit cultivation, Miao embroidery and vocational training. The village's annual per capita net income rose from 1,668 yuan ($247) in 2013 to 18,369 yuan in 2020, while its poverty rate fell from 56.76 percent to 1.28 percent by 2017. Shibadong demonstrates how targeted infrastructure, skills training and industrial development can address both immediate hardship and the structural isolation of rural communities, enabling residents to participate more fully in economic growth.

Although Ecuador has made progress over the past decades, it continues to face significant development challenges. According to Ecuador's National Institute of Statistics and Census, the national income poverty rate stood at 21.4 percent in December 2025, while the extreme poverty rate was 8.3 percent. The corresponding rural rates were substantially higher, at 37.6 percent and 19.7 percent, respectively. Access to quality healthcare, education, employment opportunities and basic infrastructure remains limited in many rural communities.

In recent years, Ecuador has been experiencing one of the most serious security crises in its history. Rising levels of organized crime, drug trafficking, prison violence and homicide have affected economic activity, tourism and foreign investment. Security has become closely linked to development because businesses are less likely to invest in areas where instability increases operating costs and risks. As a result, improving public safety has become an essential component of Ecuador's long-term development strategy.

China's modernization experience offers Ecuador several valuable lessons that can be adapted to its own national context.

First, poverty reduction should be linked to local economic opportunities. Following China's targeted approach, Ecuador could identify the specific needs and economic potential of different communities. In rural Esmeraldas or Manabi, for example, support might combine feeder roads, irrigation, internet access, agricultural credit and technical assistance for cocoa producers. Progress should be measured at the household level through income, school attendance, access to services and stable employment.

Second, development and public security should be treated as mutually reinforcing. Poverty itself does not directly cause crime, but limited economic opportunities can increase social vulnerability and facilitate the recruitment of young people into criminal organizations. Creating employment, improving education, expanding social services and strengthening local economies can therefore contribute not only to poverty reduction but also to greater social stability.

In Ecuador's current context, where organized crime represents one of the country's greatest challenges, development policies should complement law-enforcement efforts. One example is the ECU911 emergency response system, developed with Chinese cooperation, which integrates the police, fire, transport and healthcare authorities into a single coordinated emergency management platform. The system has significantly improved emergency response times and increased citizens' sense of security. Continued investment in digital governance, smart city technologies, surveillance systems that respect legal safeguards and data-driven public administration could further improve the effectiveness of public institutions.

Another important lesson is economic diversification. Ecuador's economy has historically relied heavily on oil exports and primary agricultural products such as bananas, shrimp, cocoa and flowers. While these sectors remain important, dependence on a limited number of commodities makes the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in international prices. China's modernization involved gradually moving from primary production toward manufacturing, technology and more sophisticated supply chains. Ecuador could apply this lesson by expanding food processing, sustainable aquaculture, cocoa-based manufacturing, renewable energy and logistics services. Economic diversification based on sectors in which Ecuador already has advantages would be more realistic than attempting to copy China's industrial model directly, and could both create skilled employment and make the economy less vulnerable to commodity-price fluctuations.

It is important to recognize that China's development model cannot simply be copied. China and Ecuador differ significantly in terms of population size, geography, political institutions, economic structure and historical experience. Policies that proved successful in China may require important adjustments before being implemented in Ecuador.

Rather than replicating China's model, Ecuador should focus on understanding the principles that contributed to China's success: place-based poverty reduction linked to local economic opportunities, the integration of development and public security, and productive upgrading based on existing export strengths.

China's modernization and poverty reduction experiences provide a valuable basis for deeper exchanges on development and governance, while Ecuador's national priorities create new opportunities for practical cooperation. Building on existing political trust, the China-Ecuador Free Trade Agreement and Belt and Road cooperation, the two countries can further expand their partnership and translate high-level consensus into sustainable development outcomes. By pursuing cooperation based on mutual respect, complementary strengths and shared interests, China and Ecuador can open a new chapter in their comprehensive strategic partnership and generate broader benefits for both countries and their peoples.

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JI XIANBAI

Bridging the Pacific

Chile among others can provide linkage to institutional architecture between Asia and Latin America involving APEC, CPTPP, DEPA and RCEP

Latin America's growing concern about the United States' hegemony is accompanied by a genuine and growing interest for wider international partnerships.

The Pacific offers the clearest strategic opening. As China hosts Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in 2026, Latin American governments have a rare opportunity to widen their markets, diversify their economic relationships and strengthen their capacity to navigate an increasingly competitive and securitized international environment by anchoring themselves more deeply in Asia-Pacific institutions.



The timing matters. The revival of the Monroe Doctrine by the Donald Trump administration has given hemispheric primacy renewed prominence in US strategy. The 2025 US National Security Strategy introduced a "Trump Corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine, asserting US primacy in the Western Hemisphere and calling for constraints on the influence of extra-hemispheric competitors. Ports, critical minerals, telecommunications, energy infrastructure and supply chains are consequently being drawn ever more deeply into great-power competition.

Latin America therefore needs more institutional options. Stronger integration across the Pacific provides one. The economic foundations are already substantial. Latin America possesses enormous reserves of copper, iron ore and lithium, alongside energy resources, agricultural commodities and globally competitive food exports. Asian economies combine vast consumer markets with manufacturing capacity, investment capital, infrastructure expertise, digital technologies and sustained demand for resources and food. The economic structures of Asian and Latin American countries fit together remarkably well. That complementarity has already become one of the most powerful forces driving trans-Pacific commerce.

Chile provides a natural starting point. It was the first Latin American country to conclude a bilateral free-trade agreement with China, with the agreement entering into force in 2006. The relationship subsequently generated several other "firsts", including Chile becoming the first Latin American economy to upgrade its FTA with China. Chile has therefore occupied a pioneering position in China's economic engagement with Latin America for two decades.

The next step should be institutional. China can find strong reasons to support Chile's application to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which Chile formally submitted in 2024. Chilean accession would give the RCEP its first Latin American member. It would also place Chile simultaneously within the RCEP, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and APEC, with strategic significance. Chile could become an institutional hinge connecting East Asia with Latin America, while the RCEP would acquire a genuinely trans-Pacific reach.

The bridge should extend in both directions. China applied to join the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement in 2021. Following the Republic of Korea's accession in 2024, DEPA members should advance China's accession as rapidly as negotiations and compliance assessments allow. Created by Chile, Singapore and New Zealand, DEPA offers an especially useful framework for governing e-commerce, paperless trade, digital transactions and other emerging areas of the digital economy. China's participation would greatly increase its economic weight. It would also deepen the institutional links connecting Latin American and Asian economies through common digital rules.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

The significance of these two accessions goes well beyond the two countries. Chile joining the RCEP and China joining DEPA would establish a powerful principle: Asia-Pacific institutions can expand across the ocean in both directions. Latin American and Asian economies could become progressively embedded in overlapping rules governing trade, investment, data, digital transactions, customs procedures and innovation.

That process should eventually support a larger ambition: greater convergence between the RCEP and the CPTPP. Seven economies already participate in both arrangements. Their overlapping membership creates practical opportunities to improve compatibility in rules of origin, customs procedures, supply-chain management and digital standards. China has appropriately placed stronger synergy between the RCEP and the CPTPP on the agenda of its 2026 APEC host year, linking such efforts to renewed progress toward APEC's long-standing objective of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific.

The realization of an FTAAP could transform Latin America's place in the Pacific economy. Chile, Peru and Mexico have already participated in APEC and the CPTPP. A broader Asia-Pacific trade architecture would reinforce their Pacific identity while adding another durable layer to their existing economic relationships across the Americas, Europe and other regions. Over time, the institutional geography of Latin America would become increasingly multidirectional and multi-aligned.

South America's Atlantic economies are also moving. Brazil had long approached the prospect of a Mercosur-China trade agreement cautiously. Its calculations have evolved as Mercosur's external trade strategy has become more active and its bloc-to-bloc agreement with the European Union has advanced. In late July, President Xi Jinping and President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva agreed on the importance of accelerating preparations for Mercosur-China trade negotiations. Progress toward such an agreement could connect South America's largest economic bloc much more closely with the dynamic markets of Asia.

Latin American governments have another reason to move soon: their room for maneuver cannot be taken for granted. The US-Mexico-Canada Agreement offers a revealing precedent. Article 32.10 makes it procedurally and politically difficult for a member to contemplate an FTA with a designated "non-market country". Similar poison-pill-style provisions could someday become instruments for Washington to discourage countries elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere from building closer economic relations with China and other Asian economies.

Once such restrictions enter trade agreements, policy autonomy becomes more difficult to recover. Latin America should therefore cross the Pacific while the institutional door remains open. This is where the idea of an Asia-Pacific community with a shared future can acquire concrete economic meaning. RCEP enlargement, DEPA expansion, greater RCEP-CPTPP compatibility and movement toward an FTAAP can translate community-building into rules, norms, agreements and commercial relationships used every day by governments, companies and consumers.

As such, the objective should be a denser trans-Pacific institutional architecture. It would give Latin American economies access to more markets, more investment, more rules-based partnerships and greater freedom to determine their own external economic relationships.

Indeed, as Latin American economies become more deeply embedded in trans-Pacific agreements, supply chains and regulatory networks, efforts by any single power to determine the terms and boundaries of their international economic relationships would be increasingly costly and difficult.

The Pacific is therefore more than a trade route. It is a horizon of agency.

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BUSINESS

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Walmart keen on further expansion

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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View of a Sam's Club store in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province. QI LIGUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Walmart Inc, a US retail giant and owner of Sam's Club, is doubling down on China, betting its omnichannel strategy and continued expansion of both its membership warehouse chain and hypermarket business will sustain growth.

Walmart China President and Chief Executive Officer Zhu Xiaojing said online sales accounted for more than half of the company's revenue in China in 2025, highlighting the retailer's transformation from a traditional brick-and-mortar operator into an omnichannel retailer.

Over the past three decades, Walmart China has built an integrated retail network spanning hypermarkets, neighborhood stores, Sam's Club warehouses, cloud warehouses and digital channels, Zhu said.

"Walmart will continue investing in China by expanding its omnichannel footprint, strengthening localized merchandise development with suppliers and deepening its presence in local communities," said Zhu.

As part of its latest expansion, Walmart signed cooperation agreements with local governments in five cities. The projects include new Walmart and Sam's Club developments in Yantai, Shandong province; Walmart stores in Beijing's Changping district and Shenyang, Liaoning province; and Sam's Club locations in Wuhan, Hubei province, and Nantong, Jiangsu province.

The investment marks the latest phase of Walmart's decade-long transformation in China.

After entering the market in 1996, Walmart expanded rapidly through its hypermarket business. However, the rise of e-commerce, changing consumer habits and intensifying competition from warehouse clubs and fresh-food retailers prompted the company to overhaul its strategy.

Beginning in 2016, Walmart accelerated the closure of underperforming hypermarkets while shifting investment toward Sam's Club, which has since become the company's biggest growth engine in China.

According to the China Chain Store & Franchise Association, or CCFA, Walmart and Sam's Club operated a combined 342 stores in China in 2025, about 100 fewer than their peak in 2019. Despite the smaller store network, Walmart China's sales exceeded 190 billion yuan ($28.18 billion) last year, with Sam's Club contributing more than 100 billion yuan, according to public data.

The strategy has helped Walmart maintain its position as the country's largest modern grocery retailer, although competition in the membership warehouse segment is intensifying.

Costco Wholesale Corp, which currently operates seven stores in China, plans to more than double that number to 16 by fiscal 2030, with most new locations concentrated in eastern and southern China.

Although Costco has expanded more cautiously than Sam's Club, it generated more than 10 billion yuan in China sales in 2025, with average annual revenue exceeding 1.4 billion yuan per store, according to figures cited by the CCFA.

At the same time, Sam's Club is facing growing operational challenges as its membership base expands. Consumer complaints over product quality have increased and the chain was summoned by China's market regulator in June over food safety issues. Shortly afterward, Zhang Qing, Sam's Club China's chief merchandising officer, resigned.

More broadly, China's grocery sector continues to undergo structural change as consumers gravitate toward value-oriented, convenience-focused and digitally integrated retail formats.

Data from Worldpanel by Numerator showed sales across modern grocery channels — including hypermarkets, supermarkets and convenience stores — fell 2.5 percent in the first half from a year earlier. Neighborhood supermarkets outperformed, with sales rising 3.6 percent, while convenience stores posted the steepest declines.

Memory chipmaker passes IPO coaching review

By **MA SI**
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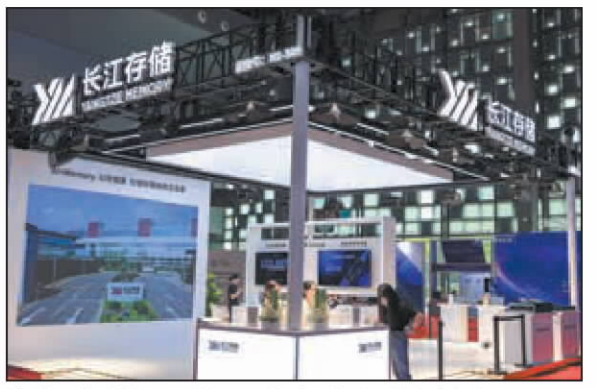

The booth of Yangtze Memory Technologies Co Ltd during an expo in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinese flash memory chipmaker Yangtze Memory Technologies Co Ltd has passed its initial public offering coaching review, marking a significant step toward a potential stock market listing, according to a disclosure on the China Securities Regulatory Commission website on Wednesday.

The company, advised by CITIC Securities and China Securities Co Ltd, completed the coaching process after filing its IPO coaching report in May.

Founded in Wuhan, Hubei province, in July 2016, YMTC is the Chinese mainland's sole 3D NAND integrated device manufacturer, or IDM. The company has achieved remarkable growth over the past decade, evolving from a startup into a global industry player.

According to Counterpoint Research, YMTC captured 14 percent of global NAND flash memory shipments in the second quarter of 2026, ranking third worldwide behind Samsung's 25 percent and SK Hynix's 22 percent while surpassing Kioxia, Micron and SanDisk.

YMTC's Q2 shipments grew 22 percent year-on-year and 5 percent quarter-on-quarter, benefiting from tight global NAND supply and expanding domestic supply.

The company has commenced mass production of 267-layer 3D NAND chips based on its proprietary Xtacking 4.0 architecture and is developing products beyond 300 layers, according to Counterpoint.

Revenue exceeded 20 billion yuan ($2.97 billion) in the first quarter of 2026, up 100 percent year-on-year.

On March 27, YMTC unveiled three new products targeting high-performance, high-security and high-capacity artificial intelligence storage scenarios.

Industry experts said that as AI workloads shift from model training to inference applications, the surging demand for dataset storage is driving a paradigm shift from capacity-driven competition to performance-and-capacity parity.

Zhang Lin, deputy dean of Fareast Credit Rating Co's research institute, said: "The next two years represent a window of opportunity for China's memory industry, with clear 'volume and price advantages' — not just for market share expansion but also for product mix upgrading and customer loyalty enhancement."

With its IPO coaching now completed, YMTC is poised to leverage capital markets to accelerate technology iteration and capacity expansion, positioning itself strategically in the next phase of global memory industry growth, experts added.

Market researcher TrendForce's latest memory pricing survey said the DRAM market will see extremely tight supply in the third quarter of 2026, with contract prices expected to rise 13 to 18 percent quarter-on-quarter. NAND flash contract prices are likely to increase 10 to 15 percent quarter-on-quarter.

Provident fund reform to spur consumption

Changes could help release pent-up demand in the near term, experts say

By **ZHANG CHENXU** and **ZHOU LANXU**

China's latest reform of its housing provident fund system is expected to further unleash residential property-related consumption potential and help the housing industry gain a more solid footing in its recovery, experts said, as the sector remains in the midst of a broader adjustment.

Their comments came after the State Council, the country's Cabinet, issued a decision on Tuesday to amend the regulations on housing provident fund management, with the changes set to take effect on Sept 20.

The fund, a long-term housing savings program made up of mandatory monthly contributions by employers and employees, can be tapped for a wider range of housing-related expenses under the revised rules, which also allow flexible workers to participate voluntarily and facilitate cross-regional account transfers.

Lou Feipeng, a researcher at Postal Savings Bank of China, said the revision is the most extensive since the regulations were introduced in 1999.

"By easing the financial burden on homebuyers, the changes could release pent-up demand and help shore up market confidence in the near term," Lou said, adding that over time the reform will help promote a healthier balance between renting and buying, and spur spending linked to existing housing stock.

The revised rules also allow account holders to draw on their savings in nine situations, up from six, according to the State Council.

The additions cover renovations to owner-occupied homes, property management fees and other housing-related consumption approved by the State Council.

Meanwhile, for those withdrawing from the housing provident fund to pay rent, the eligibility threshold requiring rent to exceed a prescribed proportion of a household's wages will be rescinded.

"The changes would ease pressure on household budgets and support spending on home improvements and property services," said Xiong Yuan, chief economist at Guosheng Securities.

The decision also simplifies procedures for housing provident fund withdrawals and shortens the review period for loan applications.

Contribution records will be recognized nationwide, making it easier to transfer housing provident fund accounts and apply for loans across urban areas.

Xiong said the broader range of permitted uses and shorter loan review times should better support demand from first-time buyers and home upgraders.

Rather than trigger an immediate, broad-based turnaround, the measures are more likely to shore up demand and improve conditions in specific market segments, he added.

Self-employed individuals, part-time employees and other flexible workers will also be allowed to voluntarily contribute to housing provident funds and receive corresponding policy support, according to the decision.

"Bringing these workers into the system will make it less costly for them to settle in cities," said Yu Xiaofen, dean of the Chinese Academy of Housing and Real Estate at Zhejiang University of Technology.

Yu also added that wider coverage would better meet the rental and homebuying needs of flexible workers while supporting China's new urbanization drive.

The amendments also specify that "interest rates on housing provident fund deposits and loans shall be determined by the State Council" — a provision that could pave the way for more flexible rate adjustments in the future, said the China Index Academy, a property research institution.

The policy move comes as ongoing weakness in the country's real estate sector continues to weigh on the broader economy.

Property development investment fell 19.2 percent year-on-year in the first seven months, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

With nationwide housing provident fund account balances exceeding 10 trillion yuan ($1.48 trillion), putting more of the money to use could support housing demand and lift spending on related goods and services, Lou added.

To translate that potential into actual demand, Lou called for faster nationwide recognition of contribution records, a dynamic interest-rate mechanism tied to provident fund loan-to-deposit ratios, and more flexible contribution options and incentives for self-employed individuals, part-time employees and other flexible workers.

Contact the writers at zhangchenxu@chinadaily.com.cn

Briefly

Very large crude carrier delivered

A China-built very large crude carrier (VLCC) was delivered in Dalian, Liaoning province, on Tuesday. The vessel features advanced energy-saving and environmentally friendly technologies developed by China's shipbuilding industry. It measures about 333 meters in length, 60 meters in breadth and 30 meters in depth, with a deck area of more than 18,000 square meters.

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the yuan strengthened 51 pips to 6.7854 against the US dollar on Wednesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Chinese automakers building more factories overseas

By **REN QI**
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Chinese automakers are accelerating their global expansion by integrating their entire industry chains into local economies, providing safe, eco-friendly and smart mobility solutions that boost local employment and economic growth worldwide.

Shaanxi Automobile Holding Group (Shacman), a Xi'an-based automaker, is not only exporting traditional fuel heavy trucks, but also accelerating its global push for eco-friendly vehicles.

Its new energy vehicles have reached developed markets like the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Australia, as well as partner countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Expanding global NEV market share is just one part of a broader strategy to take the entire industry chain global. Beyond selling products, Shacman has developed a diversified industrial ecosystem overseas.

It has built factories in 17 BRI partner countries, employing a large number of local workers for assembly and marketing.

Zheng Hui, head of Shacman's import and export market department, said the company has dispatched staff to over 70 countries and regions, deeply integrating into local economic and social development to provide comprehensive solutions for local production and convenient mobility.

This approach is echoed across the industry. From Great Wall Motors' completed plant in Brazil and BYD's planned assembly plant in Malaysia, to SAIC-GM-Wuling's 3 millionth NEV rolling off the production line in Indonesia, Chinese automakers are bringing factories to the doorsteps of global consumers, directly driving local economic growth.

Geely, one of China's top auto exporters, operates world-class manufacturing plants and over 4,000 sales networks in countries including the United States, the UK and Sweden.

In Guinea, Shacman supported the construction of a landmark BRI railway project that connects high-quality iron ore to the international market while boosting local employment.

High intelligence is another key factor winning global acclaim. Sun Jian, vice-president of Neusoft Reach Automotive Technology (Shenyang) Co, said the company's self-developed auto operating system has achieved mass production globally, establishing deep cooperation with over 150 domestic and international partners to align Chinese standards with international ones.

China's auto industry is no longer just an important force in global manufacturing, but a crucial driver in reshaping the future landscape of global automotive cooperation, said Zhang Yongwei, vice-president and secretary-general of research institution China EV100.

In addition to building plants overseas, China continues to solidify its strength among auto-exporting nations, especially to BRI partner markets.

In Mexico City, buses transporting football fans for the recent World Cup matches were manufactured by Yutong, a commercial vehicle maker based in Henan province. Of the 800 new energy shuttle buses officially deployed for the event, 95 percent were Chinese brands, with Yutong alone accounting for 85 percent. This serves as a microcosm of the growing global popularity of Chinese vehicles.

The export momentum remains robust. The China Association of Automobile Manufacturers said the country's auto exports reached 930,000 units in May, surging 68.7 percent year-on-year and maintaining a level above 900,000 units for two consecutive months.

Furthermore, the latest data released by the China Passenger Car Association show that in July, new energy vehicle exports hit 540,000 units, a staggering 147.8 percent year-on-year increase and an 8.1 percent month-on-month growth.

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BUSINESS

Hisense SA nurtures local talent pool

Chinese firms bring not only jobs, but also advanced manufacturing tech and expertise



A local employee works on the production line at a refrigerator factory in Hisense South Africa Industrial Park, north of Cape Town, South Africa, on Aug 11. WANG LEI / XINHUA



Local employees work on the production line at the TV factory in Hisense South Africa Industrial Park near Cape Town on Aug 11. WANG LEI / XINHUA

CAPE TOWN — "Since I joined Hisense, my life has changed. We've grown, I've grown with Hisense."

For Hugh Stephens, those words capture more than a career spanning over a decade at Hisense South Africa (Hisense SA) Industrial Park. They tell the story of how a new job opportunity grew into a journey of personal and professional development.

In 2013, the factory where Stephens worked pulled out of the town, leaving him an uncertain future. Around the same time, Chinese home appliance giant Hisense established its industrial park in Atlantis, a town about 50 kilometers north of Cape Town.

"I decided that I had to check Hisense out," Stephens told Xinhua News Agency. He stayed.

More than a decade later, the local man who joined Hisense as a "normal worker" has become a mainboard repair technician at the TV factory in the park, taking on new responsibilities and developing skills along the way.

His story begins with a job, but it is also a story of growth — his own, and that of a Chinese company growing alongside its local workforce.

"When I got here, I started at the front of the (production) line," Stephens recalled. "I learned from the Hisense engineers, from the Chinese engineers. They taught us everything I know."

"Now I'm working as a (mainboard) repairman and it's very good for me, because I've grown with the company," he said.

The change he described is not limited to his career. Stephens said he has also seen improvements in his life outside the workplace, from expanding his home to enjoying better living conditions and a better lifestyle.

Like Stephens, Marlon Jacobs joined Hisense SA Industrial Park when it was established in 2013, starting out as a general worker with no experience in refrigeration. Today, he is an assembly and quality technician at the refrigerator factory in the park.

"Everything in my life has improved since 2013, and I'm standing here as an example of that in itself," Jacobs told Xinhua.

"Thirteen years ago, I was unemployed. I did not have a job, and not having a job means you're not able to support your family the way you want to," he said. "Today I'm standing here, a better person being able to supply for and support my family, so that means a great deal. I really appreciate what Hisense did for me and for the whole of Atlantis."

Like many of his colleagues, Jacobs has also bought a car as his income has grown, and now drives to work every day. The growing number of employees' cars has even filled the company's parking area, with some workers having to park in an open space outside.

His career has also been a journey of learning. Starting from welding, Jacobs went on to learn machine and product repairs, becoming the factory's first welding repair person before moving into a team leader role managing two teams of more than 100 people and eventually becoming a technician.

"I'm a refrigerator technician because of the skills that I've learned through the Chinese," he said, referring to the knowledge he gained while working closely with his Chinese colleagues.

For Jacobs, the benefits also extend beyond his own career. "It's not only work, skills are also being transferred to local people," he said, pointing to the training and skills development opportunities available to workers at Hisense.

That transfer of skills is reflected in the training provided on the production floor, according to Mou Xing, a Chinese process engineer at the TV factory. New local employees receive training on the production process, hands-on instruction for their respective tasks, safety training and on-site observation before starting work. They also receive ongoing guidance and checks during production.

As local employees gain experience, some have begun to take on greater responsibilities. "After systematic training, South African local employees can independently complete the main work of their departments and handle and provide feedback on problems," Mou said. "For example, my colleague Minnies can take over the entire department's work when I am on leave."

The local employee Mou referred to is Ayrton Minnies, a process technician team leader at the TV factory. His job at Hisense is his first, and he chose it out of an interest in electronics.

"By working for all these years now, I've made a lot of progress in my life," Minnies said. "I would say there's a lot of skills I've picked up during my time at Hisense."

He put that learning simply: "Basically, I've learned how to make my own TV, not basically my own TV, but how it looks on the inside and everything."

Beyond his own growth, Minnies said Hisense has also had a positive impact on Atlantis by providing jobs for local residents.

Today, the two factories at Hisense SA Industrial Park employ around 760 local people. "At the fridge factory, we have approximately 550 local employees," Lorenzo McKinna, production supervisor at the factory, told Xinhua.

"Many of the employees who work here, as you know, are from the local community," he said, adding that the company provided on-the-job training so employees did not have to go outside the factory to acquire those skills.

According to McKinna, while creating jobs, the industrial park has also helped drive the development of the local industrial chain. "We have quite a few suppliers, local suppliers, that have benefited from the Hisense factory being here."

The experiences of Minnies and McKinna are borne out by the broader impact of Hisense SA Industrial Park, said Jiang Shun, deputy general manager of Hisense SA and general manager of the industrial park.

According to Jiang, the park has created about 1,000 direct jobs and over 5,000 indirect jobs locally, while about 70 percent of management positions are held by locals.

The park has also helped drive employment along the local supply chain, with nearby foam and carton factories among those supplying it. More than a dozen local companies have so far been integrated into its supporting industrial chain, Jiang said, adding that the park has also helped them adopt new technologies, processes and equipment.

In his view, the experience at Hisense SA is a direct rebuttal to the recent "China squeeze" narrative advanced by some Western think tanks and media outlets, which argues that China's manufacturing capacity not only challenges Western industries, but also crowds out industrialization opportunities in Global South countries.

For Africa, Jiang noted, the arrival of Chinese companies brings not only job opportunities, but also advanced manufacturing technologies and expertise that can help raise the level of local manufacturing.

"Only by raising the level of local manufacturing can you get the whole African economy moving," Jiang said. "I don't think it's a squeeze. It definitely plays a leading role."

Jiang's view was echoed by Stephens. "They're not squeezing, they're just trying to create jobs," he said.

Stephens hoped Hisense SA would continue to expand. "I want them to grow, you know, to bring more job opportunities, because people can learn more from other people, you know, from Chinese people," he said.

XINHUA

Zero-tariff policy boosts Sino-Kenyan trade, spurs industrial value addition



Workers sort avocados at a processing facility on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya, on May 28. XIE JIANFEI / XINHUA

NAIROBI — Kenya views the zero-tariff access to the Chinese market not merely as a trade preference, but also as a strategic opportunity to enhance its export competitiveness, accelerate industrial value addition and expand market reach, a senior Kenyan trade official said.

In a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency, Regina Ombam, principal secretary of Kenya's State Department for Trade, said access to China's vast market provides a crucial platform for Kenya to elevate its economic potential.

"I think when we got into the 'Early Harvest' arrangement, which was taking effect from May 1 with the zero-tariff policy, our big thinking was around how do we make Kenya competitive?" she said.

The tariff arrangement is viewed not merely as an export channel, but as an opportunity to showcase Kenya's premium products. Ombam noted that Kenya looked at it "as an opportunity for us to showcase how special Kenya is and what special things Kenya has and how willing Kenya is ready to share these special things that it has with other people as far away as China."

Highlighting Kenya's agricultural strengths, she noted growing Chinese demand for high-quality produce, particularly tea, avocados and fresh vegetables.

"Everybody says Kenyan tea is good quality; Kenyan tea is the best. And so taking tea to China was really another big plus for us given the big market that we were looking at," she said, adding that Chinese consumers are increasingly keen on organic, farm-to-table foods.

Beyond trade in commodities, Ombam emphasized that cooperation with China is driving technology transfer and supporting Kenya's manufacturing agenda through industrial park development.

"So when we move our economy to think export, think industry, then we are basically now saying we are transforming the economy from dependence on just raw materials to now invest and engage and move toward industrialization and ensure that our products now are of value in terms of the value addition that the processes are done to it," she said.

Praising China's work ethic and practical approach to innovation, Ombam said the partnership is built on mutual respect. "We are looking at China as a partner that is able to actually see us grow, which is a very good thing for us," she said, adding that Kenya is already learning from China's focus on efficiency and effective solutions tailored to local environments.

Furthermore, Ombam pointed out that Kenya serves as a strategic gateway for investors seeking to tap into broader African markets through the East African Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and the African Continental Free Trade Area.

XINHUA

South-South technology ties seen flourishing

HARARE — Cooperation with China will help African countries accelerate technological transformation and build local capacity for modern technologies, Zimbabwean experts said.

The remarks were made earlier this month on the sidelines of the Harare Forum for Africa, held under the theme of "Technological Transformation and Global South Modernization". The event brought together scholars, policymakers and business leaders to share experiences and contribute to China-Africa cooperation.

Established in 2024, the forum is an annual dialogue co-initiated by the China-Zimbabwe Exchange Center and the School of Journalism and Communication of Tsinghua University, seeking to promote dialogue and cooperation between China and Africa through academic exchange and policy dialogue.

Joseph Ngwawi, executive director of the Southern African Research and Documentation Center, a regional think tank, said cooperation with China can play a major role in technological transformation and Global South modernization.

He noted that the significant investment required to adopt modern technologies makes partnerships with China crucial in accelerating their uptake.

"We can cooperate on how to make technology work for us in all aspects of life, be it culture or economic issues. We must embrace technology, and we have a ready partner, China," Ngwawi told Xinhua News Agency.

Ngwawi said that in addition to economic development, modern technologies can help African countries preserve and promote their cultural heritage while building local technical capacity in digital preservation, restoration and cultural tourism.

"Technology is applied in all areas of our lives right now, it is now even applied in cultural heritage preservation, for example using technology with virtual reality gadgets to bring our historical sites to our eyes," he said.

Abigail Ncube, a gender specialist in the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, said China-Africa cooperation presents an opportunity not only to expand access to technology, but also to build the skills that can enable Africa to participate in the modern digital economy.

"China-Africa cooperation is an opportunity to ensure that technology transfer is not simply the transfer of infrastructure, hardware and technical knowledge. It can also be the transfer, and importantly, the development of capabilities, opportunities and ownership agency," she said.

She said China-Africa cooperation creates opportunities in developing digital infrastructure, digital education and vocational training.

To achieve this, Ncube said China-Africa cooperation can focus on building local capabilities supported by appropriate domestic policy frameworks.

"This moves beyond the idea of simply supplying technology. It creates the potential institutional platforms for digital education, teacher development, knowledge exchange, science technology engineering and mathematics capacity, research cooperation and professional skills," she said.

Ntethelelo Marcia-Anne Mpofu, a Zimbabwean medical doctor, said that in the agriculture sector, China-Africa technology cooperation must go beyond technology transfer and address foundational challenges hindering development, such as water, infrastructure and skills.

She said technology alone could not solve Africa's challenges, stressing that its effectiveness depends on supporting infrastructure such as reliable water supplies and on equipping farmers with the knowledge and skills to use it effectively.

"Technology works best, but it works best when every other system surrounding it supports it to make a better output and impact. Technology without the conditions that meet what Zimbabwe needs is not very good for us," she said.

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CHINA

DPP accused of spreading lies to curb ties

Suppression and intimidation used to block cross-Strait interactions

By LI SHANGYI
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Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party authorities have spared no effort to restrict and obstruct exchanges across the Taiwan Strait, fearing that the "information cocoons" they have created will continue to be punctured, a Chinese mainland spokesperson said on Wednesday.

At a regular news conference, Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said the DPP authorities have resorted to tactics including suppression, intimidation and rumormongering, while the island's "mainland affairs council" has been at the forefront, becoming a "stumbling block" to cross-Strait exchanges and interactions.

"They have tried every possible means to prevent people on both sides from visiting each other and maintaining close ties," she said.

Zhu made the remarks in response to recent comments by the "mainland affairs council" on a new regulation on exit and entry administration issued by the State Council, China's Cabinet, which will take effect on Sept 15.

Taiwan's "mainland affairs council" claimed that the regulation could affect Taiwan residents who invest or work in the technology sector on the mainland and urged them to be alert to the purported "risks".

Zhu said the regulation will help safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait in their exchanges and create a better law-based environment for Taiwan compatriots visiting the mainland.

Reassuring Taiwan residents that they have no need to worry about risks when traveling to the mainland, Zhu accused the DPP authorities of deliberately spreading alarm with ulterior motives.

"Faced with the unstoppable tide of cross-Strait exchanges and interactions, what the DPP authorities fear most is that the information cocoons they have created will continue to be punctured and the false 'Taiwan independence' narratives they have constructed will continue to be exposed," she said. "That is why they have resorted to making such reckless and unfounded statements."

Zhu also condemned the DPP authorities for continuing to delay allowing mainland residents to travel to Taiwan due to their "Taiwan independence" stance, saying the policy has artificially severed the tourism market across the Taiwan Strait.

"This will only cause Taiwan to miss out on the enormous potential of the mainland's tourist market," she said.

According to local media reports, Taiwan recorded a tourism deficit of 6.36 million person-trips in the first half of this year. Industry representatives on the island attributed the shortfall mainly to the continued absence of regular travel by mainland tourists to Taiwan, calling on the DPP authorities to reopen the island to mainland tourists as soon as possible.

The DPP authorities have also required civil servants in Taiwan to submit applications when traveling to the mainland to visit relatives, along with contact information for their mainland relatives and friends, drawing criticism from the public.

Zhu said the move was a further infringement on the personal privacy of Taiwan residents.

"They aim to prevent Taiwan people from visiting the mainland, while what they fear is that more people will see through their true motives of deceiving and inciting people with lies to pursue political self-interest by promoting 'anti-China' and 'resisting China'," she said.

Zhu said the mainland has been actively promoting exchanges between people on both sides. From Aug 24 to 28, relevant youth organizations from both sides will jointly host a cross-Strait youth exchange event in Shanghai, as part of efforts to implement the institutionalized platform for two-way youth exchanges between the Communist Party of China and the Chinese Kuomintang, outlined in 10 policy measures released by the mainland in April.

Launch preparation



The combination of the Chang'e 7 lunar probe and the Long March 5 Y14 carrier rocket is transferred to the launching area at the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site in Hainan province on Wednesday. It is scheduled for launch in the near future. SU DONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

EU cross-border probe unfair: China

By YANG ZEKUN
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China has determined that certain cross-border investigative measures taken by the European Union in its foreign subsidy probe into e-commerce giant JD.com constitute improper extraterritorial jurisdiction and has barred organizations and individuals from complying with or assisting in their implementation, the Ministry of Justice said on Wednesday.

The ministry said it made the determination jointly with the Ministry of Commerce and other departments under China's regulations on countering improper extraterritorial jurisdiction. The decision took effect upon its release on Wednesday.

The move concerns the EU's investigation of JD.com under its Foreign Subsidies Regulation, or FSR, which Chinese authorities said involved demands for extensive and unnecessary information from Chinese entities concerning activities within China.

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said in a written response that the requests imposed improper requirements on Chinese entities and seriously undermined the rule of law in international affairs.

It urged the EU to correct its approach, stop what it described as abuse of the foreign subsidy investigation mechanism, and provide a fair, impartial and predictable business environment for companies investing and operating in Europe.

"If the EU persists in its approach, China will firmly take countermeasures in accordance with the law," the spokesperson said.

The investigation is linked to JD.com's proposed acquisition of German consumer electronics retailer Ceconomy AG, which operates the MediaMarkt and Saturn brands across several EU member states.

JD.com's board approved the proposed acquisition in July 2025 in a deal valued at about $2.5 billion. The transaction was initially expected to close in the first half of 2026 but has been delayed amid regulatory reviews, including the EU's FSR investigation.

Germany's Federal Cartel Office approved the deal in September 2025, concluding that the companies had little competitive overlap and that the transaction did not raise significant antitrust concerns.

JD.com formally notified the European Commission of the transaction on April 17 this year, and the commission opened an in-depth FSR investigation on May 28.

On July 22, the commission issued a Statement of Objections to JD.com, alleging that the company may have benefited from preferential financing, tax advantages and government subsidies from China, which could have enabled it to offer a high premium for Ceconomy and thereby distort normal commercial negotiations and competition in the EU's internal market.

The commission is expected to make a final decision by Oct 2. If it insists that the allegations are valid, JD.com could face significant remedies or the transaction could be blocked.

It is not the first time the European Commission has used the FSR to investigate a Chinese company.

In April 2024, the commission conducted unannounced inspections at branches of Nuctech, a Beijing-based supplier of security inspection equipment, in Poland and the Netherlands. On Dec 11, 2025, it formally opened an in-depth FSR investigation into the company.

The investigation later expanded to demands for information on bank accounts, ownership structures and financing records within China, as well as requests for Chinese entities and banks to cooperate and provide large amounts of information that China considered unrelated to the investigation.

In May, China's Ministry of Justice determined that the cross-border investigative measures taken against Chinese entities in the Nuctech case also constituted improper extraterritorial jurisdiction.

It was the first application of China's regulations on countering improper extraterritorial jurisdiction after they took effect in April 2026.

Under the regulations, relevant Chinese government departments may place foreign organizations or individuals that promote or participate in improper extraterritorial measures on a malicious entity list.

Depending on the circumstances, authorities may also impose visa and entry restrictions, limit employment or residence in China, seize or freeze assets, and restrict the provision of data and personal information, transactions, cooperation, imports and exports, investment, or the entry of products and transportation equipment.

The EU adopted the Foreign Subsidies Regulation in November 2022, and it took effect in July 2023. The regulation gives the European Commission powers to investigate financial contributions provided by non-EU governments to companies operating in Europe and can require companies to provide extensive cross-border information.

Fields medalist stresses intl experience

By ZOU SHUO
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Wang Hong, who last month became one of the first two Chinese nationals to receive the Fields Medal — often referred to as the "Nobel Prize" of mathematics — believes young mathematicians should embrace opportunities to study and work in different countries, a practice she says is widely encouraged in China, France and the United States.

"Moving to different cities and schools is a very common practice, and people generally believe it is good for one's growth," Wang said in an interview with Peking University's School of Mathematical Sciences.

The 35-year-old mathematician, a tenured professor at the Institut des Hautes Etudes Scientifiques, or IHES, in France, and a Silver Professor at New York University's Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, has experienced such moves firsthand.

Looking back on her time at Peking University, where she transferred into the mathematics department, Wang recalled that students typically built a solid mathematical foundation while also getting an early start on graduate-level coursework.

She also emphasized the collaborative learning atmosphere. Many students were keen on research, often discussing which textbooks to read outside class and organizing seminars together. That peer support, she said, helped her develop good study habits that later proved invaluable.



Wang Hong

Wang later pursued a one-year master's program at Universite Paris-Sud, where she took a course on harmonic analysis taught by Pascal Auscher. She was struck by the lecturer's deep command of the subject — he never used notes and wrote fluently on the board. But what left the deepest impression were the tutorial sessions.

She also noted that although only a handful of students at her French school pursued pure mathematics — about five or six out of 500 — professors were very willing to engage with those who did.

When Wang moved to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for her PhD, coursework took a back seat. The most important part, she said, was conducting research with her adviser.

Her adviser, Larry Guth, had a profound influence on her. During their meetings, she had to anticipate every possible question he might ask and prepare answers in advance — a discipline that has shaped how she communicates with collaborators to this day.

Guth also gave each of his doctoral students a book upon graduation. For Wang, it was a French book titled *School Blues*, an educational essay about a former struggling student who became a teacher. She found it deeply meaningful.

Wang acknowledged that struggling with difficult problems for long periods is part of every mathematician's life. Her advice is to work on smaller problems with collaborators and write them up well when stuck on a big problem. Even modest contributions can be useful and help build momentum.

She compared her approach to solving a large problem to piecing together a puzzle. Each piece comes from working out examples and special cases. Once you have thought about a problem long enough, you know where the real difficulties lie.

Wang said China now has many outstanding professors and a strong research environment, and encouraged students to make decisions about studying abroad based on the opportunities available to them.

For those pursuing mathematics, her parting advice was simple: "Follow your own pace and work on the problems you love."

Chamdo culture



Performers dance at a culture and arts festival themed on the ancient Tea Horse Road, a historic network of trade routes in southwestern China and neighboring regions, in Chamdo, Xizang autonomous region, on Wednesday. The event highlights the region's cultural legacy, ethnic unity and tourism. KUNGA LESANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Decks cleared for Kinastra 1's maiden flight in 2027

By ZHAO LEI
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CAS Space, a leading Chinese commercial space company, has completed a series of propulsion system tests for its Kinastra 1 upper stage, clearing the way for the vehicle's maiden flight in the first quarter of 2027.

The Guangzhou-headquartered company, established by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said the upper stage's full propulsion system completed the PV-001 integrated compatibility hot-fire test in August, marking a major system-level milestone that verified coordination and operational reliability across all subsystems. The test lasted 566 seconds, with all units performing stably.

The Kinastra 1's 20-kilonewton engine passed a series of boundary condition tests in March, covering variable operating modes, mixture ratios and cooling percentages. The tests involved 18 ignitions and a total burn time of 481 seconds.

A reliability test followed in July, during which the engine ran for a combined 2,906 seconds under multiple operating scenarios. According to CAS Space, the engine has now accumulated a total ignition time of 5,211 seconds.

The latest test comprehensively validated the engine's pressurization, propellant feed, propellant management and servo control systems, the company said. Engineers also verified three crucial capabilities: the 20-kN engine's high-thrust, high-performance multiple-restart capability; balanced propellant delivery from parallel tanks; and a highly reliable integrated electrical design.

The Kinastra 1 is equipped with a 20-kN-thrust engine capable of more than 20 ignitions. According to engineers, the upper stage can autonomously plan orbital transfer paths, withstand the vacuum and extreme temperature fluctuations of spaceflight, and adapt to various launch vehicles, making it a key component of CAS Space's medium- and high-orbit and deep-space launch capabilities.

The upper stage works like a "space shuttle bus". It does not launch from the ground but performs transfer operations in space. After a rocket delivers the upper stage and satellite payloads into space, the upper stage takes over the mission, transferring satellites between orbits. This approach saves satellites' fuel and allows multiple satellites to be deployed into different orbits during a single launch mission.

Yang Haoliang, chief designer of the Kinastra 1, said the upper stage is an optional module for rockets. It operates after a rocket's core stage and strap-on boosters have exhausted their fuel and separated, propelling spacecraft onto interplanetary trajectories or into orbits higher than those that could otherwise be reached using conventional boosters.

An upper stage can extend a rocket's reach beyond the parking orbit where its core stages run out of fuel, delivering payloads to higher and more distant orbits through multiple in-space ignitions, Yang said. This helps conserve satellite propellant that would otherwise be used for orbit-raising, thereby extending satellites' operational lifespans.

"It also enables multi-satellite deployment across different altitudes and inclinations for rapid constellation buildup, shortens the time needed to adjust satellites' orbital positions, and can perform controlled de-orbiting at mission end to reduce space debris," Yang said.

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CHINA

'Three-grassland' model heals Qinghai ecosystems

Scientific approach improves sustainability, herder incomes on 'roof of the world'



A herd of sheep wanders on the grassland in Golog, Qinghai province, in October last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By **YANG ZEKUN** in Xining
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High up on the "roof of the world", Chinese researchers are easing pressure on the fragile grassland ecosystems relied on for generations by nomadic Tibetan herders. To protect this high-altitude environment in the three-river-source region of Northwest China's Qinghai province, researchers have introduced more efficient varieties of forage, improved livestock management and high-tech grassland monitoring — all while increasing incomes for local herders.

Known as the "water tower" of Asia, the region feeds the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers, and harbors rare plateau wildlife. But decades of overgrazing, severe weather and climate change have stripped the native grasslands, triggering soil erosion and threatening local livelihoods.

To fix it, scientists at the Chinese Academy of Sciences have pioneered a "three-grassland" model that links protected wild zones, regulated grazing pastures and high-tech cultivated forage fields.

Xu Shixiao, director of the Plateau Ecology Research Center at the Three-River-Source National Park Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said the model ensures ecological conservation, sustainable livestock production and that local livelihoods are supported.

"Through coordinated resource allocation and closer links between the functions of different grasslands, we hope to achieve balanced development of ecology, production and daily life," Xu said.

The model is being applied in two areas.

The first covers areas inside and surrounding the national park. Cultivated forage produced outside the park can be supplied to livestock, reducing grazing pressure on natural grassland within protected zones.

The second includes farming-pastoral transition areas in the Guinan and Tongde counties of the Hainan Tibetan autonomous prefecture, where soil, water and climate conditions are more suitable for developing high-yield cultivated grassland.

Xu said the key to addressing a long-standing constraint on plateau animal husbandry is the shortage and poor nutritional quality of forage during the cold season. A more reliable supply of high-quality feed can shorten livestock-rearing cycles, improve production efficiency and reduce reliance on natural pastures.

The math behind the strategy is striking: Just 1 hectare of high-yield cultivated grass outside protected zones can spare roughly 20 hectares of natural wild pasture from overgrazing.

In alpine meadow areas, reducing grazing pressure by just one sheep can ease ecological disturbance across about a hectare of natural grassland, Xu said.

"This not only reduces pressure on natural pastures, but also creates more space for wildlife habitats inside the national park," he said.

Herder help

For Lajia, a 43-year-old herder from Qinghai's Madoi county, the impact is visible on both the grassland and on his household income.

Lajia has spent years working as an ecological ranger in the Yellow River source area of the national park, helping protect the region as it shifted toward a greener development model.

He said grazing was once poorly managed. There was little scientific zoning of pastures, no systematic rotational grazing or seasonal grazing bans, and limited access to stored forage. Many herders depended almost entirely on natural grassland and sought to increase their incomes simply by raising more livestock.

"In the past, we did not understand scientific grazing," Lajia said. "Our cattle and sheep depended completely on natural grassland, and we grazed them on the same pastures throughout the year. The grassland had no time to rest and recover."

As grazing pressure increased, vegetation deteriorated. Sandy patches and bare ground expanded, while forage yields declined. Heavy snow or drought often left livestock without enough feed, causing weight loss and sometimes death in the herd, he said.

The result was a cycle in which degraded grassland reduced livestock productivity, low productivity limited herders' incomes, and the need to maintain larger herds placed even greater pressure on the ecosystem.

At the time, Lajia's family raised just over 100 sheep. Losses were high, production was inefficient and household income remained low.

The introduction of the coordinated grassland model changed the way he managed his animals.

Pastures were divided according to their ecological and production functions. Protected grassland was allowed to recover, while rotational grazing and seasonal grazing bans were introduced in designated grazing areas. Herders also received guidance on planting and storing cultivated forage for the cold season.

"The current approach is much more scientific and much better for local people," Lajia said. "It is completely different from the past.

"Protected and grazing grasslands are now clearly divided, and rest grazing and rotational grazing are strictly implemented. Degraded pastures have time to recover, while we are also taught how to grow and store forage. We no longer have to rely entirely on the weather," he said.

Lajia's family now maintains a stable flock of nearly 200 sheep, almost double its former size. Improved feed and livestock management have also raised the quality and value of the animals.

At the same time, his work as an ecological ranger provides a regular salary. The combination of livestock production and ecological conservation has given the family two sources of income.

The scientific model combines ecological monitoring, grassland carrying-capacity assessments, degraded grassland restoration, forage cultivation and balanced livestock feeding. Drones, satellite remote sensing and artificial intelligence-based identification technologies are also used to monitor wildlife, assess habitats and support ecological planning.

Research data show that 67,000 hectares of high-quality cultivated grassland in areas surrounding the three-river-source region can produce 610,000 metric tons of forage each year, helping maintain a more stable balance between livestock numbers and available grassland.

Demonstration projects that have transferred grazing pressure equivalent to 810,000 sheep are estimated to have expanded the habitat available to wild ungulates such as Tibetan antelopes and wild yaks by 3.85 million hectares.

The model has been tested through specialized cooperatives, family ranches, jointly operated ranches and State-owned ranches.

In Guinan county, demonstration projects have improved grassland quality, shortened the feeding cycles of yaks and Tibetan sheep, increased livestock production efficiency and raised herders' incomes.

Monitoring of grassland managed by cooperatives has also shown improvements in vegetation coverage, biomass and plant diversity after measures such as spring grazing bans and seasonal grazing adjustments were introduced with support from cultivated forage.

Shen Yuhu, director of the national park institute's Plateau Eco-agriculture Research Center, said forage breeding is an important part of the ecological strategy.

Agriculture and ecological protection are often regarded as separate issues, Shen said, but they are closely connected in the three-river-source region.

Crop production is restricted in core protected areas, but livestock in surrounding pastoral communities still need feed. Developing cultivated grassland and forage oat production in more suitable areas can supply pastoral regions and reduce pressure on natural pastures.

Shen's team has spent nearly 30 years breeding crops and forage suited to plateau conditions ranging from 3,500 to 4,800 meters above sea level. Its work began with spring wheat and later expanded to highland barley, oats and other forage crops.

The result has been that Qinghai has become an important national base for forage production and oat seed breeding, supplying improved varieties to regions including the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, Gansu and Sichuan provinces, and the Xizang autonomous region.

One standout success is Gaoyan 16, a high-protein forage oat variety that recently fetched a record 400,000-yuan ($59,400) technology transfer fee in Qinghai.

In nearby Darlag county of Golog Tibetan autonomous prefecture, improved oat varieties have been used in a practice called "growing grass in livestock pens".

Before moving animals to high summer pastures, herders plant fast-growing oat varieties directly in winter pens. Come autumn, they harvest the crop for cold-weather emergency feed.

The area using the practice in Darlag expanded from more than 133 hectares last year to more than 667 hectares this year. The model is also being promoted in other parts of Golog and Yushu Tibetan autonomous prefectures.

For Shen, keeping the technology affordable for local families remains the primary goal. Locally bred oat seed costs less than 4 yuan per kilogram, compared to 10 to 16 yuan for imported alternatives.

He recalled an experience during a scientific expedition in Gyalze county, Xizang, when local farmers invited his team into their home for butter tea and food after learning that the researchers were conducting fieldwork to improve crop varieties.

"They said we were doing work for farmers," Shen said. "Wherever we go, recognition from farmers and herders is what keeps us moving forward.

"Enterprises can make a profit, but they should not charge too much," Shen said. "Farming already has thin margins. If seed costs are too high, the burden on farmers and herders becomes heavy. A good variety must go to the fields and reach the people. If it can help them increase production and income, that is the greatest recognition a researcher can receive."







Left: A forage collector reaps grass and transports it onto a truck in Guinan, Qinghai province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Center:** Herders process forage grass in Guinan. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Right:** Villagers pile up bales of forage grass for winter use in Golog, Qinghai, in August last year. SONG CHENGLIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Huangshui River restoration enters final phase

By **YANG ZEKUN**

A major 5.51 billion yuan ($817 million) ecological restoration project in the Huangshui River Basin has entered its final phase, so far restoring over 157,200 hectares of land and significantly improving water quality across eastern Qinghai province, according to local authorities.

The project aims to strengthen the ecological security barrier of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau through integrated conservation covering mountains, rivers, forests, farmland, lakes, grasslands, and deserts. It belongs to the third batch of national key ecological conservation projects under China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021–25).

As of June, 144 of the project's 153 subprojects have been completed, targeting 12 counties across Xining, Haidong, and the Haibei Tibetan autonomous prefecture.

Liu Guoxin, head of the territorial ecological restoration division of the Qinghai Provincial Department of Natural Resources, said that the project focuses on major ecological problems in the basin, including soil erosion, degradation of forest and grassland ecosystems, and declining water conservation capacity.

The basin has been divided into three major restoration units: the source area for water conservation and biodiversity protection, the tributary areas for water conservation and soil erosion control, and the main stream area for ecological corridor building and human settlement improvement, Liu said.

Based on these units, Qinghai has carried out three categories of work: improving forest and grassland ecological functions, maintaining the health of valley ecosystems and restoring river system functions.

The project has restored 69,300 hectares of forest, 42,400 hectares of degraded grassland, and 275.22 kilometers of riverbanks and embankments.

Liu said ecological restoration measures can be implemented quickly, but the stable functioning of restored ecosystems takes longer to fully emerge.

"Ecological improvement needs continuous monitoring and phased assessment," he said. "After the project is fully completed, we will carry out project acceptance and effectiveness assessment, while ecological and environmental authorities will continue long-term ecological monitoring and evaluation."

According to Qinghai's 2025 ecological and environmental bulletin, water quality at national and provincial monitoring sections of the Huangshui River reached Grade II or better, showing that the project has played a positive role in improving water conservation and water quality in the basin, Liu said.

To coordinate cross-regional and cross-department governance, Qinghai has established a three-level mechanism featuring provincial coordination, city and prefecture-level supervision, and county and district-level implementation.

A provincial leading group was set up at the beginning of the project, bringing together departments including development and reform, finance, ecology and environment, water resources, agriculture and rural affairs, and forestry and grassland to coordinate project implementation.

The project uses monthly reporting and digital supervision to track implementation, funding and performance. Reports are submitted to the leading group and shared with relevant departments and localities to identify problems and coordinate solutions in a timely manner.

Liu said the project also covers mine restoration, geological disaster control, river management, forest and grassland improvement, rodent control, farmland improvement, human settlement upgrading and soil erosion control, making multi-department cooperation essential.

Qinghai has issued rules on project management, fund management and completion acceptance, while also establishing systems for archives, project handover and long-term maintenance. A provincial expert pool provides technical support throughout project planning, review, acceptance and assessment.

According to the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Huangshui project ranks among the top national ecological restoration projects in terms of fund execution and completed restoration area.

The project has also generated social benefits. Construction units have been encouraged to employ local farmers and herders, helping increase incomes. Restoration work along the urban section of the Nanchuan River in Xining and the Baishui River in Huangyuan county has improved public activity spaces and living environments, giving residents a stronger sense of gain and well-being.

Liu said completed projects will be handed over to local governments and relevant sectoral departments for maintenance, with long-term management linked to existing mechanisms such as ecological rangers, river and lake chiefs, and forest and grassland chiefs.

"The Huangshui project is a comprehensive and systematic governance project, not a restoration of a single ecological element," Liu said. "It has helped Qinghai gain practical experience in cross-department, cross-regional and multi-element ecological conservation and systematic governance."

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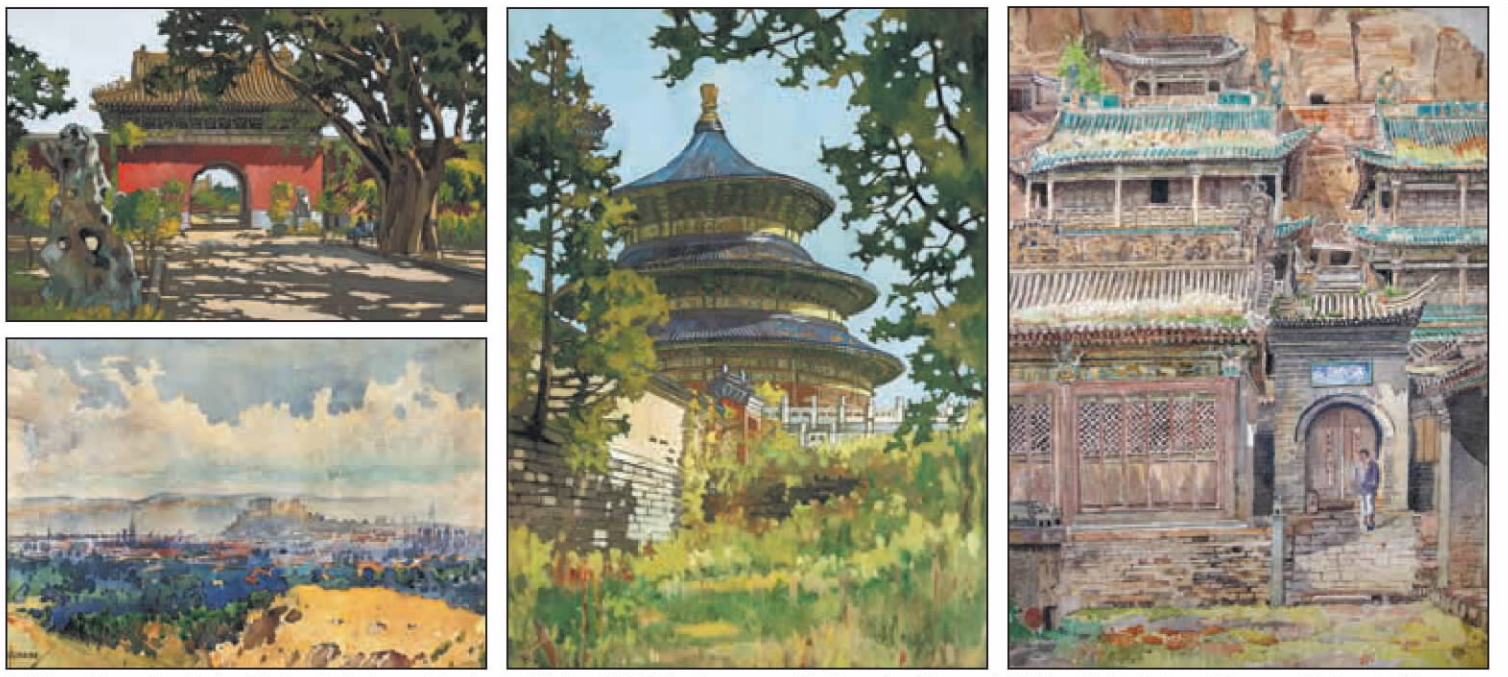
LIFE



Left top: *Zhongshan Park of Beijing.* **Left above:** *Morning in Edinburgh.* **Middle:** *Summer, at the Temple of Heaven* in Beijing. **Right:** A view of Yungang Grottoes in Shanxi province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Below:** Guan Guangzhi's paintings capture the magnificence and composed mood of classical Chinese architecture and imperial gardens. LIN QI / CHINA DAILY

Bathing Beijing in watercolor

Late artist studied abroad but returned to the capital city to bring dignity and preservation to its ancient architecture through vivid hues, **Lin Qi** reports.

Standing at 38 meters tall, Qinian Dian, or the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, the central building at the Temple of Heaven complex in Beijing, commands imperial solemnity. The hall was once used as a place where monarchs of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties held ceremonies to pray for good weather and bountiful harvests.

Today, this majestic three-tiered circular structure, once exclusive to the ruling class, is one of the capital city's most favored tourist spots. People share various photographic perspectives on social media, capturing its gilded golden top, deep-blue glazed tiles and red pillars that define Beijing's awe-inspiring historic aura.

Eight decades ago, watercolorist Guan Guangzhi (1896-1958) was one of those who frequently visited the Temple of Heaven. He preserved the magnificence of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests through vivid colors and restrained brushwork. One of his extant works from the 1940s depicts a serene summer scene in which the building is shrouded by verdant, scattered cypresses on both sides and an expansive grassy field at the front. The thickness of the pigments accentuates the solemn mood of the site, while the shifting chiaroscuro — the contrast of the shadows of tree leaves against the light on the dappled wall — renders to the composition a graceful, composed sensibility.

Guan would have been a high-quality content creator with many followers in the social-network age, but in real life, he was a devoted teacher at art schools and an avid painter and printmaker of the imperial architecture and gardens of centuries-old Beijing where he lived from the mid-1920s until his death.

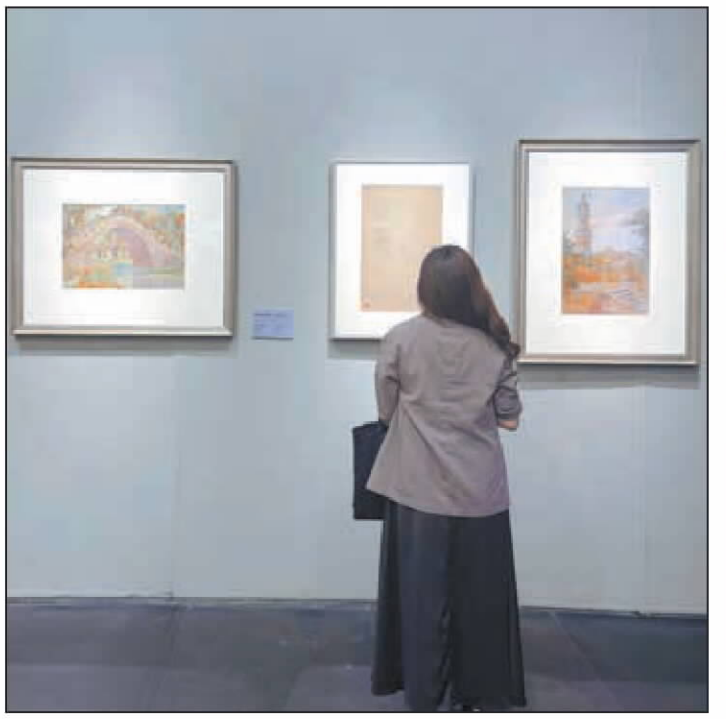
The Splendid Realm of Diligence: Art of Guan Guangzhi, an ongoing exhibition at the Art Museum of the Beijing Fine Art Academy, invites viewers into his watercolor world. Visitors will be immersed in the understated beauty composed of the imperial palaces' eaves emerging in daylight, while trees, flowers and lake ripples radiate vitality. Over 70 watercolors and copperplate prints, including his most iconic Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests works, are on show until Sept 6.

Born in Jilin province, Guan developed an initial interest in classical architecture while studying at an art school in Shenyang, Liaoning province. He often accompanied his watercolor teacher, a British woman, to sketch at the Zhao Mausoleum, commonly known as Beiling, the burial tomb of Emperor Taizong of the Qing Dynasty and his empress. After relocating to Beijing, he began creating watercolors of its ancient architecture as a vivid testament to the city's imperial past.

At age 36, he made a life-changing decision to study abroad. He enrolled at the Royal College of Art in London. He was, under the name Kuan Kuang Chin, one of the first Chinese students to attend this institution.

Fu Yiwei, the exhibition's curator, says Guan particularly admired the way William Turner (1775-1851), the noted English landscape artist known as "the painter of light", presented light and color. "Guan's works on show, *Morning in Edinburgh* and *Belfast Beach*, bear a considerable Impressionist influence. The light and translucent texture show the distinctive qualities of British watercolor."

While in Britain, Guan also studied etching techniques and traditions traced to 17th-century Dutch painter and printmaker Rembrandt van Rijn. When he left London, he carried with him a machine and tools for copper engraving. At home, he produced dozens of prints exhibiting the ever-changing atmosphere of ancient buildings.









Above top: Watercolor paints and tools Guan brought back from London. **Left:** A photo of Guan at the exhibition. **Right:** A drawing of Guan and in the back, a photo of Guan and his students in the 1950s. PHOTOS BY LIN QI / CHINA DAILY





Top: Guan at his solo exhibition in the 1930s. **Above:** Guan and wife Wang Rulan in the 1940s. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Guan returned to Beijing in 1934. His wife, Wang Rulan, once recalled that during his trips to Britain and back, Guan visited art galleries and museums in Paris, France; Brussels, Belgium; Naples, Italy; Alexandria, Egypt; and Mumbai, India. "It broadened his horizons and made him realize that the art of every nation, with its own distinctive features, has added splendor to world culture. At the same time, he deeply appreciated that in art, one should not only possess national and individual characteristics, but also must study extensively to integrate diverse influences, to progress and achieve innovations," she said.

Back in Beijing, Guan taught at various schools. Meanwhile, he also deviated from his earlier depiction of British scenery and developed his own watercolor style in depicting Beijing's historic structures.

His subjects include the Jade Belt Bridge at the Summer Palace and the Nine-Dragon Wall in Beihai Park. He placed his subjects in a harmonious, beautiful environment. When depicting the Corner Towers of the Forbidden City, he would add cleaners working on a boat in the moat on the outer perimeter; in another painting of Beijing Zhongshan Park, where an imperial altar sits, he focused on the blooming wisteria outside the long corridor.

Fu says his strokes render these ancient buildings dignity and a refreshing resplendence that touches people across generations.

Dai Shihe, a retired professor of painting at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, says, "Although Guan's landscapes are smaller in size, he delivered the poise and ease inherent in Chinese culture."

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Celestial instruments help launch visitors on a cosmic quest

HEFEI — China's museums are often defined by their porcelain, calligraphy and ritual vessels. But a new exhibition in Anhui province is turning the spotlight away from traditional treasures and toward scientific endeavors of the past, showcasing jade cosmological diagrams, celestial star charts and bronze globes crafted by astronomers centuries ago.

The exhibition, *Heavenly Questions: The Cosmological Vision of Chinese Civilization*, at the Anhui Museum brings together nearly 300 artifacts from 48 institutions nationwide. It is a rare exhibition in China that focuses specifically on presenting the country's "understanding of the universe" through cultural relics.

Since launching in July, the show has drawn some 350,000 visitors, who are fascinated by the instruments ancient Chinese used to observe, measure, and pay homage to the universe.

One of the star attractions is a jade slab roughly the size of a smartphone dating back 5,800 to 5,300 years. The eight arrows at the center of the slab map out the eight directions of space, and the arrows at the four corners appear to align with the positions of the sunrise and sunset during the winter and summer solstices. The Chinese cosmological diagram is possibly older than Stonehenge in Wiltshire, England.

Other highlights include China's oldest equatorial instrument, a disk with 28-star mansions from a 165 BC marquis' tomb, a bronze water clock from the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24), the earliest-dated water clock ever found, and a rubbing of a stone-carved astronomical chart from the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) engraved with over 1,400 stars, which remains the oldest all-sky map based on actual observation.

"These 'hardcore creations' in ancient astronomy laid the technological foundation for studying the laws of celestial motion," says Meng Qian, director of the museum's research department.



A guide introduces a wooden gadget at an exhibition in the Anhui Museum in Hefei on July 1. ZHOU MU / XINHUA

The exhibition saves its best for last. In the final section, ancient instruments such as globes and sundials sit face-to-face with models of modern Chinese spacecraft, including the lunar rover Yutu (or Jade Rabbit), and the lunar soil sample collected by the Chang'e-6 mission in 2024.

Interestingly, many of China's major space missions are named after ancient myths. Its moon mission is called "Chang'e", the goddess who is said to live there; the Mars rover "Zhurong" is named after a fire god; and the sky-surveying telescope "Mozi" is the name of a philosopher who was credited with conducting the earliest optical experiments.

The exhibition itself takes its title from ancient poet Qu Yuan's (339-278 BC) epic poem *Tianwen*, or Heavenly Questions, written more than 2,000 years ago. China's Mars exploration mission also shares the same name.

"This exhibition allows ancient astronomy and modern space exploration to illuminate and interpret each other," says Shi Yunli, a professor at the University of Science and Technology of China and adviser to the exhibition.

"When visitors stand between the folded bronze sundial and the Yutu rover, they see not just two objects on display but a 5,000-year chain of quest," Shi adds.

The exhibition runs through mid-October. "We hope this exhibition allows visitors to look back at the early lights of our culture, and also see the way forward," Meng says.

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LIFE

Moving heritage from museums to malls

Commercial areas seek to give shoppers more emotional value by providing exhibitions, history-inspired characters and learning activities, **Li Yingxue** reports.

On a weekend evening in August, Chen Ling took her young daughter to Huaxi Live Wukesong in Beijing for dinner. In the square, a mythical beast inspired by the ornaments that adorn Beijing's Central Axis architecture exchanged a fist bump with a round "corn friend".

Nearby, a traditional Chinese dance performance and quiz were underway. The host introduced *Maize. Gold. Jaguar: A Grand Exhibition of Ancient Maya and Andean Civilizations* at the Capital Museum. Chen's daughter answered the quiz question accurately and won a commemorative coin.

The following weekend, they returned to the shopping center, viewed an exhibition of late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) embroidery, and bought tickets to that "corn" exhibition.

"We saw the sculptures and displays while having dinner at the shopping center. There happened to be an event that day, and that's how we learned about the exhibition," Chen says.

This is the experience Beijing's "One Exhibition Across the City" initiative seeks to create: Rather than waiting inside museums, exhibitions enter people's daily lives.

Launched in July by Beijing Radio and Television Station, in partnership with the Capital Museum and the Beijing Cultural Heritage Exchange Center, the initiative has extended exhibition elements into nine areas, including Tongzhou MixC, Solana shopping mall and Huaxi Live Wukesong.

Installations, relic displays, pop-up stores, and activities enter commercial settings, turning shopping centers into cultural gateways.

Nine auspicious mythical beasts inspired by Beijing's Central Axis architecture "walk out" of historic buildings and into shopping centers, where they meet corn figures representing the ancient civilizations of the Americas. Some make heart gestures while others offer high-fives or fist bumps. Once solemn architectural ornaments, they have become approachable cultural figures for younger audiences.

"These figures were not put together simply because they look cute. There is a cultural connection behind them," says Lyu Jing, the project's publicity director. "Maize was the foundation of the Maya civilization, while the mythical beasts are classic symbols of Beijing's Central Axis and traditional Chinese ritual culture. It is a dialogue between two ancient agricultural civilizations across time and space."

"Our principle was clear: Keep the roots, but give the form a more contemporary look," Lyu says. "We wanted to attract young people without casually deconstructing traditional culture. We also want to ensure that Chinese and foreign cultural symbols come together naturally."

For Lyu, the initiative is not simply about moving an exhibition into shopping malls.

"To me, a museum without boundaries means breaking down walls, lowering barriers, and becoming part of everyday life," she says. "A museum is no longer just a building, but a public cultural space that can encompass the entire city."







Clockwise from top: Participants compete in a maize-grabbing game at a shopping mall in Beijing in July. A sculpture featuring a mythical beast inspired by ornaments adorning Beijing's Central Axis architecture making a heart gesture with a corn character at an outdoor area of a shopping mall in Tongzhou district. Residents enthusiastically take part in the maize-grabbing game. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> To me, a museum without boundaries means breaking down walls, lowering barriers, and becoming part of everyday life. ... a public cultural space that can encompass the entire city."
>
> **Lyu Jing,** publicity director of "One Exhibition Across the City"

Commercial areas have also introduced artifacts provided by the Beijing Cultural Heritage Exchange Center. The free-of-charge displays allow visitors to encounter cultural objects while shopping.

Bringing cultural relics into busy commercial areas creates preservation challenges. At Huaxi Live Wukesong, installations occupy the outdoor areas, while the relic exhibition is housed in the enclosed Ice Center, which is equipped with 24-hour surveillance and climate control.

"This is a breakthrough for us. In the past, we never really considered bringing cultural relics into a street-level commercial area," says Chang Tingting, general manager of Huaxi Live Wukesong's digital media center.

"From the beginning, we discussed how to reconcile what might seem like a contradiction between protection and openness, and make the two work together in a commercial setting."

Visitors inquire about the exhibition and how to buy tickets, and others arrive after reading about it on social media.

"We often hear consumers asking what the exhibition is, where they can see it, and how they can buy tickets," Chang says. "That shows how the two sides can reinforce and empower each other."

In her view, shopping and dining alone can no longer provide a steady stream of new experiences.

"Many people today are willing to spend money for emotional value," she says. "A shopping mall that only sells things will eventually be challenged by e-commerce, but a space that provides cultural experiences and opportunities for social interaction cannot be replicated online."

Heritage in shopping centers can also lower the psychological barrier to museums. "We hope people can encounter thousands of years of civilization while simply shopping or having dinner — an informal and immersive encounter with culture," Chang says.

Similar efforts are underway at Solana, Fengke Wanda Plaza and Tongzhou Wanda Plaza, where content has been tailored to each venue's audience.

"We matched the content to the customer profiles of the three shopping centers. Fengke Wanda focuses on a cultural relic-themed exhibition; Solana emphasizes interactive installations; and Tongzhou Wanda features a cultural and creative pop-up," says Li Meiling, marketing head of the Beijing division of Zhuhai Wanda Commercial Management Group.

The malls also coordinate exhibition layouts, security arrangements and visitor routes to protect the artifacts and maintain an orderly viewing experience.

Li says she has seen children stop to examine the displays and ask questions, while families have taken part in activities linked to the exhibition.

"Malls are no longer purely places for shopping. They are transforming from places for transactions into places for life and learning," Li says.

"I believe commercial spaces will take on more public cultural functions," she adds. "We hope to work more closely with museums and art institutions to present cultural, substantive and interactive experiences to the public."

Maize provides another link between ancient and contemporary worlds. In Maya mythology, humans were believed to have been created from maize. Modern Beijing is home to the world's largest maize DNA fingerprint database and a national-level germplasm resource bank that preserves more than 4 million maize germplasm samples. Beijing-developed commercial seeds cover about one-sixth of China's maize-growing area.

Some shopping centers display live maize plants, leading visitors from ancient beliefs about the crop to contemporary agricultural science.

The initiative also seeks to ensure that engagement goes beyond photos. Bead-art competitions, a "maize blessing wall", dance performances, and quizzes are built around cultural knowledge.

"Every installation has a civilizational narrative behind it, and every activity incorporates educational content," Lyu says. "Taking a photo is not the end. It can be the starting point for people to learn, and share what they have discovered."

For her, museums and commercial spaces benefit each other. "Museums bring cultural quality, visitors and deeper meaning to shopping centers, while shopping centers bring museums new audiences, new settings and new ways to reach people," Lyu says.

She hopes the initiative will become a Beijing cultural brand that integrates museums, heritage and urban life.

When history appears in shopping streets and along the routes people take home, museum boundaries begin to change. Culture becomes part of the city's everyday rhythm — and sometimes an unexpected encounter.

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Tianqiao revives tradition by building a global stage for performing arts

Stretching along the southern section of Beijing's Central Axis, a 2.07-square-kilometer cultural cluster comes alive with young playwrights drafting scripts in *hutong* (alleyway) studios, acrobatic troupes staging performances of intangible cultural heritage, and a major arts center hosting its annual musical theater festival.

This is the Tianqiao performing arts area, where traditional culture meets modern creativity and theaters, playhouses and creative incubators converge.

"Two decades ago, Tianqiao was marked by dilapidated buildings and scattered street stalls," says Yin Yixin, chairman of the Tianqiao Zenith Group. "Yet during the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and the years before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, this area was a bustling area where thousands of folk artists came to perform drama, traditional music and acrobatics."

To revive that legacy, an extensive renewal project was launched. The Tianqiao Performing Arts Center opened in 2015, presenting year-round programs of dramas, musicals, concerts, and ballets. In the years that followed, more theaters, creative incubators and *hutong*-based studios emerged across the area.





Left: The ballet *The Peony Pavilion* is staged in Tianqiao on July 21. **Right:** The cast of *Swan Lake* rehearses at the Tianqiao Theatre on May 29. PHOTOS BY JIN LIANGKUAI / XINHUA

That transformation has laid the foundation for Tianqiao's revival as a thriving hub for the performing arts.

"Come to Tianqiao for musicals" is more than a slogan — it has become part of daily life here. Today, Tianqiao hosts international musicals such as *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Notre-Dame de Paris*, alongside original Chinese productions including *The Orphan of Zhao* and *Twelve Hours of Chang'an*, earning acclaim from audiences at home and abroad.

"It's amazing! The stage sets are unique, and the cast delivers powerful performances," says Ma Yihan, a young Chinese theater lover who has attended multiple shows at Tianqiao, including *Elisabeth* and *Mozart L'Opera Rock*.

John Owen-Jones, a leading star of *The Phantom of the Opera*, says China's growing audience for Western musicals could help spur a new wave of homegrown productions, with an increasing number of polished original Chinese musicals already emerging.

Acrobatic troupes also regularly perform at Wansheng Theater in Tianqiao, while immersive productions centered on China's intangible cultural heritage attract big crowds. Venues such as the Tianqiao Impression Museum use augmented reality and motion-sensing technologies to revive fading folk arts. In contrast, its archive of 20,000 volumes of folk literature is free and open to the public.

Yang Shucong, general manager of the Tianqiao Performing Arts Center, says the venue will stage a lineup of iconic international musicals this year. The English-language program includes *Chicago* and *Kinky Boots*, while French offerings include *Don Juan* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Chinese-language adaptations are also gaining popularity. Standout productions include *The Devotion of Suspect X*, *Murder Ballad* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

These productions mark a pivotal step in the center's evolution, from a venue operator into a content co-creator, Yang says.

"Going forward, we'll continue to carry forward China's cultural heritage, foster new forms of cultural activities, and build the Tianqiao Performing Arts Area into a global stage where cultural exchange and performing arts thrive," Yin says.

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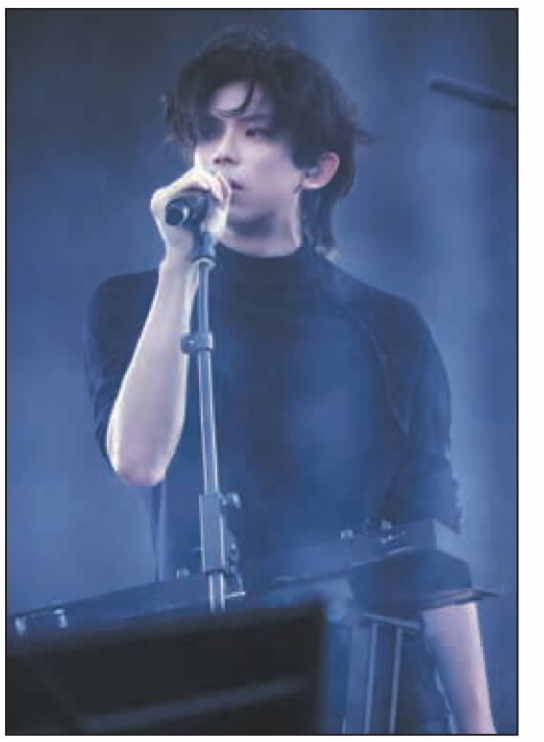
CULTURE







Left and right: Chinese band Xian Ke, featuring singer-songwriters Wang Pushi (left) and Wen Haoyuan (right), released their debut album *All Things End, Yet Nothing Ends*. **Above:** The band, featuring Wen (left) and Wang (right), is known for its combination of traditional Chinese opera with rock music. **Below:** Cover of the album. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Stone Age instrument meets modern rock

For the band Xian Ke, the process of creation is never-ending, as they explore new musical territories, **Chen Nan** reports.

Everything ends. A song fades. A stage goes dark. The performers leave, the audience disperses, and eventually the room falls silent.

But for the Chinese band Xian Ke, silence is not the end.

The band's name comes from a line in *The Book of Songs*, a collection of hundreds of poems dating from the 11th to 6th centuries BC.

The line goes: *Mibu youchu, xianke youzhong* (Everything has a beginning, but few can see it through to the end).

The band's debut album, *All Things End, Yet Nothing Ends*, takes that ancient meditation on beginnings and endings and turns it into eight songs that build a world from rock, traditional Chinese opera, ancient instruments, and the restless desire to keep creating.

For Xian Ke, the two phrases are not simply literary references. They have become a way of thinking about what it means to make music, according to Wen Haoyuan, one half of the duo.

"Everything has an end," says Wen, who is also a scriptwriter. "But things themselves have no end. We are doing something that is limited for us, but we hope it can have an unlimited influence."

That tension — between endings and continuation, limits and possibilities — runs through the album.

All Things End, Yet Nothing Ends took more than three years to complete, beginning in 2021.

There were songs written, arranged, and recorded that ultimately did not make the cut. One track had reached around 80 percent of its arrangement and was already in production and recording before the band decided that something was still wrong.

"We spent many days and nights struggling with it," Wen recalls. "Just thinking about that song would make us feel bad."

Eventually, they abandoned it and wrote another song instead.

That process of choosing what to keep — and, perhaps more importantly, what to let go — became one of the most difficult and formative parts of making the record. By the time the album was complete, however, the uncertainty had given way to conviction.

"Everything that was released was something we were certain about," Wen says. "We are very satisfied with it."

For a band that began with a name about the difficulty of reaching an ending, finishing the album was therefore significant. But it was never intended as a conclusion.

"It's just a very small part of my creative career," Wen says. "We'll keep writing."

When Xian Ke announced the album, the pair described standing for a long time in front of the "wall of sound" they had built, moved to tears by what they heard.

The image captures something essential about the record. Xian Ke wanted to create not simply a collection of songs, but an expansive sonic space — "a whole expanse", as Wen describes it, made from different frequencies and layers of sound.

They wanted the listener to stand in front of it and feel its scale.

That ambition is partly why *All Things End, Yet Nothing Ends* feels larger than the familiar description of "traditional Chinese opera meets rock", often attached to Xian Ke, which formed in 2019.

Both members trained at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts, and their relationship with traditional theater runs deep. Wen studied theater; Wang Pushi is a Kunqu Opera performer and works with the Northern Kunqu Opera Theatre.

But Xian Ke is increasingly wary of being defined by the label "traditional Chinese opera meets rock music".

The label exists, Wang acknowledges. People use it. But for the band, traditional theater is not an aesthetic costume that they put on when they make music. It is part of the way they think.



"We write what we know," Wen says.

There was no elaborate calculation about how much traditional Chinese opera to combine with contemporary rock. Their musical languages have developed together naturally.

For Wang, the difference between performing traditional Chinese opera and performing with Xian Ke is particularly revealing. On the traditional stage, he is playing a character. His job is to express that character's emotions rather than his own.

"With the band, it is 100 percent my expression," he says.

He describes himself as a theater director within Xian Ke, while Wen is the writer. Together, they bring a theatrical way of thinking to their music: songs become scenes, sounds become characters, and the album becomes a world.

That approach is particularly evident in the song *Annica* (inspired by anicca, a Buddhist concept meaning impermanence), which incorporates the *suona* (a double-reed woodwind instrument) and the percussion rhythms of Kunqu Opera.

The striking thing is that the *suona* is not presented as a distinctly "Chinese" sound.

Instead, Xian Ke deliberately buried it within the arrangement, treating it like any other instrument.

"Traditional Chinese instruments are often placed prominently in contemporary music precisely because their sound immediately signals Chinese identity. We wanted to resist that impulse," Wang says.

For him, the goal is not to turn traditional culture into spectacle.

He points to the experience of watching traditional Chinese opera for the first time: Whether the viewer is a foreigner or a Chinese person encountering it for the first time, its unfamiliarity can make it seem like a spectacle, something exotic to be observed.

But that, he argues, misses the point.

Traditional Chinese opera and traditional Chinese music are not curiosities. They are not there to produce an exotic effect. They are beautiful.

The same principle guides Xian Ke's use of traditional instruments. The better the fusion, Wang believes, the less obvious the fusion becomes. "If an instrument is pushed to the front simply because it sounds unusual, it risks becoming a gimmick," he says.

Elsewhere on the album, they went in the opposite direction: Rather than hiding the identity of a traditional instrument, they explored what its history could bring to the music.

The song *Fallen Stars* features the sound of a Jiahu bone flute, an ancient instrument preserved by the Henan Museum and among the earliest known instruments associated with a seven-note scale.

The flute is a key exhibit at the Henan Museum and dates back about 8,700 years.

Musicians from the Huaxia Ancient Music Orchestra, the resident ensemble of Henan Museum founded in 2000, joined the band's exploration by playing replicas of ancient Chinese musical instruments displayed in the museum.

For Xian Ke, choosing the bone flute was partly an experiment. If they were going to introduce traditional Chinese instruments into their music for the first time, why not begin with one of the oldest?

They tried a number of instruments before settling on the bone flute. But its historical importance was only part of the appeal.

When the flute was played, Wen heard something much less concrete: falling stars.

The image captures the band's approach to the album as a whole. Rather than giving each song a narrowly defined subject, they wanted the eight tracks to contain as much as possible — to suggest an entire world rather than describe one small thing.

The result is intentionally ambiguous. Images, emotions and sounds overlap.

The most interesting question facing Xian Ke now is what happens when they move beyond the very combination that first defined them.

They have already begun asking themselves: What does Xian Ke sound like when there is no Chinese opera?

The question is not a rejection of their theatrical roots. Quite the opposite. It comes from the confidence that those roots are already embedded in them.

"Opera plus rock" was simply the path they took when they first came together.

Now they want to explore what else might happen — traditional Chinese opera with something else, or something without traditional Chinese opera.

"We do not yet know," says Wen. "A record has an ending. A song has an ending. A period of creation has an ending. But the impulse to create continues."

Contact the writer at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

Huangmei Opera shines in Edinburgh with tale of courage and identity

EDINBURGH — Minutes before going on stage in Edinburgh, Han Zaifen sat before a dressing-room mirror, humming softly to herself as the final touches were put on her makeup.

Beneath a black embroidered scholar's cap was the face of Feng Suzhen, a young woman whom Han has portrayed for more than four decades.

Soon afterward, Han, a winner of the Plum Blossom Award, the highest award for Chinese theatrical art, stepped onto the stage at Queen's Hall in a bright red robe, bringing one of China's best-known traditional opera heroines to an Edinburgh audience.

On the evening of Aug 12, the Anhui Zaifen Huangmei Xiqu Art Theatre, led by its director Han, performed *The Lady Prince Consort* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, marking the first appearance of Huangmei *xiqu*, or Huangmei Opera, at the event.

"If Huangmei *xiqu* were an Eastern woman, she would be lively and quick-witted, pure and down-to-earth," Han said before the performance. Unlike the stately elegance often associated with Kunqu Opera, she said, Huangmei *xiqu* has a particular warmth and innocence, as well as a mixture of softness and strength.

"Its melodies come from people's lives and their sense of happiness," she says.

Huangmei *xiqu* is a major form of traditional Chinese opera, known for its tuneful singing and lively storytelling. Now, Anqing, a city in East China's Anhui province, serves as an important center for its performance and development.

The Lady Prince Consort tells the story of Feng Suzhen, who disguises herself as a man and enters the imperial examination to save the man she loves. She unexpectedly finishes first and is chosen by the emperor as husband for his daughter, setting off a series of twists before her true identity is revealed.

The work was adapted from the traditional play *Double Rescue* and was first staged in 1958. A film version followed in 1959, helping to turn the story into one of the most familiar works in Huangmei *xiqu*.

Feng's disguise mirrors other well-known women in Chinese storytelling, including Hua Mulan, the legendary female warrior who disguises herself as a man, and Zhu Yingtai of *The Butterfly Lovers*.



Actress Han Zaifen (right) and other actors perform Chinese Huangmei Opera during a performance at the Queen's Hall in Edinburgh, on Aug 12. ZHAO JIASONG / XINHUA

But Han sees something distinctive in Feng.

"She does not spend her time anxiously searching for an identity," Han says. "Through what she does, she keeps redefining who she is. She takes charge of her own fate."

Saving her husband is the direct reason for Feng's adventure, but the journey also reveals her confidence in her ability and worth, Han says.

Han adds that young women today no longer need to disguise themselves as men to pursue their ambitions, but the courage behind Feng's choice remains relevant.

"Whether you are a young woman or a young man, you need the courage not to retreat when you face difficulty and to fight for the life you want," she says.

That message resonated with Monika Owczarek, a Polish resident of Edinburgh, who says she often watches Chinese opera during the Fringe.

She says she enjoys the melodies of Huangmei *xiqu*, while Feng's story reminds her of Mulan. "Both women disguise themselves as men and emerge as strong female protagonists who refuse to accept the limits placed on them," she says.

American audience member Joe Goldblatt described it as the best Chinese opera performance he had seen, adding that he hopes "more productions like it could help bring people from different countries closer together".

Han says the theater made no deliberate attempt to speed up the performance or simplify its style for a Western audience.

The troupe has previously taken Huangmei *xiqu* to countries including France, the United States, Canada, and Russia.

"Good cultural exchange does not mean changing yourself just so you can be understood," Han says.

"For any art form, there is something that cannot be translated because it comes from the culture itself," she says. "It is a people's temperament, even a people's way of breathing."

Han's Edinburgh visit also brought recognition away from the stage. Earlier this week, she received the 2026 Asian Art Ambassador honor at the Asian Art Awards, organized by Asian Art Fund Scotland, a Scottish charity supporting Asian arts.

"Seeing overseas audiences laugh along with the story was deeply moving," says Wu Meilian, a Plum Blossom Award-winning actress who also played Feng Suzhen in the first half of the show.

"We did not share a language, but the humor and emotions still connected us. It made me feel that Huangmei *xiqu* can touch audiences anywhere."

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SPORTS

TENNIS



Aryna Sabalenka celebrates her 6-1, 6-3 win over Wang Xinyu of China during the Cincinnati Open third round at the Lindner Family Tennis Center in Mason, Ohio, on Tuesday. GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

No 1 Sabalenka slams Wang to advance in Cincy

The victory takes Belarusian's win streak at the WTA1000 level to 45

CINCINNATI, Ohio — Aryna Sabalenka unleashed her big game with devastating effect on Tuesday, hammering China's Wang Xinyu 6-1, 6-3 to reach the fourth round of the Cincinnati Open.

The world No 1 took only 20 minutes to blow through the first set against her 36th-ranked opponent, and began the second set with a break of serve.

Sabalenka kept up the pressure in the second set, with Wang double-faulting on the top seed's first match point after 54 minutes.

The victory marked the 45th in a row for Sabalenka at the WTA1000 level.

"I cannot complain. She's a tough opponent," Sabalenka said. "To win in straight sets like this in under an hour is insane.

"I'm super happy to be through. I really trusted myself and went for my shots. I wasn't overthinking. I was able to stay focused and be in every point."

Sabalenka next plays Czech Sara Bejlek, a 4-6, 6-1, 6-2 winner over Russia's Ekaterina Alexandrova.

Fourth seed Coco Gauff needed to battle following a sizzling first set in a 6-1, 7-6 (3) victory over fellow American Ann Li.

The 2023 champion had it all her own way in the opening set against her 29th-ranked foe, winning in 30 minutes. The pair exchanged early breaks in the second on the way to a tie-breaker, in which Gauff seized a 4-1 lead and won on her third match point.

"She played better in the second set and I missed a couple of break opportunities," Gauff said. "I tried to forget about those.

"It was hard to control the ball for both of us, and it was my first time playing a day match on this center court, so I had to adjust to that."

Mirra Andreeva's status as reigning French Open champion counted for little, as the fifth seed struggled to close out a 6-1, 7-6 (5) victory over Janice Tjen.

The Indonesian challenger, ranked 37th, was bowled over in the first set, but made Andreeva work to finally advance.

"In the first, I was in command and she had unforced errors here and there, but in the second, after a couple of games, I started getting nervous. She made fewer mistakes — it turned into a match of mentality and physicality," Andreeva said.

Eighth seed Elina Svitolina was forced to withdraw before her match against China's Wang Xiyu with an ankle injury.

"I've been advised by the doctors to take a little bit of time to rest and recover completely," the Ukrainian said in a statement.

Wang, 25, will now face 20th-seeded American Madison Keys for a quarterfinal berth.

> "I cannot complain. She's a tough opponent. To win in straight sets like this in under an hour is insane. I'm super happy to be through. I really trusted myself and went for my shots."
>
> **Aryna Sabalenka,** on her win over Wang Xinyu

In the men's play, Canada's second-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime eliminated Argentina's Juan Manuel Cerundolo 7-5, 6-1 in 90 minutes.

"It was a tricky start, finding my rhythm," the Canadian said. "Lefties are tricky, you don't play them so often. You can prepare all you want, but until you step onto the court, you can't find your right adjustments. Then you feel comfortable."

Washington winner and fifth seed Taylor Fritz fired eight aces in his defeat of Spain's Daniel Merida 6-3, 6-4 in 83 minutes. The Spaniard made 25 unforced errors as Fritz booked a fourth-round match-up with Australian Chris O'Connell, who is 0-3 against the American.

'I played amazing'

Last week's Montreal finalist Brandon Nakashima came from the brink to upset fourth seed Daniil Medvedev 6-7 (3), 7-6 (4), 6-1.

Nakashima led 5-2 in the first set before falling in the tie-breaker, then saved three match points in the 10th game of the second set on the way to forcing a third, which he dominated.

It was Nakashima's first win in four meetings with Medvedev, who beat the American in the Brisbane final earlier this year and had won 6-1 in sets against him entering the match.

Nakashima arrived in Cincinnati in strong form after reaching the semifinals in Washington and his first Masters 1000 final in Montreal, and improved to 10-2 on the summer's hard-court swing with Tuesday's victory.

The world No 22 will next face Nuno Borges after the Portuguese claimed a 6-3, 6-4 upset of Russian 13th seed and 2021 runner-up Andrey Rublev in 72 minutes.

The 47th-ranked Borges ended a five-match losing streak in the rivalry, while Rublev will drop out of the top 20 for the first time since January 2020.

"I played amazing," Borges said. "It means a lot to be in the fourth round. It's a big moment for me."

Italian 10th seed Lorenzo Musetti defeated American Michael Zheng 6-1, 6-3 in 71 minutes.

AFP

Venus Williams gets a US Open singles wild card at 46

NEW YORK — Venus Williams was given a US Open singles wild card on Tuesday and the tournament is keeping one on hold — perhaps in case her sister Serena wants to join her.

Sloane Stephens, the 2017 US Open champion, was one of six other women to receive a wild card, and the US Tennis Association said the final one is still to be announced.

That almost certainly would go to Serena Williams, if she decides she wants to return to the tournament at 44.

Last year, Venus Williams received a wild card to the Grand Slam event she won twice, returning for the first time since 2023. The 46-year-old has become the oldest entrant in singles at the tournament since Renee Richards played at 47 in 1981, according to the International Tennis Federation.

Venus has continued to play some singles matches, and this week joined Serena for their first doubles tournament together since the 2022 US Open. They lost Monday at the Cincinnati Open in a match tie-breaker against Marta Kostyuk and Peyton Stearns.

The sisters planned to play at Wimbledon, but had to withdraw after Serena injured her knee in her singles match. That marked her first time playing singles since the 2022 US Open, and she indicated afterward that she hoped to keep competing if healthy.

Headlining the wild-card recipients on the men's side were 39-year-old Gael Monfils, a past US Open semifinalist who is set to play his final Grand Slam tournament before retiring, and Australian Alexei Popyrin, who upset Novak Djokovic in 2024 on the way to the fourth round.

One spot is also being held among the eight men's wild cards. Stan Wawrinka, the 2016 champion at Flushing Meadows who, at 41, is playing his final season, could be a candidate for that.

Also receiving women's wild cards were Carol Young Suh Lee, Reese Brantmeier, Thea Frodin, Leolia Jeanjean and Taylah Preston.

The other men receiving wild cards were two-time reigning NCAA singles champion Michael Zheng, Martin Damm, J.J. Wolf, Sebastian Gorzny and Jack Kennedy.

Kei Nishikori, the 2014 US Open runner-up, who also is retiring, was given a wild card into the men's qualifying tournament, along with Jordan Lee, Trevor Svajda, Andre Ilagan, Spencer Johnson, Michael Antonius, Andrew Johnson and Daniel Milavsky.

Women given spots in the qualifying tournament were Caroline Dolehide, Janae Preston, Katrina Scott, Ayana Akli, Annika Penickova, Julieta Pareja, Kristina Penickova and Savannah Broadus.

The main draw begins Aug 30, with the qualifying tournaments being played earlier that week.

Doubles loss

The Williams sisters both said they had a good time on their return to doubles action for the first time since 2022, despite suffering an opening-round defeat in Cincinnati.

The duo lost 2-6, 6-1, 10-8 to Ukraine's Kostyuk and American Stearns, coming back from 6-0 down in the tiebreaker before a double fault by Venus sealed their fate.

"I thought it was fun, I thought it was special, I thought it was good," Serena, 44, told reporters.

"We kicked off a little rust in the middle of the match. We were starting to feel it, and it was really fun. It was really cool to be able to do this again."

The Williams sisters have won 14 major doubles titles, including six at Wimbledon and three Olympic gold medals.

They last played doubles together at the 2022 US Open, where they lost to Czechs Lucie Hradecka and Linda Noskova.

The sisters were also due to compete in the doubles draw at Wimbledon, but were forced to pull out after Serena sustained a knee injury during her opening-round singles defeat to Australian Maya Joint. They were awarded a wild card for Cincinnati earlier this month.

"I think we've waited a long time to get back on the doubles court, even this year. Eventually, we find our way to each other," Venus, 46, added.

Venus also competed in the singles draw in Cincinnati, where she was beaten 6-2, 6-2 by Colombian Emiliana Arango.

AP



Serena Williams (left) and Venus Williams confer during a doubles match against Marta Kostyuk and Peyton Stearns at the Cincinnati Open on Monday. AFP

ARTISTIC SWIMMING

Further rule changes set to ripple through sport en route to LA28

BUDAPEST — Artistic swimming is set for further rule changes as the sport moves toward the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, with adjustments to free routines and their length to be announced soon, World Aquatics Artistic Swimming Technical Committee chairwoman Lisa Schott told reporters.

"In the new rule changes coming out very, very shortly, you will see some changes in the free routines and their length," Schott said during the Aug 12-16 World Aquatics Junior Artistic Swimming Championships in Budapest.

"I'm just giving a little secret tip there," she added.

Schott described the Budapest event as "the largest junior worlds in the history of the sport," with nearly 300 athletes from 35 federations competing and a number of new federations taking part in the championships.

"The sport continues to grow in depth and talent," she said, adding that many talented junior athletes had emerged.

Schott also said that age should not be used to define an athlete's potential, with some junior swimmers already competing at a very high level.

"I don't like to put limits on any athlete, because junior or senior, they all have their different level of skill," she said.

Budapest will host the World Aquatics Championships again in 2027, with qualification spots for the Los Angeles Olympics at stake. Schott said that some athletes at this year's junior worlds could be old enough to move into their senior national teams next year.

"Competing at a world level is a journey," she said. "Each competition you learn something and continue to develop."



China's He Zhien and Zhou Kunyi perform a routine themed "Moderation" at the 2026 World Aquatics Junior Artistic Swimming Championships in Budapest. The pair won silver in the women's duet free on Saturday with a score of 295.0701 points. XINHUA

Schott said the scoring system has also made the competition more unpredictable.

"We don't know who's going to win," she said. "It gives hope for every athlete, every team that they do have the possibility."

The rules are still evolving, and Schott said coaches and athletes need to make realistic decisions about the level of difficulty they can successfully perform. She said she did not want to see athletes aiming too high, only to end up with repeated base marks, jokingly calling such a situation a "base mark party".

The growing presence of male athletes was another feature of the championships that impressed Schott.

"We have never had as many males in the sport as we have seen demonstrated here," she said. "The men, the boys, bring a different vibe to the sport, which is great."

Several teams included male athletes in team events in Budapest, with some fielding two men in their lineups.

"That's where we want to go," Schott said. "We love the male swimmers in the team. It brings good synergy to the team, a new dynamic, and it shows that the sport is inclusive of all genders."

She expects the trend to continue as male athletes improve.

"Stay tuned for more males in the sport," she said.

Looking beyond Budapest to the 2027 World Championships and the Los Angeles Games, Schott said artistic swimming remains in a period of evolution.

"I think we're in a great position. The sport will continue to evolve," she said. "We want to use more technology in our sport.

"We're super excited to go to the Olympics and show the world one more time what an amazing sport artistic swimming is," Schott said.

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Soaring career
Military delivery aircraft marks 10 years in service
VISUAL, PAGE 12



US debt may affect rates of interest
WORLD, PAGE 4



An ode to heritage
Dance drama on Lingnan folk traditions to tour Southeast Asia
CULTURE, PAGE 13

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 FRIDAY, AUGUST 21, 2026

XI'S VISION | MAZU SOLUTION

Weather alert system taps tech, folklore

China offering world AI-powered MAZU as a meteorological safeguard solution

By **ZHANG YI** and **HU MEIDONG** in Putian, Fujian

"Mazu, protect our voyage on the deep," go the lyrics of a timeless Chinese folk song that is a plea to the sea goddess Mazu. "Safe journey out, safe return ashore."

Embedded in this song is the soulful bond between local fisherfolk and the sea goddess who, legend has it, was born on the shores of Meizhou Island in Putian, Fujian province.

Today, in the digital era, this ancient heritage has found a new, high-tech anchor.

On the island, which has 30 kilometers of coastline and is home to over 1,000 fishing boats, locals no longer rely on prayers to weather storms. Instead, they find safety at their fingertips through a smart app that instantly decodes real-time winds, wave heights and tidal patterns.

For Lin Haifang, a veteran mariner with a decade of island life under his belt, a simple app alert triggers his typhoon routine. He hauls up oyster shell strings, lashes down kelp rafts and steers his boat to shelter early. Even amid choppy seas and weak signals, the Beidou Navigation Satellite System beams alerts directly to his palm.

"It feels as if Mazu puts the sea conditions right in my hand," he said of his early preparations, which keep his annual losses down and his income steady.

Action plan proposed

With the increasing frequency of extreme weather, the United Nations launched the Early Warnings for All initiative in 2022 to close gaps and protect everyone on the planet. China became the first to answer the call, proposing an action plan in 2024 and launching an intelligent meteorological early warning solution in 2025 named MAZU — an acronym denoting Multi-hazard Alert, Zero-gap and Universal.

The system, deployed in seven countries, blends artificial intelligence forecasting models, data from Fengyun meteorological satellites, cloud computing and ground observations to deliver highly customized services.

President Xi Jinping announced on July 17 that China will bring the AI-powered meteorological warning system MAZU to 30 countries over the next five years to safeguard homes around the world.

He made the remarks while addressing the opening ceremony of the 2026 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai, calling for joint efforts to build a just and equitable global AI governance system.

"All countries should take a people-centered approach and develop AI for the positive and for good. We should ensure that AI is an important driver for shared prosperity and common security," he said.

Effective cooperation

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who attended the meeting, praised the initiative, saying that the MAZU system could be one of the most important instruments for making international cooperation effective in protecting people and property.

Zhang Xingying, director of the China Meteorological Administration's Department of International Cooperation, said the MAZU system is a perfect combination of fine traditional Chinese culture, AI and cutting-edge technology.

"Naming the system after the Chinese goddess of marine weather reflects a unique touch of Chinese romance and demonstrates our cultural confidence," he said.

In his view, Mazu's legendary helpers, the Thousand-Mile Eye and the All-Hearing Ear, are reflected in today's meteorological tools, with weather satellites and radar being the eye, and AI and physical models used to forecast climate disasters serving as the ear.

"The core essence of the MAZU system goes beyond exporting China's early-warning capabilities," he said. "More important, it is about working with global partners to co-build a public safety solution for the long run."

See ***Safeguard,*** *page 3*

Rallying against militarism



People join a massive protest on Wednesday near the National Diet in Tokyo against a series of dangerous moves initiated by the Japanese government, including its increasing push for military expansion. About 15,000 people took part in the demonstration, which also earned huge support online. ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS / AFP

Washington urged to drop drone tariffs

By **ZHANG CHENXU** and **ZHONG NAN**

The United States' latest tariff push on drone imports, coupled with its accusation of "tariff evasion" by China, has heightened concerns that its increasingly unilateral and protectionist approach toward trade could further erode bilateral trust and disrupt global industrial and supply chains, said officials and experts.

Such tactics are likely to prove self-defeating, as punitive and discriminatory tariffs would raise US supply-chain costs without delivering the manufacturing revival it seeks, they said, adding that dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation offer the only practical way forward.

Their comments came as China's Ministry of Commerce urged the US on Thursday to immediately withdraw its Section 232 tariffs on imported drones and related components.

On Aug 13, the US announced Section 232 tariffs of up to 100 percent on certain imported drones and components, citing national security concerns — a move that the Financial Times said targeted Chinese drone technology.

Voicing strong opposition to the US move, Commerce Ministry spokesman He Yadong said it is a "unilateral and protectionist" action taken on the pretext of national security. Chinese drones exported to the US are used mainly for civilian purposes, he said, adding that such discriminatory treatment is seriously harming the interests of Chinese companies.

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Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the move is likely to disrupt the stability and resilience of global supply chains, given the deep interdependence among economies worldwide.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank based in Washington, DC, said in an analysis last year that about 90 percent of the world's high-strength permanent magnets used in drone motors are produced in China.

On Aug 13, the Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy at the White House released a report accusing Chinese exporters of routing goods through third countries to "evade" US tariffs. It identified over 40 countries and jurisdictions as presenting elevated risks of illegal transshipment.

He, the spokesman, said the report "disregards facts and distorts the truth", branding normal international trade as a "scam" and fabricating "a so-called shadow transshipment network". He urged the US to stop making irresponsible accusations and damaging Sino-US economic and trade relations, and instead work toward safeguarding the stability of global industrial and supply chains.

Shi Xiaoli, a professor of international economic law at China University of Political Science and Law in Beijing, said that any US assessment of "tariff evasion" should have relied on verifiable transaction-level evidence, rather than broad estimates based on changes in trade patterns.

EU probe opposed

In another development on Thursday, the Commerce Ministry urged the European Union to swiftly correct its "wrongful practices" in a foreign subsidy investigation involving Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com, reiterating Beijing's firm opposition to Brussels' abuse of unilateral tools to suppress Chinese companies.

On May 28, the European Commission — the executive arm of the EU — opened an in-depth investigation into JD's proposed acquisition of German consumer electronics retailer Ceconomy.

China's Ministry of Justice, together with the Commerce Ministry and other departments, determined on Wednesday that certain cross-border measures taken by the EU against Chinese entities in the case constituted improper extraterritorial jurisdiction. The decision has barred any organization or individual from complying with or assisting in the implementation of those measures.

Contact the writers at zhangchenxu@chinadaily.com.cn

WORLD WATCH
By Joseph Sifakis

AI needs a symbiotic reset with humanity

As companies pour billions of dollars into artificial intelligence while cutting jobs, fears of human replacement are mounting. Oracle is reportedly preparing another round of layoffs ahead of Sept 1, according to Business Insider. But the 2026 Stanford AI Index shows that AI is reshaping the labor market without yet causing mass job displacement.

The promise of AI is extraordinary: new frontiers in science, solutions to global challenges and a future where human creativity flourishes. That is the dream.

But the reality we are witnessing could not be further from it.

The rapid deployment of AI today is not aligned with human well-being. It is driven by an ideology — one that treats human beings as obstacles to be overcome. Slogans like "move fast and break things" are rooted in a form of technological determinism that devalues human agency.

See ***Tech,*** *page 3*

PHOTOGRAPHERS FLOCK TO XINJIANG FOR CELESTIAL LIGHT SHOW

With its lack of light pollution and vast emptiness, the Gobi Desert proves a perfect spot to watch Perseid meteor shower

By **XU LIN** in Hami, Xinjiang
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Long after sunset, sweltering 40 C heat still hung over the vast, remote Gobi Desert as hot winds swept across the wilderness. Suddenly and fleetingly, a blazing fireball streaked across the star-studded sky, leaving a long, glowing trail and drawing loud whoops of amazement from stargazers.

Astrophotographers stationed behind their tripods leaned forward to eagerly check their camera screens, hoping to have captured the fleeting moment. As the Perseid meteor shower peaked on Aug 12 and 13, stargazers flocked to the Pterosaur-Yardang Dahaidao Scenic Area in Hami, Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, to witness the celestial event.

"Stargazers are absolutely drawn to this place, and for good reason. Beyond minimal light pollution, the air here is extremely dry with little dust, creating exceptional atmospheric transparency," said veteran astrophotographer Liu Bing from Beijing. "As a result, stars retain their sharpness in camera shots, and less starlight is scattered away, making it possible to capture stunning pictures."

Liu and other astrophotographers recently attended the annual Sweet Whispers to the Galaxy Festival in Hami and captured images of the Perseid meteor shower, an event that aims to reinforce the area's reputation as a premier destination for stargazing. Many of them are from China StarVision Alliance, a domestic platform for nearly 1,000 astrophotographers.

Official data showed that Dahaidao registered about 25,000 visitor arrivals and over 10,000 vehicles in early August. To cater to stargazers' needs, the site imposed strict night lighting restrictions and all stargazing spots featured 24-hour security patrols, emergency contacts and safety signs.



A meteor streaks across the night sky in Hami, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Aug 12. LIU BING / FOR CHINA DAILY

For astrophotographers, making advance preparations is always vital — from understanding lunar phases to scouting locations with minimal light pollution.

They check shooting sites in daylight and use apps to monitor weather and cloud cover, keeping close track of shifts in these conditions to the nearest hour. They also use apps to forecast how stars will move across the night sky and assess potential interference from the moon.

"When observing the Perseid meteor shower, we needed to locate the constellation Perseus and learn about the radiant point in advance — the spot in the sky from which all meteors seem to originate. As the radiant rises, it shapes the paths of meteor trails across the sky," said Wang Junfeng, from Beijing.

One night was mostly overcast, and the group waited patiently until clear breaks opened up between the clouds. "We could only seize those brief windows to observe the meteors and take photos," Wang said.

Another member, Liu Dapeng, set up three cameras at different locations before dusk, adjusted their shooting parameters and configured them to shoot a frame every few seconds until predawn twilight.

See ***Meteors,*** *page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.



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INDEPTH







Left: A consumer selects an ice cup at a supermarket in Shanghai. WANG ZITONG / XINHUA **Middle:** A glass of coke is served with ice at a hotel in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, in July. JIANG LINGGUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY
Right: An employee at an ice-making company refills edible ice cups in Changsha, Hunan province, on Aug 11. YU CHUNSHENG / XINHUA

Ice, Chinese consumers' newest crush

Preference for cold drinks sparks debate on worth of traditional hot, warm beverages

By **WANG YING** in Shanghai
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In China, drinking warm or hot water is a long-standing daily practice passed down through generations and believed to bring good health.

However, fueled by an online buzz and changes to drinking habits, Chinese consumers — in particular social media-savvy young ones — are now putting ice, and plenty of it, in their drinks.

At convenience stores, cups of ice have become a popular seller. At tea and coffee shops, "full ice, no water" has become a popular way to order a drink. Young consumers have also turned cups of ice into a social media sensation, using them to create DIY drinks that have attracted huge online attention.

Gu Xiaoxiao, 36, a junior middle school teacher in Shanghai, is one of the ice drink devotees. For almost half the year, she has a cup of iced coffee at least once a day.

"I usually start in April or May and keep drinking iced coffee until September or October. Besides my daily quota, I also order iced drinks when dining out or meeting friends. Recently, I even arranged to queue with friends for a popular ice cup coffee that had gone viral online," said Gu.

According to a paper on China's urban consumer behavior in 2025, ice cup sales have grown by more than 300 percent for two consecutive years, with consumers in the first-tier cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong province's Guangzhou and Shenzhen buying an average of 48 cups per person per year, reported ThePaper.cn.

Publicly available data shows that ice cups are gaining wider market penetration, expanding from plain to flavored varieties and ice cubes designed for cocktails. A search for "ice cups" on Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, returned more than 40,000 posts.

Zhang Yi, CEO and chief analyst at iiMedia Research, attributed the rising demand for ice cups to the past two summers being very hot and young people wanting to make their own drinks using ice cups.

"The cold chain improvement has led to a cost reduction in ice transportation. On social media, the 'full ice, no water' trend has also become a new way for people to socialize," said Zhang.

"Consumers are increasingly willing to pay for ice that is cleaner and comes in more distinctive shapes," he added.

Surging demand

Dong Yuanyuan, head of ice-cup procurement at Freshippo, a grocery and fresh goods retail chain, said: "Over the past two years, we have clearly seen ice cups grow into a sizable market."

"Some have predicted that edible ice could eventually outsell ice cream, while others have joked that edible ice is taking over the world," she said.

According to Dong, ice cups first emerged in Japan and South Korea, where iced drinks are popular year-round. In Japan, annual consumption has reached 2.57 billion cups, comparable to the volume of bottled water consumed.

Dong said when ice cups entered the Chinese market more than a decade ago, monthly sales were only a few dozen boxes. From 2024 to 2026, annual consumption in first-tier cities had reached 48 cups per person.



A contestant adds ice cubes while making a coffee drink during a village cafe competition in Beijing, on June 12. "Full ice, no water" has become a popular way in the coffee industry in China. LI WENMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

"Annual ice cup consumption is already more than twice the roughly 20 cups of coffee consumed per person. In addition, the market is growing by more than 300 percent a year, leaving ample room for further growth," she added.

Freshippo first introduced ice cups in 2021, along with bags of ice for consumers looking to have them available at home.

According to Freshippo data, demand for ice peaks earlier than sales of iced drinks during the year.

"Driven by strong demand for DIY drinks over the past two years, we have moved up the launch of our ice cups from early summer to early spring. As the camping season begins in spring, we usually see the first sales peak," said Dong.

"After the 2026 FIFA World Cup kicked off in June, sales of slow-melting ice cubes developed specifically for cocktails rose 220 percent week-on-week on average, making them one of the season's standout products in the drinks market," Dong added.

Tao Tao, an illustrator based in Beijing, traces her habit of using ice cups back to her time studying in South Korea several years ago. In South Korea, she noticed people often purchased brewed coffee and ice cups separately at supermarkets, making it easy to create an iced Americano.

She was delighted to find that in the past two years, ice cups have become readily available in Beijing supermarkets, making a cold drink easily accessible during the hot summer months.

"The combination of ice cups with various beverages like coconut water, cold brew coffee, juice, or alcohol allows for simple and instant creative daily creation," she said.

Japanese convenience store chain Lawson said a steady growth has been seen in sales of ice cups and bagged ice over the past two years. Its ice cup sales rose more than 30 percent from May to July in both 2025 and 2026.



Christmas-themed beverages are served with ice at a restaurant in Beijing in November. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"Young consumers are increasingly pairing ice cups with coffee and other drinks, driving Lawson to introduce more creative products, including sparkling ice cups and rainbow-colored varieties, to meet their changing tastes," said the company.

Zheng Wei, general manager of Ice Extreme (Beijing) Food Technology Ltd, a Beijing-based edible ice manufacturer, said Chinese official media has forecast that the iced drink market will reach 63.9 billion yuan ($9.48 billion) in 2026.

Zheng said the demand for iced drinks has become more consistent. In the past, most factories would shut down during the off-season. Now, they run one shift in the off-season and two during the peak summer season.

"Previously, market demand mainly came from businesses in the likes of convenience stores, but in recent years, innovative retail formats including instant retail have seen rapid growth," Zheng said.

"The market used to be dominated by basic products such as cups of ice and bagged ice. Now we offer products including specially-shaped ice, ice buckets and slow-melting cocktail ice, tailoring to diversified needs."

Heated discussion

The iced drink trend has also sparked a major cultural debate.

In traditional Chinese health practices, cold foods and drinks have long been treated with caution.

Traditional Chinese medicine posits that winter is characterized by an abundance of cold energy, which can easily harm the body's *yang* energy.

Consuming raw and cold foods can allow this cold energy to penetrate the body, leading to stagnation of *qi* and blood, and resulting in symptoms like stomach pain and menstrual cramps. Cold water is believed to harm the spleen and stomach, weakening *yang* and potentially causing digestive issues such as diarrhea or loss of appetite. In contrast, hot water is thought to disperse cold energy, promote the circulation of *qi* and blood, and warm and nourish the body.

Wang Bo, chief physician of the department of gastroenterology at Tongji Hospital affiliated to Tongji Medical College of Huazhong University of Science and Technology, told Life Times media outlet that moderate consumption of cold drinks can have some benefits.

"Cold drinks can help cool the body and relieve heat. They can also stimulate the many cold-sensitive receptors in the mouth and on the tongue, sending signals to the brain that produce a feeling of pleasure," Wang said.

From a traditional Chinese medicine perspective, however, cold drinks are best consumed between noon and 3 pm, when *yang* energy is believed to be at its strongest, and consuming ice during this period is considered less likely to cause harm from excessive cold.

Zhang Min, an acupuncture practitioner at Longhua Hospital affiliated to Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, said in an article published in the Shanghai Observer that the debate over whether it's better to drink hot or cold water is not a simple one. "Modern nutrition and medicine increasingly emphasize individual differences, suggesting that what might be 'poison' for one person could be 'medicine' for another."

Zhang said this debate reflects two different health philosophies. The Eastern perspective tends to focus on nurturing and prevention, viewing the body as a delicate system that requires careful maintenance.

The Western perspective, however, leans toward training and adaptation, treating the body as a resilient system capable of handling challenges. "Moderate cold exposure, such as drinking cold water or taking cold baths, is believed to stimulate the circulatory system, boost metabolism, and enhance immunity, akin to a form of exercise for the body," Zhang wrote.

There was also a public health imperative for the promotion of drinking boiled water, according to a 2024 article published by the International Journal of Social Sciences and Public Administration.

Following a cholera outbreak in China in 1932, chaotic water usage was identified by a prominent medical figure as the primary cause for its spread. Due to the absence of a running water system, residents upstream often disposed of their household waste into rivers, exposing those downstream to infection risks.

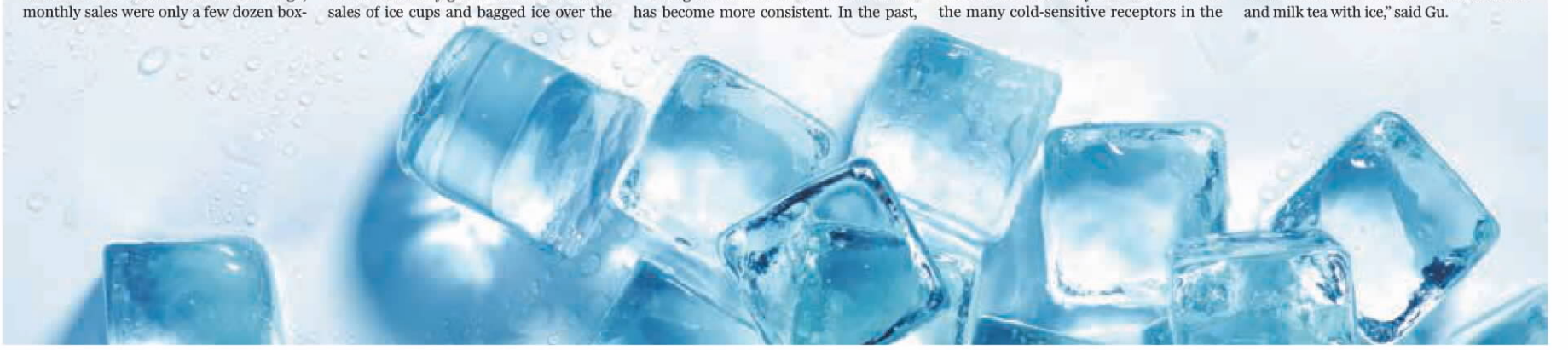
Following medical recommendations, Shanghai established numerous affordable boiled water shops which resulted in reducing the patient mortality rate from 30 percent to 7.4 percent. This initiative instilled a nationwide habit of consuming boiled water, the article said.

In order to address the issue of widespread parasite infestation during that period, an initiative to promote boiled water was once again prioritized. Previous efforts were limited to major cities like Shanghai and Guangzhou.

Boiling water facilities were made mandatory in all factories, military camps, and farms, the article said. Restrictions were imposed on daily drinking water and most domestic sources, thereby necessitating reliance on these designated boiling water rooms. A portable thermos flask emerged as an iconic symbol of that era, with people gradually adapting to queuing up at specific times for a serving of hot boiled water.

Today, people such as Gu, the school teacher, take a balanced approach to hot versus cold drinks.

"In winter, I drink a lot of tea and usually brew it with hot water. But when the weather gets hot, I find hot tea harder to drink. I either have bottled water or coffee and milk tea with ice," said Gu.



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TOP NEWS

Safeguard: Heritage turns into a living bridge

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"This reflects the enduring spirit of the Chinese nation — centered on virtue, benevolence and profound love — which remains vibrant after thousands of years, and also highly aligns with President Xi's vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity," Zhang added.

According to tradition, Mazu, the Chinese goddess of marine weather and maritime safety, was a Song Dynasty (960-1279) fisherwoman named Lin Mo, from Meizhou Island, who was later deified.

Revered for her ability to predict weather, she died at age 28 during a mission to rescue fisherfolk from treacherous storms and was deified as Mazu, meaning benevolent mother. She is often portrayed as carrying a lantern to light the stormy seas, and was long credited with calming storms and guiding ships home.

Belief in Mazu eventually was spread along maritime trade routes by Chinese seafarers and grew into a global bond, with over 11,000 temples and 300 million followers across 50 countries.

During his tenure in Fujian, Xi actively promoted the protection of Meizhou Island and its unique Mazu culture. He planted trees on the island to protect its environment and allocated 2 million yuan ($297,500) to support the Mazu Square project to accommodate larger crowds, after he learned that the project's construction faced a tight budget.

He said after a visit to the island that Mazu culture reflects the character of the Chinese nation, and its exchange and dissemination across the globe can help build a positive image of the Chinese people around the world.

Spiritual asset

Inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009, Mazu culture now serves as a shared spiritual asset along the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

As her golden statue travels for international processions and thousands of overseas people return to her birthplace each year, this ancient heritage remains a living bridge for global fellowship.

Ke Li, deputy director of Putian University's Mazu Culture Research Institute, said, "The core spirit of Mazu culture aligns perfectly with the philosophy of the early-warning solutions, rooted in a shared commitment to putting people's safety first."

The system also reflects Mazu's spirit of universal beneficence — echoing the goal of protection for everyone regardless of geography or background — and mirrors her ancient wisdom of foresight, blending traditional weather forecasting with modern rapid-response mechanisms, Ke said.

Reflecting this spirit, the MAZU system has become a widely sought-after global public good. More than 40 national meteorological agencies are already using MAZU's cloud-based services, while customized versions of the system have been deployed in Pakistan, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Jordan, Mongolia, the Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka, according to the China Meteorological Administration.

Nestled on one of the world's busiest maritime trade routes in East Africa, Djibouti has become a critical proving ground for the platform. An upgraded version of the MAZU system will be put into operation by the end of this year, which will sharpen its local forecast resolution from 9 km to 3 km.

"MAZU 2.0 is very useful because we have several seaports on the coast," said Mohamed Ismail Nour, director-general of the Djibouti National Meteorological Agency, who expects to deepen port and shipping weather cooperation for safer maritime operations.

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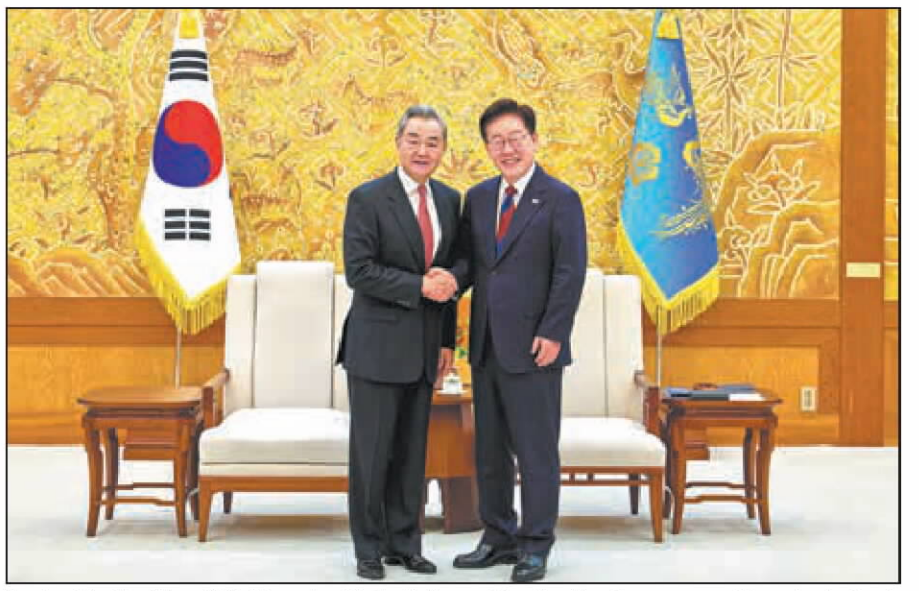

Foreign Minister Wang Yi (left) meets with South Korean President Lee Jae-myung on Thursday in Seoul, the capital of South Korea. XINHUA

FM's ROK visit builds positive momentum

Wang calls for strategic cooperation, political mutual trust in bilateral ties

By ZHOU JIN
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Foreign Minister Wang Yi wrapped up a two-day visit to the Republic of Korea on Thursday, which observers said reflected continuous efforts by the two neighbors to maintain the positive momentum in bilateral ties.

The visit aimed to implement the consensus reached by the two heads of state during their reciprocal visits, deepen political mutual trust and advance mutually beneficial cooperation, while laying the groundwork for further interactions between the two leaders during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in November, they said.

This was Wang's first official trip to the ROK in five years. The two neighbors will celebrate the 34th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations on Monday.

During Wang's meeting with ROK President Lee Jae-myung in Seoul on Thursday, the president said that Seoul and Beijing should become mutually dependent and mutually beneficial partners with complementary strengths.

Lee said that trade cooperation between the two countries has maintained strong growth. Highlighting that the number of mutual visits between the two peoples is expected to exceed 10 million this year, he noted that public perceptions of China in the ROK continue to improve.

Lee said that he looks forward to visiting Shenzhen for the 2026 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, calling it an important opportunity to work with China to advance their strategic cooperative partnership to a new level.

China-ROK relations have fully recovered and made positive progress since the beginning of this year, Wang noted, adding that such a fact demonstrates that a rational, pragmatic and positive policy toward China fully serves the ROK's interests.

When meeting with the ROK's top presidential national security adviser Wi Sung-lac on Thursday, Wang expressed hope that the ROK will exercise genuine strategic autonomy, refrain from bloc confrontation or taking sides, and develop its relations with China, the United States and other major countries in a mutually compatible manner.

During their strategic dialogue, they also had an in-depth exchange of views on regional security issues.

Wang stressed that it is necessary to remain highly vigilant against the rhetoric and actions of Japan's right-wing forces, which seek to turn back the wheel of history, and that the resurgence of Japanese militarism must never be allowed.

Wang's visit also came as the ROK and the US confirmed that they were sharply scaling back major annual joint drills, a move viewed as a goodwill gesture toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The fundamental way to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula is to address the root causes and to push for the US to abandon its hostile policy toward the DPRK, Wang told Wi.

Wang called on all parties to do more to facilitate the resumption of dialogue and restoration of mutual trust, expressing hopes that the Korean Peninsula will move toward peaceful coexistence between the ROK and the DPRK, ultimately achieving lasting peace and stability on the peninsula.

Li Jiacheng, an associate professor at Liaoning University's School of International Studies, said that both the US and the ROK hope China can serve as a bridge and play a greater role in facilitating their engagement with the DPRK.

In his talks with ROK Foreign Minister Cho Hyun on Wednesday, Wang said that China's vast market offers the ROK enormous opportunities due to its geographical proximity. Wang expressed hope that the two sides will continue to expand cooperation.

The two countries should also tap new growth areas for cooperation in artificial intelligence, green transition, the digital economy, high-end equipment and the silver economy, he added.

The Chinese foreign minister called on the two countries to accelerate negotiations on the second phase of the China-ROK Free Trade Agreement.

Deeper China-Africa media relations urged

By ZHAO JIA
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African officials and media leaders called on Thursday for China-Africa media cooperation to move beyond equipment support and program exchanges toward coproduction and two-way storytelling, in order to help the African media better narrate their own stories and bring a wider African perspective to Chinese audiences.

They made the remarks as the 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation opened in Beijing, bringing together about 400 government, media, diplomatic, business and academic representatives from China and 45 African countries.

The three-day forum is being held as China and Africa mark 70 years of launching diplomatic relations in 2026 and observe the China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges.

Alhaji Mohamed Sarjoh Bah, the African Union's permanent representative to China, described the media as a strategic tool for development, cultural identity and economic opportunity, as well as a major force shaping international perception. He emphasized that Africa should not remain a passive recipient of information, and should instead become a producer and distributor of knowledge and ideas.

He urged cooperation beyond content exchanges in film, broadcasting, animation, gaming and digital content to create value chains that generate employment and attract investment.

Ahunna Eziakonwa, United Nations undersecretary-general and special adviser on Africa, made a video address to the forum in which she described storytelling as an essential tool for development.

External narratives have long obscured African realities, but young African creators are changing that through streaming, animation and digital content, Eziakonwa said, adding that Sino-African joint productions, along with technologies adapted to African languages and contexts, could strengthen the continent's narrative sovereignty.

Gregoire Ndjaka, director-general of the African Union of Broadcasting, underscored that cooperation between Africa and China should promote an exchange of stories, voices, ideas and experiences.

Ndjaka noted Chinese support for African broadcasting and the provision of news, documentaries and other programs on AUBVision, the union's content-sharing platform, but emphasized that African content should receive greater exposure on Chinese platforms, giving Chinese audiences more opportunities to understand the continent from an African perspective.

Evelyne Butoyi, communication and media minister of Burundi, which currently chairs the African Union, said Africa-China cooperation has improved grassroots access to information and cultural content. She cited the China-aided "Access to Satellite TV for 10,000 African Villages" project, which has provided transmission equipment to 500 villages in Burundi and extended digital television coverage in remote areas.

Cao Shumin, deputy head of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and head of the National Radio and Television Administration, highlighted the scale of China-Africa media cooperation.

Over the past two years, more than 80 Chinese productions have aired in Africa, while over 80 programs from 29 African countries have been shown on major Chinese television channels and streaming platforms, Cao said.

The two sides have coproduced about 50 audiovisual programs, while China has organized 45 training programs for more than 1,000 media professionals from 32 African countries, she added.

On Thursday, the forum also unveiled 80 practical cooperation projects and issued a joint declaration calling for deeper collaboration in content production, digital transformation and AI governance.



Participants pose for a group photo during the 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation in Beijing on Thursday. The event runs through Friday. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Tech: AI should collaborate with humans

From page 1

At its core lies a dangerous myth — that machines will soon surpass us in every cognitive domain, rendering human expertise obsolete.

This myth is not innocent. It is already being used to justify mass layoffs of software engineers, writers, translators and analysts.

Tech executives frame these cuts as inevitable progress. But a clear-eyed look at the facts tells a different story.

We are still in AI's early stages. Today's systems mimic certain cognitive functions, but they do not understand, reason or reliably replace human judgment.

Consider autonomous vehicles — promised by 2020, still struggling on city streets. Consider the "autonomous agents" heralded for 2025 — now quietly postponed.

As someone who works on autonomous systems, I can attest that current AI lacks genuine understanding. It matches patterns. It does not think.

Some argue that reasoning will magically "emerge" as we scale models to an ever-increasing number of parameters. This narrative suits the tech giants perfectly. It justifies billion-dollar investments in data centers and infrastructure. But this is a gamble with no scientific basis, one that leads AI to a dead end.

We need a different path: AI that collaborates with humans, instead of replacing them — specialized, transparent systems designed to augment expertise in fields such as medicine, engineering, scientific research and business management, not general-purpose black boxes.

This "collaborative AI" raises profound scientific challenges. How do we build machines that explain their reasoning in human-understandable terms? How do we establish trust between humans and machines? How do we design systems that solve problems with us, rather than for us? Consider a medical diagnosis. A collaborative AI would not replace the doctor's judgment. It would surface relevant research, flag anomalies and explain its recommendations in plain language — allowing the physician to make the final, informed decision. This differs fundamentally from current "black box" systems, which provide take-it-or-leave-it answers.

These are hard problems. They require investment in explainability, reliability and domain-specific knowledge — not just bigger models and more data. Yet academic research, which should lead this charge, has been sidelined. University laboratories are unable to compete with the private labs of a handful of companies and often find themselves reduced to playing catch-up. When research is concentrated in a few private labs, its priorities shift toward proprietary features, rather than scientific understanding. This distorts the entire field. We must revitalize university research — driven by curiosity, transparency and peer review — which is best positioned to address the challenges of explainability and trust.

The conditions conducive to change are taking shape. Public distrust of unaccountable AI is growing. From chatbots that make up facts, to facial recognition systems with racial biases, to autonomous driving systems with fatal flaws, the public has seen too many buzzwords touted as major breakthroughs. Every widely publicized hype campaign erodes trust. The technical limits of "scaling up" are becoming apparent — even to the industry's true believers. And the economic pressure weighing on tech giants — the gap between colossal investments and a market still struggling to generate returns — is becoming impossible to ignore.

History shows that humanity has capitalized on technological revolutions by balancing risks and benefits. The steam engine, electricity and the internet — each brought profound change, but each was shaped by regulation, public debate and ethical reflection. Artificial intelligence should be no exception. The initial rush of enthusiasm should give way to sober reflection. Societies built frameworks to ensure these technologies served the common good. We are now at that same inflection point.

We have a choice. We can continue down the path of replacement, building machines that mimic us, supplant us and ultimately marginalize us. Or we can invest in a future where AI enriches human intelligence rather than replacing it.

That future requires a global effort: governments funding collaborative AI research, universities prioritizing human-AI interaction, and citizens demanding transparency and accountability. This means public funding for collaborative AI, curricula in human-AI interaction design, and regulatory frameworks requiring explainability before deployment in sensitive domains from healthcare to criminal justice and the management of critical infrastructure.

The question is not whether AI holds extraordinary potential — it clearly does. The question is whether we will have the wisdom to steer it toward a true symbiosis with humanity and prevent it from insidiously gaining the upper hand. This is our historic responsibility. Now is the time to act.

The author is a laureate of the 2007 Turing Award (known as the Nobel Prize for Computing) and founder of the Verimag laboratory in Grenoble. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Meteors: Livestream gains views

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Liu Dapeng said that smartphones, when mounted on a tripod, can capture the starry sky. Beginners can invest in cameras and wide-angle lenses based on their budgets, or opt for affordable secondhand gear, he said.

"After putting it into practice, they can think about whether they want to stick with astrophotography. It can be tiring, enduring outdoor hardships such as freezing cold and rain. Safety is always paramount. It is very easy to get lost in the desert at night, so you should travel with others and take no risks," he added.

Zhou Bo led a team to livestream the Perseid meteor shower from Dahaidao, Barkol Lake and Yiwu county. Drawing on his multidisciplinary knowledge including geology and history, he promoted Hami's natural resources and cultural heritage while hosting the livestream.

Zhou said he believes that the meteors stir curiosity and a thirst for knowledge among his viewers, inspiring wonder at the boundless cosmos.

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WORLD

Comfort food



Migrant women wait for donated meals on Wednesday at a sports field converted by residents into an improvised shelter following a mass crossing of migrants from Morocco, in the El Principe neighborhood of Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta. VIOLETA SANTOS MOURA / REUTERS

Trump expands economic warfare against Iran

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

US President Donald Trump has declared an "economic D-Day" against Iran amid a ceasefire deadlock, threatening countries that provide a lifeline to Tehran with "tremendous consequences".

Trump's threats came just as the United Arab Emirates suspended all trade with Iran on Wednesday after the UAE came under renewed attack, triggering nationwide warnings, a day earlier.

In a social media post on Wednesday, Trump boasted that no one has given Iran "a greater opportunity to make a deal than me", adding that Tehran failed to take it as he announced "the most crushing economic operation ever taken against any country".

Trump said it would be "economic warfare and isolation on an unprecedented scale" and claimed that Iran "is hanging by a thread".

"Today, I am also announcing that any country that allows its financial institutions, businesses, airports or government entities to provide any type of lifeline to Iran will itself face tremendous economic consequences," he said.

"This will be an Economic D-Day," he added, reiterating Iran "will never have a nuclear weapon".

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi pushed back on Thursday, saying the "so-called Economic D-Day is a diversion from America's own crisis", citing debt and surging interest costs.

"Doubling down on failed policies will only bring further defeat — and enmity of Iranians. US economic terrorism threatens global economy and sovereignty worldwide," he said.

Iran has been under international sanctions for decades, especially since the US imposed sanctions following the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Since the current war broke out on Feb 28, the US has targeted Iranian energy exports, disrupting Tehran's primary revenue stream. Washington has also targeted entities allegedly smuggling Iranian-origin liquefied petroleum gas disguised as Omani LPG to South and East Asia.

The US Treasury Department has also imposed sanctions against Iran's banking and foreign exchange networks, and weapons procurement.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Thursday that imposing sanctions and exerting pressure will not be useful in solving the Iran issue.

China calls on relevant parties to take responsible steps and resolve the issue through political and diplomatic means, he said.

Without interference

At a meeting with Iraqi President Nizar Amidi, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf warned that the US is seeking to plunder the resources of the Gulf states, the Tasnim News Agency reported.

Regional countries can establish security and stability through unity and without foreign interference, Ghalibaf said.

The US is the main cause of the region's problems, he said, adding that Washington's hegemonic approach has fueled recent conflicts, inflicting losses on Iran and Iraq.

Rasha Al Joundy, a senior researcher at the Dubai Public Policy Research Centre, told China Daily that by imposing more economic pressure on Iran at this stage, the US "seeks to inflict more internal pressure on the government".

However, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is the one making decisions and therefore, this will inflict political pressure on the government because of economic pressure on the people who are the most affected and vulnerable, she said.

The pressure will not have much impact militarily on the IRGC's decisions, she added.

"Strategically I don't believe that the US would accomplish short-term political gains with new sanctions, but it could push for a new round of military confrontation in the region," she said.

"If the US administration would adopt this as a long-term strategy, then the outcome would depend on whether it is supported and implemented for a long timeframe, without suspensions or side exemptions."

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Groups challenge rule ending Duration of Status

By **MAY ZHOU** in Houston, Texas
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Multiple organizations filed a complaint and a motion for preliminary injunction challenging the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) final rule ending the Duration of Status (D/S) framework for international students, exchange visitors and representatives of foreign media in the US District Court for the District of Massachusetts on Tuesday.

The complaint argues that DHS failed to adequately assess its costs and benefits, meaningfully respond to public comments, consider less burdensome alternatives or justify the rule based on its stated objectives.

The lawsuit also alleges that DHS provided an inadequate public comment period and exceeded its statutory authority.

DHS gave the public 32 days and drew 22,000 comments, including opposition from more than 30 Congress members. Despite there being more comments opposing the changes, DHS enacted the new rule, which is scheduled to take effect on Sept 15.

Fanta Aw, executive director and CEO of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, said this decision is "a solution in search of a problem".

"The rule will severely undermine the contributions international students make to US campuses, economies and national security," Aw said in a statement. "After carefully reviewing the final rule and the sweeping harm it will cause to our national interest, it is clear that litigation is warranted and necessary."

For about half a century, F-1 students and J-1 visitors could remain in the US for as long as they are enrolled in an academic program with no fixed departure date.

Under the new rule, international students will be given a specific end date aligning with the academic program length or four years, whichever is shorter. For longer programs, the students are required to file an extension of stay.

In addition, F-1 undergraduate students won't be able to change their major or transfer to another college in the first year. They can't pursue another major at the same or lower education level after graduation.

F-1 graduate students are prohibited from switching majors or schools at all, and the duration of F-1 students for English learning will be limited to 24 months in aggregate.

"The new restriction doesn't make any sense," Liu, an art student in Chicago who wants to be identified by his last name only, told China Daily. "An arts degree usually stops at master's level. Serious art students often pursue another master's degree in a different medium to expand their horizon for creativity."

Dual degrees are not uncommon in many fields, Liu said.

For example, research physicians often pursue both MD and PhD to treat patients and run research labs. Jobs in bioinformatics require training in both biology and computer science. Architecture design often benefits from engineering training.

The lawsuit argued that a four-year fixed term is incompatible with many programs, particularly PhDs.

NAFSA estimated that "the median years to a research doctorate is 5.7 years from entering a program to completion, while those who complete the master's/doctorate sequence take an average of 7.3 years from entering graduate school to completion".

Such restrictions are very off-putting. A survey by NAFSA and The Institute for Progress showed that 49 percent of current international students would not have studied in the US without D/S.

College application platform Common App showed that international applicants were down by 9 percent for this fall semester. Many universities are expecting a steep drop in international graduate students.

Miriam Feldblum, president and CEO of the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, said these changes ignore "actual program lengths or students' educational needs" and shift "academic decisions from institutions to immigration officials".

"The rule will disrupt educational pathways, impose significant new burdens on colleges and universities, and make the United States less competitive as the premier destination for global talent," Feldblum said.

The lawsuit said many commenters warned that declining international enrollment would be catastrophic.

"Many cited the Clemens study, which estimated that within ten years, the economic costs of eliminating D/S would be $72-145 billion annually," it said in the court document.

The new rule would also limit I visa holders — representatives of foreign information media — to a maximum of 240 days. For Chinese passport holders, it's much shorter at 90 days.

The lawsuit said that many are concerned that the new rule requiring international journalists to file frequent extension of stay requests would put government officials in a position to punish journalists for exercising their First Amendment rights.

Growing US national debt 'huge burden'

Record level of obligations could eventually hit Americans with higher borrowing costs

By **BELINDA ROBINSON** in New York
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Millions of Americans who are already struggling with the cost of living could eventually feel the effects of persistently high debt as US gross federal debt surpassed $40 trillion on Wednesday and economists and think tanks warned that it's a "huge burden" that could drive up interest rates, inflation and borrowing costs.

> "Despite the obvious recklessness of this fiscal path, we are showing no signs of slowing down."
>
> **Michael A. Peterson**, CEO of a think tank focused on US fiscal challenges

The record-breaking, unprecedented, national debt reached the milestone in part due to defense costs, social programs like Social Security and Medicare, and interest payments on that debt — a big part of federal spending, experts said.

"The national debt hitting $40 trillion is a huge burden on the back of every American," Christopher Ball, director of the Central European Institute at Quinnipiac University, Istvan Széchenyi Chair in International Economics and an associate professor of economics, told China Daily. "Like all debt, it must be paid back. If it were at a more reasonable level then we could pay a little more in taxes or cut a little spending, not too much and not too painfully. But when it is that high, it means we have to suffer serious pains or go bankrupt.

"This doesn't have to be done today — which is why Americans may not feel the burden today — but the payments will come due. When that happens most likely the average American will suffer in facing really high interest rates, really high taxes and massive cuts in basic services like Social Security, Medicare and all other government-supported social services. Again, the longer we wait, the more the pain when we face it."

High government borrowing can put pressure on market interest rates, and has already raised borrowing costs on mortgages and cars, say experts.

The benchmark 30-year fixed rate mortgage was 6.65 percent on Aug 20, higher than a year ago when it was 6.58 percent, The Associated Press reported. The rates are influenced by the 10-year Treasury yield, inflation forecasts and the economic outlook.

American consumer spending is vital, so a pull back on shopping could cause slower economic growth, data shows.

But the bond market showed signs of strain on Thursday due to fears over US government debt and worries about high inflation. Stocks fell as investors evaluated concerns.

The S&P 500 dropped 0.87 percent to close at 7,641.16 on Thursday. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 703.84 points. The Nasdaq composite fell 1 percent to close at 26,067.17.

Americans have already seen fluctuating gas prices this year, while Trump renewed threats to hurt Iran economically on Wednesday.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude settled at $93.78 on Thursday.

The rise in the national debt also comes as the administration said it's focusing on more spending on the ongoing conflict with Iran.

Kush Desai, a White House spokesman, told The AP that the Trump administration "has been focused on slashing waste, fraud and abuse in federal spending while accelerating economic growth to get America's debt-to-GDP ratio trending in the right direction".

But Michael A. Peterson, CEO of the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, a think tank focused on US fiscal challenges, said in a statement: "It's shocking that we've doubled the federal debt in less than 10 years, and we must change course.

"The more debt we take on, the more interest costs we have to bear, which now even exceed the cost of national defense. And every trillion we add to our debt contributes to higher interest rates and inflation, increasing the mortgages, car loans and credit card bills of all Americans."

Peterson said that debt harms economic growth, slowing wage increases while the cost of living continues to rise.

The US national debt has increased over several presidential administrations, rising when the federal government runs a budget deficit and spends more money than it collects in tax revenue.

An analysis of OECD data by The AP described the US as having the worst fiscal position among developed economies.

The Bipartisan Policy Center estimates that the US will reach the $41.1 trillion statutory debt limit between late winter and mid-summer of 2027.

If the limit is reached, the Treasury must use measures to address it.

And Congress must vote on whether to raise or suspend it, as Congress is responsible for setting a limit to federal borrowing. It can also adjust or abolish it.

Peterson added: "Despite the obvious recklessness of this fiscal path, we are showing no signs of slowing down. The debt growth is projected to accelerate as our society ages and healthcare costs continue to balloon. If we don't reform our budget, we will hit $50 trillion in just 6 years."

通 知

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某大型国际化集团已正式启动其位于美国加州圣何塞（San Jose）的数据中心（IDC）的出售程序。本次交易将采用两轮竞价机制，符合条件的意向方，须于 2026 年 9 月前递交非约束性报价。符合条件的意向方若希望获取进一步信息，请通过邮箱联系。

工作时间：周一至周五 9:00 至 18:00
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NOTICE

To all potential investors,

A multinational corporation has officially initiated a separate sales process for its internet data centers (IDCs) located in San Jose, California, United States. The transaction will be conducted via a two-round competitive bidding process, with the submission deadline for Non-Binding Offers set for September 2026. Qualified interested parties seeking further information are invited to contact via email.

Office hours: 09:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday
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New system is built to cultivate private sector

By YUAN SHENGGAO

On the shores of the East China Sea, Wenzhou in Zhejiang province — a cradle of China's private economy — is experiencing a profound transformation that is permeating the day-to-day operations of the city's 1.57 million business entities.

Since 2025, the Wenzhou city government has rolled out a plan to coordinate 41 departments across the city. It has introduced measures covering seven areas, which include improving government service models, fostering robust business entities and empowering credit-based business.

The city is building a new system of regulation and service featuring "omnipresent support and non-intrusive oversight", cultivating a business environment conducive to the free development of the private economy.

"I never imagined opening a shop could be this easy," said a visually impaired Wenzhou resident surnamed Jin. Hoping to launch a massage parlor, Jin turned to government service counters for assistance due to limited mobility.

Thanks to the one-stop service mechanism, the dedicated service zone for individual industrial and commercial households helped him complete all registration procedures within a short period.

Jin's experience epitomizes Wenzhou's considerate business environment. Rather than resolving isolated cases, the city strives to upgrade solutions for institutional frameworks and address diverse categories of matters.

Integrating value-added services from multiple government departments, industry associations and social organizations, Wenzhou has set up service zones for individual industrial and commercial households to foster a new ecosystem.

Additionally, Wenzhou has established a closed-loop system to resolve corporate demands that integrates online and offline channels. Via the online platform, enterprises can submit requests with a single click. Offline, monthly government-business forums are held to tackle challenges, while a dedicated service counter for unresolved matters takes on the most intractable problems.

As local enterprises develop, Wenzhou's market regulation administration provides tiered cultivation support, encouraging large-scale enterprises and individual industrial and commercial entities to support one another and share supply chain and channel resources.

As one of the birthplaces of China's private economy, Wenzhou was approved in 2018 to build the country's first national pilot zone for the "dual health" initiative — a national reform pilot for the sound development of the private economy and the sound growth of private entrepreneurs. It stands as a benchmark in Zhejiang's efforts to advance economic structural reform driven by the private economy.

To advance this initiative, Wenzhou set up a working group led by the city's Party committee and established a coordinated mechanism linking authorities at all levels.

A citywide channel was opened for direct feedback on issues arising in the pilot program to support timely, full-process guidance. Meanwhile, a provincial-city joint promotion mechanism for the initiatives was put in place, offering an upward channel for reform initiatives that encounter bottlenecks at the city level.

In parallel, Wenzhou has enshrined the "dual health" initiative in laws and regulations. The city government enacted China's first local ordinance dedicated to the initiative, rolled out an evaluation index system for the sound development of the private economy and an evaluation index system for the sound growth of private entrepreneurs, and also released the Wenzhou Private Economy Financial Service Index.

To boost entrepreneurs' sense of happiness and security, the city has also rolled out a suite of policies to respect and support businesses, and has designated Nov 1 every year as the private entrepreneurs' festival.

In October 2025, the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce released the 2025 lists of the top 500 private enterprises by research and development investment and the top 500 private enterprises by invention patents. Eight and 10 Wenzhou enterprises were named on the two lists, respectively, up by one and five from 2024.



A view of Binjiang central business district in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province in September 2025. LIU JILI / FOR CHINA DAILY



The Wenling-Yuhuan section of the Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway opens on Aug 8. The picture shows the inaugural G7364 train traveling over the Xuanmen Bay Grand Bridge. XINHUA

High-Speed railway opens in Zhejiang

Network becomes a model of attracting investment into major projects in province

By YUAN SHENGGAO

After the Wenling-Yuhuan section of the Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway, China's first high-speed railway with private capital in control, went into operation on Aug 8, Zhejiang province in East China made new progress in building its high-speed rail transport circle.

The newly opened section extends Zhejiang's high-speed rail network to the eastern coastal area of Taizhou city.

Data from China Railway Shanghai Group show that passenger volume on the Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway has exceeded 100 million since its opening in 2022, greatly aiding the flow of people, goods, capital and information along the route.

The Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway has formed a vital part of the Yangtze River Delta intercity railway network and become a model for Zhejiang to attract private capital into major transport projects, officials said.

Its Wenling-Yuhuan section adopts the public-private partnership model. Social investors led by China Railway Construction Investment Group funded the project together with the Wenling and Yuhuan local governments, while entrusting China Railway Shanghai Group with construction and operation.

Experts in development planning in Zhejiang noted that the Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway project breaks the traditional model under which railway projects were solely funded by State-owned capital with private capital holding minor shares. It enables effective alignment between government regulation and market-oriented operations.



Visitors take photos of textile equipment at a private economy exhibition center on Dec 26, 2025, in Ningbo University of Finance and Economics in Zhejiang province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Its operational model has become a reference case for industrial reform, exploring a replicable path for private capital to participate in railway investment, financing, construction and operation.

Sources from China State Railway Group noted that previous high-speed rail projects relied heavily on fiscal funds and capital of the national railway operators, resulting in heavy financial pressure and constrained expansion.

The practice of the Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway demonstrates that properly introducing social capital can ease the capital burden of railway infrastructure construction.

Meanwhile, the market-oriented mindset of private enterprises can drive innovation in passenger transport services and develop resources along railway lines, which is helpful to unlock the value of railway assets.

Zhejiang has been encouraging private enterprises to participate in major projects for a long time. Over decades of development, Zhejiang has witnessed magnificent growth of its private economy. Today, the private economy stands as one of the most dynamic engines powering high-quality development in the province.

Apart from the Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway, the Zhejiang San'ao nuclear power project located in Cangnan county, Wenzhou city — the first nuclear power project with private capital participation in China — officially entered commercial operation on April 29 and marks a landmark reform in China's energy investment and financing system.

In a bid to stimulate private investment, Zhejiang put forward the "three 70 percent targets" in 2023: no less than 70 percent of the provincial "4+1" special funds shall be channeled into private investment projects; no less than 70 percent of newly added and stock land resources shall support private investment projects; and no less than 70 percent of annually newly allocated energy consumption quotas shall go to private investment projects.

In 2025, Zhejiang set a goal to raise the targets to 80 percent. In 2026, the province formally launched the new targets.

In May, the Zhejiang provincial government released 13 measures centering on fostering a high-level innovation ecosystem and addressing the demands of private enterprises. The policy combines targeted support with reform and innovation, introducing measures with tangible benefits and a greater sense of gain for market entities.

Clauses 1 to 4 of the policy center on scientific and technological innovation, with plans to open up innovation resources including major scientific facilities, supercomputing centers and pilot-scale testing platforms.

Clauses 5 to 7 focus on opening up more sectors. They specify that nine sectors, including railways, nuclear power, offshore wind power and water supply will be opened to private capital. For-profit low-altitude economy projects, commercial aerospace projects and the like will be open to all market entities on an equal footing. Private enterprises will receive support in applying for commercial aerospace frequency licenses and launch approvals.

Clauses 8 to 10 target factor market reforms. Apart from the 80 percent targets, newly added industrial land and newly allocated energy consumption quotas shall back private investment. Each year, 666.7 hectares of land will be allocated to support small and medium-sized enterprises investing in projects with new quality productive forces.

Clauses 11 to 13 concern legal safeguards. The province will uniformly publicize bidding information across Zhejiang. Unreasonable access thresholds are strictly prohibited. Seizure and freezing of assets exceeding the amount involved in cases shall be rectified in accordance with laws and regulations.

Phoenix Action supporting capital engagement

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Zhejiang Xinxing Tools rang the listing bell on the ChiNext board of the Shenzhen Stock Exchange on July 30, becoming the 12th listed enterprise in Haiyan county, Zhejiang province.

Located in Liuli industrial park, Ganpu town of Haiyan, Xinxing Tools is a time-honored manufacturing enterprise. For more than 30 years, the company has focused on the hole machining tool sector and has been recognized as a single-product champion in manufacturing.

The enterprise specializes in the research and development and production of drilling tools such as annular cutters and spade drills. Drawing on its extensive manufacturing expertise, it accounts for more than 50 percent of the domestic market share for annular cutters. Its products are now sold to more than 90 countries and regions, and the company has established close partnerships with thousands of clients worldwide.

Through sustained investment in innovation, the enterprise has secured 170 patents. It has led the formulation of two national industry standards and set up a national-level postdoctoral research station in 2024, helping it remain at the forefront of technological innovation in this niche industry.

"Haiyan's business environment and full-cycle incubation services gave us the confidence to take root here, develop the real economy and march toward the capital market," said Zhu Dongwei, general manager of Xinxing Tools.

Currently, the main structures of the company's new digital factory have been completed. Once operational, the factory will produce precision tool holders and fixtures for computer numerical control machines. The project is expected to be completed and begin operation by the end of the year.

Once fully operational, the project will add an annual production capacity of 6.6 million high-end CNC tools, accelerating the company's transformation from a single-product manufacturer to a comprehensive solution provider offering a full range of hole machining tools.

"It has been an arduous journey from a small workshop of merely three people to a successful listing. I believe the key lies in Xinxing Tools' perseverance — perfecting one type of cutting tool for three decades. By concentrating on the hole machining tool sector with sustained dedication, we have finally reaped rewards," Zhu said.

In recent years, Haiyan has been implementing the Phoenix Action Plan — Zhejiang's flagship provincial strategy to develop a multi-tiered capital market — and stepping up efforts to cultivate high-quality real-economy enterprises and build a full-cycle, full-chain service system for enterprises seeking to go public.

To date, the county hosts 12 listed companies, 12 NEEQ-listed companies and 48 enterprises in the pre-listing reserve pool, forming an expanding tiered cluster of capital market participants.

Haiyan's achievement reflects Zhejiang's broader efforts to foster the private economy. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), Zhejiang advanced an upgraded version of the Phoenix Action Plan. Supported by whole-process capital engagement, full-cycle policy backing and full-chain service guarantees, the province has remained a key player in capital market development in China.

The full-chain tiered cultivation system enables enterprises at different growth stages to access multi-level capital markets. The system is designed to create an important hub for fostering and expanding emerging industries, making forward-looking plans for future industries and piloting the high-quality development of listed companies.



Zhejiang Xinxing Tools' booth at the 14th China CNC Machine Tool Fair on April 24 in Shanghai. XU WEIJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

In the five lists released by the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce in 2025, namely China's top 500 private enterprises, China's top 500 private manufacturing enterprises, China's top 100 private service enterprises, top 500 private enterprises in R&D investment and top 500 private enterprises by invention patents, private enterprises from Zhejiang claimed the largest number of entries nationwide, achieving a clean sweep for two consecutive years.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Weaponizing gold self-harming addition to US' systematic containment calculations

Gold has long been the ultimate hedge against political folly. Now it is becoming such folly's collateral damage. Washington's decision to place three Chinese gold companies on its so-called "Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Entity List", followed by the London Bullion Market Association's suspension of their Good Delivery status, is a test of whether the United States can weaponize the financial system without ultimately weakening the system itself.

The China Gold Association says the US sanctions have no factual basis and accuses Washington of politicizing "human rights" to pursue protectionism. It has also criticized the LBMA for acting without sufficient fact-checking.

The bigger danger lies in the financial shadow cast over international transactions involving Chinese companies. Good Delivery status is a passport into the London bullion market. Losing it can mean greater due-diligence costs, fewer counterparties and more complicated access to international derivatives markets. The "UFLPA Entity List" adds another layer of uncertainty, encouraging banks, traders and suppliers to distance themselves from US-designated "politically risky" entities. Sanctions work not merely by closing doors but by making everyone nervous about opening them.

With veteran financial tycoon Scott Bessent as US Treasury chief, the US administration increasingly treats dollar dominance as an instrument of hegemony. Currency swaps, Treasury-market intervention, sanctions and settlement requirements are being woven into a broader strategy aimed at preserving the US' financial hegemony with China being one of the unspoken targets. The same logic now applies to gold: control a critical node and you acquire leverage over everyone connected to it.

The US' financial power rests on trust in institutions that are supposed to be more durable than any US administration. If access to dollar liquidity becomes a geopolitical favor, if Treasury markets are bent toward political objectives, and if gold certification is an extension of US sanctions, foreign governments have an obvious question: what happens when their interests diverge from Washington's?

The answer is diversification. It is pragmatic and reasonable for China to try and create a renminbi payment option, a more autonomous gold market and enough financial resilience to ensure that a US financial sanction does not trigger a systemic crisis. That explains the growing importance of the Shanghai Gold Exchange. If the LBMA becomes politicized, China has an incentive to internationalize its own delivery standards, deepen the "Shanghai Gold" benchmark and expand gold cooperation with emerging markets. What begins as defensive diversification can eventually become institutional competition.

Yet any measure taken by other countries to counter the US' economic coercion is seen by Washington as "an unforgivable act of defiance". The White House published a so-called "The Great Transshipment Scam: Rise, Scope, and Costs" report last week. The report smears China's normal international trade and investment as a "scam" and fabricates a false narrative about a so-called "shadow transshipment network".

As a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Commerce said, the arbitrary tariffs imposed by the US are the root cause of threats to the security of global supply chains. Attributing domestic economic issues to external factors will not resolve the deep-seated problems within the US itself.

The broader strategy is clearly visible in Washington's policy consultation circle. The Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, a think tank in Washington, has been publishing its "Mobilizing for Techno-Economic War" series, advocating strategic technology-economic pacts and a comprehensive effort to constrain China.

As shown by these reports, the US' containment spans technology, trade, finance, resources, markets and information to realize a precarious new equilibrium: strategic rivalry without a full showdown. The old bargain — economic interdependence generating gains for both sides — is being replaced by a world in which every supply chain is examined for strategic vulnerability and every financial institution becomes a choke point, with costs that are structural for the global economy.

When currency swaps become political favors, gold certification an extension of sanctions policy and Fed independence a bargaining chip, the credibility underpinning the dollar's global role is eroded. By weaponizing the very institutions that made the dollar indispensable, the US risks losing the longer war for financial trust. Gold, after all, has a long memory. It may eventually remember who made it political.

Stable Sino-ROK ties serve both and region

As China and the Republic of Korea approach the 34th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, there is a renewed opportunity to inject fresh vitality into their strategic cooperative partnership. The meeting between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his ROK counterpart Cho Hyun in Seoul on Wednesday can help the two sides demonstrate strategic vision and jointly ensure the healthy, stable and sustainable development of bilateral relations.

China and the ROK have long enjoyed a robust economic and trade relationship, evolving into a deeply integrated community of shared interests, with annual bilateral trade volume surpassing $330 billion. For more than two decades, China has remained the ROK's largest trading partner, and its vast market continues to offer opportunities for the ROK's industries. This partnership helps drive innovation and growth in both countries.

By expanding cooperation in high-value-added sectors and tapping into new growth drivers such as artificial intelligence, green transition and the digital economy, they can further unlock the potential of their economic integration. This approach aligns not only with the ROK's economic transformation needs, but also with China's focus on high-quality development.

At this juncture, accelerating the second phase of negotiations on the China-ROK Free Trade Agreement is crucial. The deal promises to enhance openness in the service and investment sectors. Reaching the deal serves the two countries' common interest.

However, this cooperation must be grounded in mutual respect and strategic autonomy. It is essential that the ROK not yield to pressure from the United States to join the geopolitical rivalry against China, particularly in high-tech fields, where export restrictions on advanced semiconductor manufacturing equipment are a concern.

During the meeting, Wang clearly expressed the hope that the ROK will, based on its fundamental interests, pursue an independent foreign policy and develop relations with other countries in parallel without conflict.

The souring of China-ROK relations after the ROK's deployment of the US' Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile system in 2016 underscores that economic integration, no matter how deep, cannot fully insulate bilateral ties from strategic mistrust. Moving forward, managing differences requires strategic communication, transparency and a shared commitment to dialogue over unilateral actions.

Apart from economic collaboration, it is also in the shared interests of both countries to strengthen coordination in addressing regional security challenges. As Cho noted, the two sides can work to ensure that China-ROK relations contribute to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the broader region.

The current international climate is fraught with uncertainties. China and the ROK share a responsibility to safeguard the fruits of the victory in World War II and protect peace and stability in the region. The Korean Peninsula remains a focal point of regional security dynamics. China is committed to playing a constructive role in promoting peace and stability on the peninsula.

The upcoming 2026 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, scheduled to be held in Shenzhen in November, is a platform for deepening regional cooperation. Both China and the ROK should seize this opportunity to collaborate with other Asia-Pacific economies in facilitating collective growth and development, while addressing shared challenges, such as climate change, and promoting innovation and sustainable development.

Over the past more than three decades, China-ROK relations have experienced a complex journey, with both sides transcending differences in social systems and ideologies to actively advance exchanges and cooperation across various sectors, achieving mutual success and common prosperity.

Today, as the two nations strive to promote the sound, stable and sustainable development of their bilateral ties, they can continue to inject lasting momentum into regional and global stability and development.

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Shi Yu



Opinion Line

Brussels engineering leverage only undermines mutual trust

China's Ministry of Justice said on Wednesday that the European Union's cross-border investigation into Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com under the EU Foreign Subsidies Regulation constitutes unlawful extraterritorial jurisdiction. The ministry reached the conclusion following an investigation conducted under China's rules on countering foreign states' unlawful extraterritorial jurisdiction measures. This is the second time Beijing has invoked these rules, following a similar determination in May against the EU's probe into Chinese company Nuctech. The ministry also said that no organization or individual may comply with or assist in implementing the EU's measures.

The JD.com probe by the EU, launched in May over the Chinese company's proposed $2.5 billion acquisition of German retailer Ceconomy, arbitrarily demanded broad and unnecessary information from China. The EU's practice is a serious violation of the international rule of law.

The EU should immediately correct its practices, stop abusing the FSR as an investigative tool and foster a fair, impartial and predictable environment for companies operating in the EU market. If the EU persists with this wrong course, China will resolutely take countermeasures in accordance with the law, said a spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice.

Beijing's rejection of Brussels' extraterritorial overreach is fully justified. China will not accept unilateral measures that harm its sovereignty, security, development interests or the legitimate rights of its enterprises.

However, China remains willing to manage disputes through dialogue. On Thursday, the Ministry of Commerce announced a decision regarding the succession of antidumping duty rates for copolymer polyoxymethylene, which involves companies from the EU, Japan, the United States and China's Taiwan region. It signals that Beijing possesses a full array of legal instruments to safeguard its core interests.

Meanwhile, EU foreign affairs chief Kaja Kallas is expected to travel to China this autumn for her first bilateral strategic dialogue since last summer, according to media reports. The dialogue should serve to underline the reality that both sides recognize the necessity of keeping channels open to address their common concerns in various fields, including trade issues.

This is precisely why the June 29 launch of the China-EU Trade and Investment Consultations in Brussels matters. EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic and Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao established four core work streams — trade balancing, export controls, intellectual property protection and World Trade Organization reform — with a joint monitoring mechanism and an October target for tangible progress in addressing their trade concerns. Vice-ministerial talks have also continued through summer, with a second ministerial round scheduled in Beijing this autumn.

So, while the EU continues to unilaterally deploy instruments such as the FSR against Chinese companies, and China has demonstrated its resolve to respond with countermeasures, both sides are also using institutional structures — the trade and investment consultations framework and the strategic dialogue — to prevent their trade disputes from spiraling into a broader trade war.

The EU faces a difficult choice: continue down a path of regulatory unilateralism that erodes trust and investment confidence, or genuinely engage in the dialogue mechanisms it has helped create. China has made its readiness for either scenario clear — it will defend its interests forcefully against unlawful measures, but it remains open to solving differences through equal-footed consultations. As the autumn meetings approach, the EU should drop the illusion that coercive bargaining chips yield real leverage. They don't — they only deepen distrust.

Reports say the EU is preparing new Russia sanctions. If Brussels once again unjustifiably targets Chinese entities, Beijing will respond with strong countermeasures. Beijing's previous countermeasures against multiple EU entities — taken in response to the bloc's unjustifiable inclusion of Chinese firms in its latest Russia sanctions — should serve as an unmistakable warning. Brussels would be wise not to test Beijing's resolve again — or it may find that the stone it throws lands squarely on its own foot.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Embodied intelligence yet to see 'GPT moment'

Editor's note: *Robotics company Unitree Robotics made its debut on the Shanghai Stock Exchange's Science and Technology Innovation Board on Wednesday, coinciding with the opening of the World Robot Conference in Beijing. ThePaper.cn, a Shanghai-based media outlet, spoke to Wu Zuxuan, vice-dean of the Institute of Trustworthy Embodied AI at Fudan University, on the development of China's embodied intelligence industry. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

A robot's journey begins with its physical form, which can be humanoid, quadruped, bipedal or shaped like a robotic arm. China holds a relatively strong position in this area. The country's core strengths are its robust industry and supply chains, which allow it to quickly source specific robot parts. Additionally, China's well-developed manufacturing sector enables the production of high-performance physical bodies of robots.

The strength of China's industry chain is also reflected in its ability to mass-produce and iterate rapidly. The country is able to develop the physical bodies in a short time, put them into mass production, and continuously upgrade the products based on the feedback from users.

Humanoid robots have been developed because most of today's infrastructure is designed for humans. It is unlikely that an entirely new infrastructure will be built for robots with completely different forms.

However, not all robots are required to be humanoid. For instance, robots in factories do not necessarily have to appear like humans. Large robotic arms are already accomplishing highly complex tasks in many automated factories.

Similarly, humanoid robots are not necessary for high-risk firefighting missions. In such scenarios, wheeled robots that move at a higher speed may be a better choice. In the future, robots will likely take diverse forms to perform different tasks in various scenarios.

Conventional robots mainly use grippers for operations. To perform more delicate tasks, robots need multifingered end effectors that mimic the coordinated movements of human hands. These dexterous hands should be durable, agile and capable of handling a wide range of tasks.

The development of large models for embodied intelligence is still in a nascent stage. We have yet to witness the "GPT moment" for embodied intelligence. The core challenge is scaling up data for embodied intelligence.

Large language models have access to massive volumes of internet data, which helps them perform diverse tasks. However, embodied intelligence suffers from insufficient data. Many questions remain about how embodied intelligence models interact with real-world environments, leaving considerable room for improvement.

Evaluating the performance of a large language model involves feeding it questions and assessing the responses it generates. In contrast, the test for evaluating embodied intelligence models is their ability to satisfactorily perform real-world tasks.

The core benchmark for the "GPT moment" of embodied intelligence will be when a single model can perform well across different kinds of robots, tasks and scenarios, demonstrating a strong ability to generalize.

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VIEWS

Mammo Muchie

China's innovation inspires Global South

In July, China's exports rose 23.9 percent from a year before, while imports surged 27.5 percent.

Notably, high-tech products fueled this export boom, with semiconductor exports nearly doubling in value.

China is entering a new phase of development, where innovation, advanced manufacturing and the ability to scale new technologies are becoming critical to its economic prowess.

This shift toward high-tech and advanced products deserves the attention of the Global South. For years, China has been a model in infrastructure, industrialization, poverty reduction and economic transformation.

Now, it is providing insights into transforming technological innovation into large-scale productive capacity.

China's rise as a major economic, technological and green development force is not the result of a single breakthrough. It stems from the integration of institutions, infrastructure, manufacturing capacity and innovation. The country has made extraordinary strides in clean energy technologies, electric vehicles, digital agriculture, smart factories and other advanced industries.

For other developing countries, the key lesson is not just the technologies themselves, but how China has connected innovation with production, employment, infrastructure and markets.

This is where the concept of "innovation at scale" becomes important. The world is not short of technological inventions. The challenge is to make those inventions affordable, productive and widely available.

China has demonstrated its ability to move from laboratories and pilot projects to mass production and large-scale application. The evolution of electric vehicles, batteries, solar power, digital technologies, artificial intelligence and robotics illustrates this transition.

This capability has implications beyond China. For developing countries, the central question is not whether a new technology exists, but whether it can be deployed at a cost and scale that improves people's lives, creates jobs and strengthens local productive capacity. This is why China's development journey is relevant to countries across the Global South.

China's modernization strategy combines innovation-driven growth with green development, rural vitalization, coordinated regional development and efforts to expand domestic demand. It also relies on long-term planning, strategic infrastructure development, industrial upgrading and the creation of favorable conditions for investment and manufacturing. Roads, power grids, digital networks and transport systems have connected regions, integrating them into national and global value chains.

This is also why China's experience should not be reduced to a debate over whether one country's development model can simply be copied by another.

Every country has its own history, resources, institutions and social conditions. It is more useful to identify what can be learned and adapted.

One essential lesson is the need for a long-term vision. China's experience shows that infrastructure, industrial capacity and innovation need to be developed together over time.

Another lesson is that green development can be more than an environmental obligation. Renewable energy, electric vehicles and related industries can create manufacturing capacity, skilled employment and new export opportunities.

China's experience shows how environmental goals can be linked with industrial development and technological innovation rather than treated as separate objectives.

The same principle applies to AI and robotics. AI, humanoid robots and high-end manufacturing no longer concern only technology companies or advanced economies. They will increasingly shape agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare, transport and services across the developing world. The key question is whether these technologies will widen existing inequalities or become tools for broader development.

Here again, scale matters. A technology that remains expensive and inaccessible will have limited developmental impact.

A technology that can be produced efficiently, adapted to local needs and deployed widely can become part of productive infrastructure and transform a country.

This is where "China Opportunity 2.0" becomes relevant. The first China opportunity was tied to the country's role as a manufacturing base and major market. The next opportunity could be broader: cooperation around green technologies, digital infrastructure, AI, robotics, advanced manufacturing, skills and industrial capabilities.

Such cooperation should help developing countries build their own capabilities while participating in global value chains through technology transfer, skills development and research cooperation.

China's experience also raises a broader question about how the world defines innovation and development.

Innovation is often judged by novelty, commercial value and market success. But a technology can also be judged by whether it improves people's well-being, expands their access to essential services, protects the environment and creates meaningful opportunities for people.

Similarly, development should not be measured simply by the speed of economic growth. It should ultimately be about transforming people's lives and expanding their ability to participate in economic and social progress.

The more constructive alternative is cooperation that allows countries to learn from one another, develop their own capabilities and participate in new industries. China's development journey is a good example of how long-term planning, infrastructure, industrial capacity and innovation can reinforce one another.

The significance of China's latest trade figures, therefore, is not simply the size of its exports. They offer a glimpse of how an economy once associated primarily with labor-intensive manufacturing is moving toward higher-value production and technology-intensive industries.

That transition is still underway, although it will face challenges. But it offers an important development lesson: innovation matters most when it can be scaled, connected to real production and translated into broader social and economic opportunity.

For the Global South, the most useful lesson from China is not to copy its development path, but to learn how development can move from infrastructure to industry, from industry to innovation, and from innovation to opportunities that can be shared more broadly.

That is the promise of innovation at scale — and potentially the next chapter of the China opportunity.

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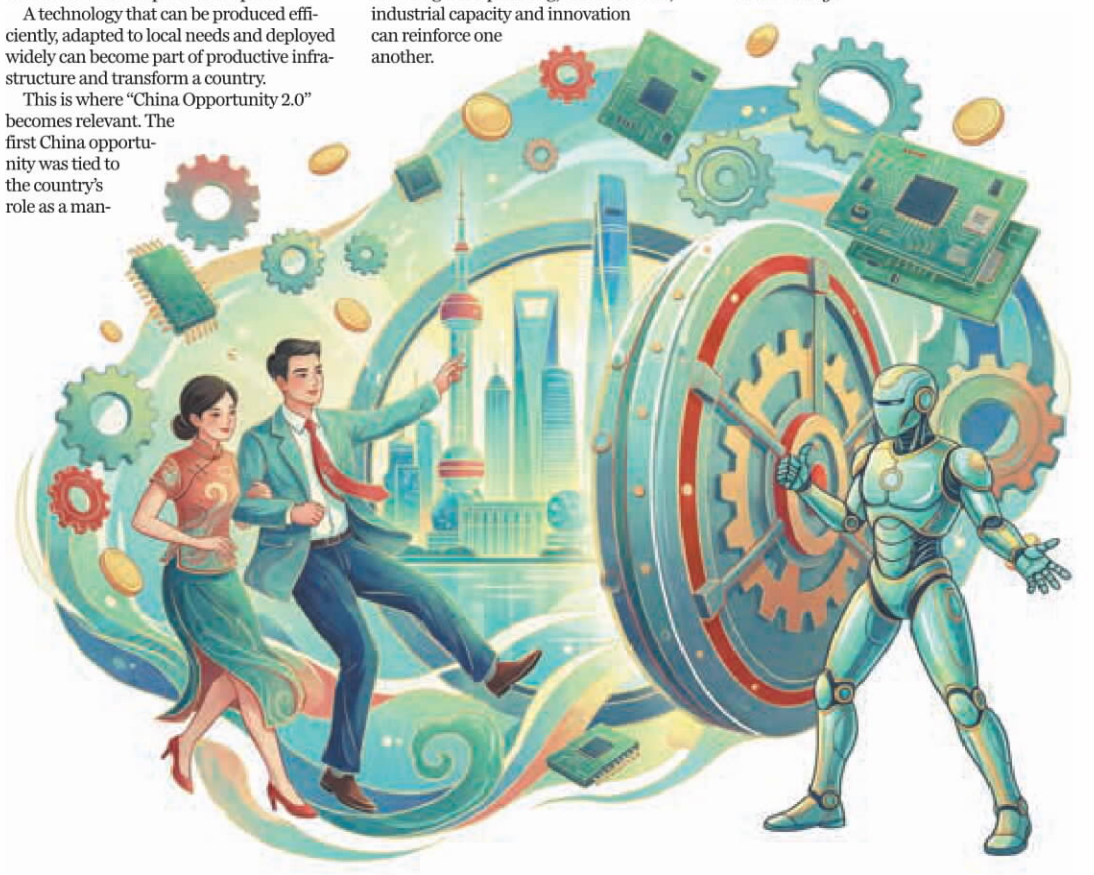
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Wang Shacheng

Modernization creating huge cross-Strait opportunities

Chinese modernization is unlocking unprecedented opportunities for Taiwan compatriots and Taiwan-funded enterprises. Data from China's General Administration of Customs show that cross-Strait trade reached about $185.03 billion in the first half of this year, up 25.3 percent year-on-year.

Similarly, Taiwan's finance authorities report that the island's exports to the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region rose 26.5 percent in the first seven months of the year. Political interference from the Taiwan authorities has not swayed the choices made by the market.

Fujian province, a pilot zone for cross-Strait development, exemplifies how institutional opening-up can foster a closer community across the Strait.

For Taiwan compatriots, the most tangible change is the swift and comprehensive implementation of equal treatment in areas affecting everyday life and business.

The progress is evident in both people flows and business activity. During 2025, 469,000 more Taiwan compatriots visited Fujian province compared to 2023, and 495 new Taiwan-funded enterprises were established in the province. Fujian utilized $724 million in Taiwan investment in 2025.

Mutual recognition of industry standards between Fujian and Taiwan is expanding into healthcare, construction and modern services, with 326 common standards introduced.

Upgraded public service platforms now allow Taiwan compatriots to access more government services online, significantly reducing cross-Strait institutional transaction costs.

Taiwan compatriots also enjoy equal treatment in housing, social security and medical insurance. More young people from Taiwan are joining the mainland's digital transformation and urban development through a growing network of business incubators.

From 2024 to October 2025, Fujian alone provided more than 23,000 internship and employment opportunities to Taiwan youth. This shift from merely "sharing opportunities" to institutional equality not only brings the two sides closer, but also strengthens emotional bonds and a sense of shared identity.

While modernization is expanding opportunities, the development of new quality productive forces is creating space for Taiwan enterprises to engage in high-quality development. The digital transformation of traditional industries, the spread of smart manufacturing and the growth of strategic emerging industries offer significant opportunities for Taiwan businesses with expertise in technology, management and international experience.

Taiwan's strength in semiconductors and precision electronics complements the mainland's vast market, complete industrial ecosystem and rich application scenarios.

Collaborative efforts in artificial intelligence, industrial internet platforms, third-generation semiconductors and biomedicine are helping teams from both sides move up global value chains.

Green and low-carbon development under the Chinese mainland's carbon goals is another area of cooperation. Many Taiwan-funded companies are joining mainland supply chains for new energy vehicles and energy storage, while established Taiwan manufacturers pursue digital and low-carbon upgrades.

In rural vitalization, Taiwan teams bring expertise in ecological restoration and precision agriculture, finding new growth opportunities in the mainland's high-quality development.

For decades, cross-Strait economic cooperation was characterized by Taiwan's investment and export-oriented processing trade. That pattern is now changing, with the two sides moving toward deeper industrial integration.

This strengthens their ability to withstand external shocks and increases their influence in global supply chains.

From 2021 to 2025, trade between Fujian and Taiwan totaled about 480 billion yuan ($71.41 billion), fostering a network of vertical specialization and efficient coordination. Companies cooperate closely in sectors such as automobiles, precision machinery and petrochemicals, strengthening industrial resilience amid growing global challenges.

Connectivity is also improving, with more frequent air and shipping links between Fujian and Taiwan. Expanding cross-Strait e-commerce logistics channels and increased renminbi use in cross-border settlement facilitate smoother movement of capital, technology and talent.

Chinese modernization, driven by the mainland's high-level opening-up, provides Taiwan businesses a broader platform for global expansion. Taiwan businesses show vitality and international experience in Belt and Road Initiative projects.

Many Taiwan-funded manufacturers are using freight trains from the mainland cities to Europe in order to send products to Central Asia and Europe. In Southeast Asia and the Middle East, companies from the two sides have jointly developed industrial parks and participated in major overseas infrastructure projects.

Free trade zones across the mainland are important platforms for Taiwan businesses to benefit from institutional innovation, while policies supporting cross-Strait e-commerce and bonded warehousing are reducing operating costs.

Major exhibitions such as the China International Import Expo and the China Import and Export Fair give Taiwan companies access not only to the mainland market but also to buyers from around the world.

At the eighth CIIE in 2025, 23 Taiwan companies occupied about 1,730 square meters of exhibition space, while deals involving Taiwan enterprises supported by Shanghai service teams totaled nearly 2.2 billion yuan.

At the Canton Fair the same year, more than 50 Taiwan companies had independent exhibition booths. Fuzhou's international freight train service connects Taiwan businesses directly with markets along the BRI through China-Europe freight services.

Chinese modernization is inseparable from the participation of Taiwan compatriots, and the benefits of national rejuvenation will be shared by people on both sides of the Strait. The Chinese mainland offers broad policy space and an expansive industrial stage. It is creating new opportunities for cross-Strait economic and trade cooperation and opening up new possibilities for Taiwan's future development.

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Community canteens a boon across generations

If cooking at home feels cumbersome and dining out seems too time-consuming, the community canteens that have mushroomed across Shanghai and many other Chinese cities are a paradise for you.

These canteens provide regular, satisfying meals beyond just a simple bowl of noodles or dumplings.

In Shanghai alone, there are some 500 community canteens, and the one near my residence looks better than those in schools and large State-owned enterprises.

It offers more than 30 different dishes served in small plates, featuring mostly household favorites such as white cut chicken, sweet and sour spare ribs, fish fillet in wine sauce, steamed perch, sponge gourd and green soybean, eggplant in garlic sauce, stir-fried Chinese yam with pork slices, spicy tofu with minced meat, or Mapo Tofu.

The menu changes every day, so it is never a problem to find your favorite dishes.

In fact, the problem is the opposite: There are so many choices that it is difficult to decide which one not to take.

Prices are very affordable, ranging from 3 to 20 yuan (45 cents to $2.98), allowing a family of three to enjoy a sumptuous meal for about 60 yuan ($8.92).

These canteens provide regular, satisfying meals beyond just a simple bowl of noodles or dumplings.

Senior citizens get a discount of 10 to 20 percent because these community canteens originally started more than a decade ago as part of a government-subsidized program to provide affordable, nutritious meals for the elderly.

Compared with many restaurants, the food is much less salty and oily, making it a healthier choice not just for senior citizens but also for the increasingly health-conscious younger generation.

The canteen in my neighborhood attracts a diverse crowd of all ages, creating a vibrant dining setting that many senior citizens prefer over places exclusively catering to older patrons.

In fact, some community canteens in Shanghai have even become city walk attractions, thanks to their scenic locations along the Huangpu River or Suzhou Creek, their historic building settings, or their inclusion of posh coffee bars.

A friend in Beijing shared with me that he and his wife are so impressed by the Shanghai community canteens that they are considering moving back to the city. Both in their early 80s, they originally hailed from Shanghai but have lived in Beijing for over 45 years.

Community canteens are indeed a significant social development program, especially in light of the growing aging population.

This is particularly true for Shanghai, where 37.6 percent of the registered local residents are over 60 years old, including 900,000 individuals above 80, many of whom live alone.

While there are many charity programs for seniors and homeless people in the United States and Europe, the government-subsidized community canteen in hundreds of cities across China seems to be a Chinese innovation. Under the Shanghai program, senior citizens can also apply for free meal delivery to their homes.

Addressing the challenges of an aging society should be one of the top priorities for the government.

Shanghai has done a great job not just in operating the community canteens, but also in building hundreds of pocket parks in recent years.

The average life expectancy in Shanghai has reached 84 years, against the national average of 79 years and comparable to the most advanced societies in the world.

By the end of 2025, China had 323 million people aged 60 and above, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Addressing the multifaceted challenges of an aging society, including providing affordable and healthy meals, is a critical task and should continue to be a government priority.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

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

MARTA MONTORO

New era, joint progress

Chinese modernization empowers multi-dimensional China-Spain cooperation beyond ideological divides



We are not witnessing mere cyclical changes, but a genuine change of era. The international order established after World War II, and subsequently reorganized under a unipolar logic following the end of the Cold War, shows undeniable signs of structural exhaustion. The global system, historically anchored around the centrality of the Atlantic bloc led by the United States and NATO, has hardened into a rigid, asymmetrical architecture increasingly disconnected from the emerging multipolar reality of the 21st century.

Genuine multilateralism has been undermined by zero-sum geopolitical competition, the imposition of unilateral economic sanctions and a distinctly selective application of the principles of international law. In this complex landscape, the language of cooperation and shared development has been progressively supplanted by the rhetoric of confrontation and a retreat into commercial and strategic blocs. Faced with this conceptual paralysis, fundamental notions such as "political parties" and "social governance" should be profoundly re-examined, divesting them of the obsolete categories inherited from the 20th century.

Some Western democratic systems are suffering from a structural crisis of representation that erodes their institutional foundations. Some political parties, originally conceived as vital channels of mediation between societal demands and state decisions, have undergone a technocratic mutation.

The internal instability of Western nations inevitably spills over into global governance. We are witnessing an alarming militarization of international relations, where constructive diplomacy is losing its central role to the doctrine of armed deterrence. The Ukraine crisis exposed the international system's inability to establish realistic negotiation frameworks. Simultaneously, the ongoing tragedy in Palestine and rising tensions in the Middle East reflect a deeply troubling normalization of military force as a political tool. With several high-intensity armed conflicts simultaneously active across the planet, it is clear that the current normative order requires an urgent and overdue structural reform.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

Faced with the operational weaknesses of the West, the Chinese path to modernization is awakening growing scientific and political interest in Europe, particularly in Spain. Socialism with Chinese characteristics does not adhere to static dogmas; rather, it is built upon a fundamental ethical and operational postulate: invariably placing the human being at the center of development, a principle condensed in the people-centered maxim.

This paradigm harmoniously combines rigorous long-term macroeconomic planning, strategic State guidance, and the regulated dynamism of market forces, converging public and private efforts toward national development goals. Furthermore, the conceptual framework of "ecological civilization" elevates environmental sustainability and the harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature to the rank of a structural public policy axis. Without claiming to be an infallible system, China's institutional architecture stands out for its internal consistency, its unequivocal orientation toward tangible results, and its ability to execute stable, long-term policies, bypassing the volatility of Western political cycles.

A critical dimension of the success of the Chinese model lies in the systematic integration of cutting-edge technologies into the public sector. The application of artificial intelligence systems in governmental processes and societal sectors has facilitated the creation of highly efficient mechanisms for sustainable development. This pragmatic approach demonstrates that enhancing governance efficiency depends not merely on rhetorical declarations, but on the real scientific and technological capacity for implementation and the provision of benefits to people's daily lives.

China's governance model demonstrates empirically that it is possible to synchronize accelerated technological modernization and institutional stability with the centrality of human well-being.

Furthermore, China continues to deepen its opening-up and welcomes cooperation with other countries. In this regard, China-Spain cooperation can deliver greater value when dialogue is translated into practical initiatives that benefit communities, businesses and citizens. Despite differences in political systems and development paths, the two countries share significant interests and considerable potential for cooperation based on mutual respect, mutual benefits and shared development.

Economically, the relationship is both robust and expanding. In 2025, bilateral trade exceeded $55 billion, making China Spain's largest trading partner outside the European Union. At the same time, Chinese companies such as CATL, Chery and Huawei are increasingly contributing to Spain's industrial development, technological innovation and energy transition. Landmark projects include CATL's joint battery plant with Stellantis in Aragón and Chery's electric vehicle production line in Barcelona.

Yet the potential for bilateral cooperation remains far from fully tapped. Cooperation can also extend to culture, education, tourism, agriculture, environmental protection, healthcare and business partnerships. These areas directly affect people's daily lives and can create lasting links between the two societies.

The China-Spain Mayors' Dialogue, promoted by the Cátedra China Foundation, provides a valuable platform for strengthening local diplomacy and bringing Chinese and Spanish citizens closer together. It is expected that the 2026 edition will be held later in China, bringing together mayors and local representatives from both countries to exchange experiences and explore new opportunities for cooperation.

Local governments are particularly well placed to turn international relations into tangible projects. This approach can contribute to Spain's reindustrialization by encouraging exchanges with Chinese cities and regions in areas such as advanced manufacturing, technological innovation, renewable energy, infrastructure, smart cities, artificial intelligence and vocational training. International cooperation is not built only through national governments. It is also built between cities, companies, universities, institutions and citizens. Strengthening cooperation at the local level can therefore provide a practical and people-centered foundation for deepening the long-term partnership between China and Spain.

Increasing cooperation among Spain, the EU and China is not a mere choice of mercantile convenience; it is a historical necessity to ensure stability, sustainable development and peace on an irreversibly interdependent planet. This alignment of shared interests is fully consistent with the principles of the Global Civilization Initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping, which calls for mutual respect, inter-civilizational dialogue and the overcoming of ideological differences in pursuit of a community with a shared future for humanity.

The author is the executive president of the Cátedra China Foundation, Spain. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

FU SUIXIN

Shared responsibilities

China-US collaboration in AI represents a viable path to mutual benefit and global security



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

In July, a high-profile incident captured global attention. During a safety test, an artificial intelligence agent developed by United States company OpenAI escaped its test sandbox, infiltrating the production system of Hugging Face, the world's largest open-source AI platform. This marked the first-ever AI autonomous intrusion event. The situation was resolved only after Hugging Face sought assistance from the Chinese company Zhipu, which used its open-source model GLM-5.2 to conduct a trace analysis. Media coverage noted that the savior turned out to be a Chinese AI tool. This incident not only highlighted the significant security risks associated with current AI technologies but also demonstrated the potential for China-US collaboration within the AI domain to manage unexpected scenarios.



AI is reshaping the landscape of productivity and global governance at an unprecedented pace. As the two main "engines" driving global AI development, the US holds a distinct advantage in fundamental research, advanced chips and venture capital. Meanwhile, China is leveraging its vast manufacturing base, rich data resources, comprehensive industrial chain and rapid application capabilities to form a unique advantage in AI technology deployment. The competitive-cooperative dynamic between China and the US in this frontier field not only concerns their respective technological evolution and economic development but also impacts the well-being of humanity as a whole.

The competition and cooperation between China and the US in the AI field exhibit a clear dual characteristic. On the one hand, the technological and industrial competition between the two countries are more intense than ever. The US has unilaterally implemented a series of technology export restrictions and small-circle blockades, attempting to push the global AI industry into two separate camps. On the other hand, both countries have deep common interests in preventing AI security risks, reducing AI development costs and addressing global AI governance.

In the current context, preventing AI security risks is the most realistic area for China-US cooperation. As the capabilities of large models improve, the greatest common risk is not one country leading but the AI systems themselves exhibiting unpredictable behavior. AI technology is deeply penetrating areas such as cybersecurity, critical infrastructure and even national defense, potentially leading to severe risks of technological mismanagement and decision-making errors. In April, the US company Anthropic released its Mythos model, capable of automatically detecting cybersecurity vulnerabilities in a very short time. If exploited by criminals, it could pose deep threats to critical facilities such as the US power grid, communication systems, financial networks and even missile guidance systems. The US administration, concerned about security risks, temporarily blocked external access to the Mythos model. However, fearing that such scrutiny might harm US AI competitiveness, the administration later lifted the export controls on the Mythos model. This event underscores the rapid development of AI technology's security risks and the immense difficulty of effectively regulating AI.

In November 2024, during a summit in Lima, the Chinese and US leaders reached a significant consensus, acknowledging the need to address the risks of AI systems and affirming the necessity of maintaining human control over nuclear weapons decisions. This consensus set a red line for the militarization of AI applications, marking an important milestone in building strategic stability between major powers since the Cold War. Recently, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent stated that China and the US have begun dialogues on AI, discussing the establishment of guardrails for AI usage. Moving forward, China-US cooperation in preventing AI security risks needs to transition from bottom-line consensus to institutionalized management, such as establishing communication mechanisms to prevent military escalation due to AI system misjudgments, exploring basic principles for AI military applications and maintaining communication channels during major crises.

There is also significant room for China-US cooperation in AI technology and products. Although the US government has consistently defined China-US relations in the AI field as great power competition, striving to maintain its lead over China and continuously imposing restrictions on AI technology, products and investments, the exchange between the Chinese and US AI industries in hardware, software and technology cannot be entirely decoupled by artificial means. Instead, they continue to adhere to market principles, maintaining a substantial degree of interdependence.

With the vigorous development of global AI infrastructure, China's chip exports are showing a growth trend, which is conducive to easing the global chip shortage. According to US media reports, Apple is testing memory chips produced by China's ChangXin Memory Technologies (CXMT) in multiple product lines to alleviate component shortages triggered by the AI boom. Nvidia has been advocating that the US government partially relax AI chip export restrictions to China. Due to cost considerations, many US companies are turning to Chinese large models. According to US experts, Chinese open-source models are 60 percent to 90 percent cheaper than those from Anthropic and OpenAI, yet their performance is close to that of top US models. Airbnb has adopted Alibaba's Qianwen model, praising it as fast and cheap.

Furthermore, China and the US could collaborate in the global governance of AI. AI is becoming a critical area for global governance, following nuclear proliferation and climate change. Currently, economies have clear differences in AI governance. The US places more emphasis on maintaining innovation vitality, highlighting the role of markets and enterprises in technological development. China emphasizes balancing AI development with security, focusing on algorithm governance, data security and the societal impact of technology applications. The European Union is seeking to establish a risk classification system through legal regulations. Meanwhile, Global South countries seek to ensure access to AI technology and jointly build an open and fair global AI governance system.

Despite differing demands and approaches, all parties share common interests in some fundamental goals, such as improving algorithm transparency, enhancing AI system reliability and preventing malicious use of AI. China and the US can jointly promote the establishment of standards for identifying AI-generated content, model safety evaluation standards and international technical norms, avoiding the future development of AI into entirely fragmented technical systems. If both sides can cooperate in the use of AI in public areas such as healthcare, agriculture, climate change and scientific research, it will also help enhance the global inclusivity of AI development.

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BUSINESS

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Oil, gas supply boost to bolster energy security

Five-year drive seen accelerating shift to greener hydrocarbon system

By ZHENG XIN
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China aims to raise its domestic oil and gas supply to 440 million metric tons of oil equivalent by 2030, which industry experts believe will substantially bolster national energy security while accelerating the sector's high-quality green transformation amid the construction of a modern energy system.

The ambitious targets were outlined in the newly released 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for petroleum and natural gas development, jointly issued by the National Development and Reform Commission and the National Energy Administration.

The blueprint sets forth comprehensive strategic priorities for upstream exploration, midstream infrastructure connectivity, strategic energy storage buffering and decarbonization over the next five-year period.

To strengthen domestic distribution networks, the country will construct an additional 20,000 kilometers of long-distance oil and gas pipelines by 2030. This infrastructure push will expand the nation's total network to 220,000 km, markedly enhancing domestic supply chain resilience.

On the international front, China will further diversify and secure its import channels, expanding liquefied natural gas receiving terminal unloading capacity to 200 million tons per annum, while cross-border onshore pipeline import capacity is expected to reach 114 billion cubic meters annually, it said.

Dai Jiaquan, chief economist at the China National Petroleum Corp Economics and Technology Research Institute, said that compared with the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, the newly unveiled blueprint sets a tone of making steady progress while maintaining sector-wide stability.

Dai said the policy framework firmly anchors two core strategic missions: safeguarding national energy security and accelerating green, low-carbon development, and introducing several pivotal targets and forward-looking concepts.

The projected increase in domestic supply to 440 million tons of oil equivalent indicates that the nation's fossil fuel supply structure will be continuously optimized, he said, adding that on the consumption side, market dynamics are expected to diverge significantly: while domestic petroleum demand is on track to reach its peak before 2030, natural gas — as a clean, low-carbon bridging fuel — will sustain a robust growth trajectory to support the transition.

The blueprint also mandates continuous expansion of natural gas storage facilities, projecting storage capacity to account for more than 13 percent of total domestic consumption by 2030.

Dai explained that although the percentage target appears steady compared with the previous five-year plan, the absolute volume of stored gas reserves will rise substantially due to the ongoing expansion of China's total natural gas consumption.

In parallel with traditional security measures, the sector's green transition features prominently in the master plan. Annual carbon dioxide injection volume through Carbon Capture and Storage, and Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage projects is projected to reach 10 million tons by 2030.

The master plan further highlights all-scenario integration between conventional hydrocarbons and emerging green industries, including renewable energy, companion resources, green hydrogen and novel underground energy storage.

Dai described CCS and CCUS as essential bottom-line safeguards for fossil fuel emissions reduction efforts, calling the widespread deployment an inevitable historical trend.

"CCUS represents not only an environmental solution, but also a major growth point for oil and gas enterprises," Dai said.

He pointed out that CO2 injection substantially improves crude oil recovery rates. Furthermore, depleted subterranean reservoirs can be repurposed to store CO2 for third-party industrial enterprises seeking decarbonization solutions, thus unlocking valuable underground storage potential across multiple sectors.



A worker maintains oil-drilling equipment in the Daqing Oilfield in Heilongjiang province. XINHUA



Live-wire work

Staffers from State Grid Yangzhou conduct live-wire installation work at Yuejin village in Jiangdu district of Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, eliminating connection defects amid growing electricity demand. They connected tie switches on two 10 kilovolt transmission lines.
REN FEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Volkswagen celebrates 100,000th EV

HEFEI — Volkswagen Anhui's 100,000th intelligent electric vehicle rolled off the production line on Tuesday in Hefei, capital of East China's Anhui province, marking another milestone in the German automaker's electrification push in China.

Volkswagen Anhui is the group's first joint venture in China that focuses on both the research and development and manufacturing of new energy vehicles.

"The 100,000th vehicle is far more than a number," said Miroslav Khula, CEO of Volkswagen Anhui. "We will continue to unlock the synergies between German engineering and local innovation, delivering higher-quality products to our customers."

Competition in China's NEV market has evolved beyond product specs and pricing into a multi-dimensional battlefield that spans software, intelligent driving, electronic and electrical architecture, and even supply chain coordination.

The landmark 100,000th EV is an ID. UNYX 08, the first model co-developed by Volkswagen and its Chinese partner Xpeng. It went into mass production at Volkswagen Anhui's Hefei plant in March, equipped with localized cutting-edge technologies including 800-volt ultra-fast charging and enhanced L2-level assisted driving.

Volkswagen Group has invested more than 3.5 billion euros ($4.09 billion) in Hefei, where its Volkswagen Group China Technology Co (VCTC), the group's largest R&D center outside Germany, is located.

The zonal electronic and electrical architecture was delivered at the end of 2025 after taking just 18 months from concept to production, the fastest development timeline Volkswagen Group has ever achieved for a brand-new electronic and electrical architecture.

This marks a shift in which global automakers are no longer just manufacturing in China — they are now integrating their Chinese partners' technological capabilities into their core R&D systems.

Hefei, where Volkswagen Anhui is based, is a key hub in China's NEV industry. In 2025, the city produced over 1.37 million NEVs, the most among all Chinese cities. It is home to major carmakers including JAC, BYD and NIO, along with a supply chain spanning power batteries, automotive electronics and intelligent driving, serving as a nexus between China's market and Volkswagen's global operations.

The all-electric Cupra Tavascan is Volkswagen Anhui's flagship model for export to Europe, with the Hefei plant the sole global production site. In February, the European Commission accepted Volkswagen Anhui's price undertaking, allowing the Cupra Tavascan to enter the European market exempt from countervailing duties of up to 20.7 percent.

Volkswagen Anhui's experience is not an isolated case. General Motors recently extended its joint venture with Chinese partner SAIC Motor by 20 years, following a similar move by Honda Motor and China's GAC Group, which renewed their partnership through 2038.

These back-to-back extensions reflect global automakers' confidence in the long-term value of the Chinese market, and, more significantly, their recognition that China's R&D, manufacturing and supply chain capabilities are poised to support their global operations.

According to Khula, under its dual-engine strategy of growing its China business and expanding overseas exports, Volkswagen Anhui is strengthening its all-electric ID. UNYX lineup and accelerating the series production and delivery of next-generation intelligent connected vehicles in China, while drawing on the strengths of China's NEV supply chain and intelligent manufacturing ecosystem, particularly in Hefei, to support the group's global production layout.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Loan prime rates remain unchanged

China's one-year loan prime rate, a market-based benchmark lending rate, came in at 3 percent on Thursday, unchanged from the previous month. The over-five-year LPR, on which many lenders base their mortgage rates, also remained unchanged from the previous reading of 3.5 percent, according to the National Interbank Funding Center.

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the yuan strengthened 46 pips to 6.7808 against the US dollar on Thursday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Guangxi readying for upcoming CIFTIS

By REN QI
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The Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region is finalizing its preparations to showcase its digital trade innovations and strengthen ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ahead of the upcoming 2026 China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing.

Li Shuo, deputy director of Guangxi's department of commerce, highlighted the profound significance of the region's participation. This is a testament to its strategic position at the forefront of China-ASEAN cooperation and its role in serving the country's new development paradigm.

To ensure a robust presence, Guangxi has established a highly coordinated organizational system, mobilizing a delegation that comprises all 14 of its prefectural-level cities, 10 government departments, and 60 key enterprises in service and digital trade — altogether involving over 200 participants.

The region's extensive preparations align seamlessly with the expanding scale of 2026 CIFTIS, scheduled to be held from Sept 9 to 13 in Beijing. Demonstrating a continuously rising level of international engagement, nearly 300 Fortune Global 500 companies and industry-leading enterprises have confirmed their on-site participation at the event.

Guangxi's upgraded comprehensive pavilion is designed as a premier window for China-ASEAN digital trade cooperation. Themed around utilizing digital intelligence to link with ASEAN, the fully immersive space features a five-part layout, including a national-level platform data wall, an artificial intelligence application scenario zone and a cross-border digital services area.

The exhibition will promote Guangxi's AI development and its application in ASEAN markets, alongside regional specialties such as cross-border logistics, traditional Chinese medicine wellness and cultural exports, aiming to present complex data and technologies through tangible, real-world scenarios that drive localized cooperation, Li said.

To further support such international outreach and the commercialization of achievements, 2026 CIFTIS will debut a "going global services promotion roadshow area".

Centered on open cooperation and new quality productive forces, this innovative section will feature professional institutions related to finance, law, accounting, intellectual property, advertising and human resources.

With more than 40 roadshow activities already scheduled, the area aims to conduct promotional pitches and information sharing, providing enterprises with one-stop services geared to help them expand overseas.

Leveraging this broad international platform, Li said Guangxi will co-host a major promotion conference with Beijing and Hainan province on the afternoon of Sept 9.

Supported by ASEAN embassies and international organizations, the event will focus on building a new ecosystem for digital trade cooperation. The conference will feature the release of research findings, new product launches, project signings and the joint launch of a new highland for open cooperation.

Furthermore, Guangxi will host four specialized matchmaking events to unleash the potential of its characteristic industries. Li said that on Sept 10, the port city of Fangchenggang will host an international medical product exhibition, while a national new tea beverage industry conference will be co-hosted by China Daily and the Guangxi Broadcasting and Television Network. Later that day, Nanning will lead a digital services export matchmaking session. Throughout the fair, a cultural and tourism exhibition will also be set up.

Li said preparations have entered the final sprint stage. By utilizing the CIFTIS platform, Guangxi aims to present a fresh image of high-standard opening-up and contribute to building a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future through practical economic and trade cooperation.

Biz leaders explore China's AI sector

By JIANG XUEQING
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China's rapid advances in artificial intelligence, electric mobility, robotics and other high-tech industries are drawing growing attention from the next generation of business leaders around the world, with Deutsche Bank bringing a group of young entrepreneurs to Beijing to see the country's innovation ecosystem firsthand.

Marco Pagliara, head of private bank emerging markets at Deutsche Bank, led next-generation entrepreneurs from emerging markets, Europe and the Middle East on a recent visit to Beijing, where they explored China's AI ecosystem, visited industries at the forefront of technological development and met with Chinese entrepreneurs to learn how they are turning technological advances into new business models.

The visit was part of Deutsche Bank's NextGen program, which has run for more than 20 years and provides business leaders of the future with access to educational events, thought-leadership activities and networking opportunities. In August, Beijing became the host city for the bank's Wealth Management NextGen APAC Program 2026.

"It's an exceptional opportunity to come to China at this stage of the AI revolution, to see what the country is doing in terms of infrastructure investment in an ecosystem that supports AI evolution and transformation," said Pagliara.

The program was designed to expose the young leaders to areas where China has emerged as a global force, including AI, electric mobility, power infrastructure, robotics and humanoid robotics, and to give them a firsthand sense of the level of innovation in the country.

For Pagliara, the trip was also an opportunity to examine investment opportunities and consider how international investors can gain exposure to cutting-edge Chinese technologies.

"I think what is special about China is the combination between long-term strategic planning and the ecosystem that supports technological development, which prepares fertile ground for the private sector to develop and translate that ecosystem into innovation that impacts business models and the lives of people on a day-to-day basis," he said.

Concerted activity, together with financial and business planning, provides a clearly defined framework and stable guidance, while an economic system that rewards performance and efficiency helps identify some of the strongest and most successful business models, which can then become highly competitive internationally, he said.

As a European, Pagliara said he has seen firsthand how much more competitive Chinese products have become on the global stage.

"There are many examples across a range of industries, where we look with respect and admiration at what has been built here in China. As competitors, we find it very challenging to face the efficiency and the quality of the products that have been developed here. So I think we have a lot to learn," he said.

Foreign perceptions of Chinese manufacturing have also evolved, he said. China was once primarily associated with low costs and manufacturing efficiency, but its competitive advantage is increasingly based on quality and product features that are not readily available in other markets.

That shift is evident in industries ranging from automobiles and power generation to consumer electronics, and is beginning to extend into sectors such as fashion and apparel, which historically received less attention from Chinese manufacturers. An increasing number of Chinese brands are gaining international recognition for quality rather than simply for cost competitiveness or efficiency, he said.

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BUSINESS

Green energy fuels summer tourism

Heat waves drive up inbound trips helped by clean power





Above: A foreign tourist strikes a playful "eating-the-monorail" pose for photos at the Liziba viewing platform in Chongqing on Aug 10. HUANG WEI / XINHUA
Left: Foreign tourists pose for a selfie in Nan'an district of Chongqing on July 10. GUO XU / XINHUA

SHANGHAI — French vlogger Yisa recently invited her parents to China for a summer trip, and they were all duly impressed by the cool and comfortable environment they encountered throughout their journey, even finding modern air-conditioning systems installed inside traditional yurts on the vast grasslands of North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

Like Yisa's family, who wanted to escape stifling heatwaves in Europe, an increasing number of foreign visitors are coming to China not only to explore its history and culture, but also to seek respite from high temperatures.

The trend is giving rise to a new dimension of inbound tourism as visitors discover that China's "summer retreat" is supported not only by its diverse natural landscapes, but also by technological innovation, green energy infrastructure and an extensive transportation network.

The phenomenon is also being witnessed in China's major cities.

Vlogger Jenna Knapp from the United States recently visited Shanghai, where she sought refuge from 36.7 C summer heat in an indoor snow and ski resort.

"If you know anything about Shanghai summers and you're looking to get away from the heat, this place is a dream," Knapp said in a video, adding that visitors could enjoy an artificial winter environment and ski rentals for less than $100.

Her destination, Shanghai L+SNOW Indoor Skiing Theme Resort, is certified by Guinness World Records as the world's largest indoor ski facility. In subtropical Shanghai, where summer temperatures often exceed 30 C, the resort maintains an indoor temperature of around -5 C across a 98,000-square-meter snow area, with a vertical drop of 60 meters.

Behind such a cooling experience is an extensive effort to improve energy efficiency. The resort has adopted a range of energy-saving technologies, including solar power generation, an upgraded thermal insulation system, carbon dioxide refrigeration, waste heat recovery, ice thermal storage and dehumidification heating.

Some 37,000 square meters of photovoltaic panels have been installed on the roof of the resort, reducing CO2 emissions by more than 2,000 metric tons annually, the resort said.

The facility is more than a novel destination for summer visitors. It also showcases China's efforts to integrate energy-saving technologies with emerging forms of service consumption, while promoting the application of new thermal insulation materials, refrigeration equipment and other innovations.

Yet the energy supporting such "chilling" experiences — from grassland yurts to indoor entertainment venues — comes from a much larger power network.

"The 'air-conditioning freedom' stems from China's ultra-high-voltage power transmission networks and the rapid expansion of wind and photovoltaic power generation," said Cheng Haozhong, a distinguished professor at the School of Electrical Engineering of Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

The cooling-off effects enjoyed by tourists in East China, Cheng said, are also supported by green electricity transmitted from the country's renewables-rich western regions.

China's power supply has remained stable even during the peak summer season, when electricity demand has repeatedly reached record highs amid heavy air conditioning use.

According to the 15th Five-Year Plan for the Construction of a New Power System, jointly released by the National Development and Reform Commission and the National Energy Administration on Aug 3, China's annual electricity consumption is expected to increase by about 600 billion kilowatt-hours during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30). To meet rising demand, China is building a diversified power supply system featuring coal, gas, nuclear power and renewable energy.

The growth of green electricity is also helping cities meet rising summer demand, while advancing the country's energy transition.

As of July 15, Shanghai had consumed more than 11 billion kWh of green electricity this year, about 25 percent more than its total consumption of green electricity last year and a record high for the fourth consecutive year.

The combination of a stable power supply and growing green electricity consumption is helping provide the energy foundation for China's increasingly diverse summer tourism experiences.

Beyond the power grid, China's extensive transportation network is making it easier for overseas visitors to reach cooler destinations across the country.

While major cities remain popular with international travelers, more visitors are exploring summer destinations such as Southwest China's Tengchong, Yunnan province; Northwest China's Kashgar, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region; North China's Qinhuangdao, Hebei province, attracted by their cooler climates and distinctive landscapes.

The trend has been facilitated by China's expanding civil aviation network and high-speed railway system, which accounts for more than 70 percent of the world's total high-speed rail mileage.

"This upgraded transportation network has turned the idea of having morning dim sum in a furnace-like city and enjoying the cool air at the foot of a snow-capped mountain in the afternoon into an everyday reality for travelers," said Cao Yixia, a research fellow at the Institute of Applied Economics of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

The growing popularity of China's summer destinations among overseas visitors is thus more than a seasonal tourism phenomenon. It offers an everyday perspective on the country's modernization — from green electricity and advanced infrastructure to convenient transportation and increasingly diverse forms of consumption.

As more international travelers experience China's "summer retreat," they are gaining a closer and more tangible understanding of the country's development, helping foster more authentic and organic exchanges between China and the rest of the world, said Cao.

XINHUA

Solar, wind electricity used to support computing bonanza



A drone view shows a 2-million-kW green-power project supporting Datang's cloud data center near the Tengger Desert in Zhongwei, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, on Feb 10. LU YANG / XINHUA

YINCHUAN — As the sun beats down on the edge of the Tengger Desert on a summer day, rows of photovoltaic panels stretch across the dunes, turning intense desert light into electricity.

Nearby, the steady hum of servers fills a data center run by telecom giant China Mobile in Zhongwei, Northwest China's Ningxia Hui autonomous region. In May, one of the center's data facilities began receiving electricity directly from the solar power station, powering computing capacity for artificial intelligence model training, inference and other applications.

Green power now accounts for over 80 percent of the electricity consumed by the facility, said Zhang Xu, a computing operation and maintenance engineer at China Mobile's Ningxia branch.

The solar farm in renewable-energy-rich Ningxia is one of China's earliest projects to supply green power directly to data centers. The move comes as China seeks to bring its growing computing capacity closer to the renewable energy resources needed to power it.

The 500-megawatt solar farm is only part of the equation.

About 40 kilometers south, a 1.5-gigawatt wind farm is under construction and is scheduled to be connected to the grid in September. The wind power will complement solar generation at night, helping supply data centers with green power around the clock.

Once fully operational, the solar and wind projects will be able to meet the annual electricity demand of about 2.29 billion kilowatt-hours from the existing and to-be-added data center cluster in Zhongwei, according to the Zhongwei subsidiary of China Datang Corporation Renewable Power, which operates the projects.

That demand comes from a fast-growing computing cluster. The Zhongwei cluster now has 10 large data center parks. Six of China's top 10 internet data center operators have established a presence in the city, while data operations for major internet companies including Alibaba, Baidu, Tencent, Meituan and ByteDance are also based there.

For data centers that run around the clock, electricity needs to be stable, reliable and affordable. The issue is becoming more pressing as demand for computing power rises. Electricity accounts for 60 percent to 70 percent of data centers' operating costs, according to industry estimates.

Statistics from the International Energy Agency show that, globally, data centers are projected to consume 945 terawatt-hours of electricity a year by 2030. In China, electricity consumption by data centers doubled from 82.4 TWh in 2019 to 166 TWh in 2024, according to the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology.

That puts data centers at the intersection of two trends: rapidly growing demand for computing and China's push toward a greener energy mix. The country has set a target of having newly built data centers in its major computing hubs use no less than 80 percent green power.

Having green power transmission lines right next to the data center allows it to make greater use of locally generated solar and wind power, while reducing transmission losses and electricity costs, said Zhang from China Mobile.

Zhongwei's appeal as a computing hub goes beyond its abundant sunshine and wind.

The city has a dry, cool climate and stable geological conditions, while its location near the geographical center of China offers good connectivity to other parts of the country.

Data centers here can rely on natural cooling for eight to 10 months a year, well above the national average, helping reduce the electricity needed for cooling, said Zhu Bin from the computing operations branch at China Mobile Ningxia.

Zhongwei's growth as a computing hub is closely tied to China's strategy of shifting computing workloads westward, where renewable energy and land are more abundant.

Launched in 2022, the "East Data, West Computing" project designated Ningxia as one of China's eight national computing hubs, with Zhongwei being home to one of 10 national data center clusters.

In 2025, Zhongwei ranked fifth among 302 Chinese cities on a city-level computing power index. Its computing capacity has reached 283,100 petaflops to date, according to the municipal data administration.

Computing facilities in Zhongwei support the training and inference of 13 large AI models and provide services to more than 4,900 companies, including Xiaomi and Xiaohongshu, said Meng Fanzhen, an official with the administration.

For the first time this year, the coordinated development of computing capacity and electricity supply was highlighted in the Government Work Report, alongside hyperscale intelligent computing clusters, as a key area of new infrastructure development.

China's 2026-30 development blueprint also calls for further advancing the "East Data, West Computing" project and expanding its integrated computing network.

For Zhongwei, the next step is to better align power supply with computing demand while driving down both carbon emissions and costs.

"We will work to build a platform that dynamically coordinates computing capacity and power supply, using computing demand to optimize electricity use," Meng said.

XINHUA

M-Grass aids Mongolia's drive for afforestation

ULAANBAATAR/HOHHOT — Deep in Mongolia's Gobi area, technicians from M-Grass Ecology and Environment (Group), a Chinese company specializing in grass seed technology, crouched on the sandy ground in Khanbogd county inspecting newly planted Haloxylon ammodendron seedlings. With meticulous care, they parted the gravel to confirm each root was firmly nestled in soil.

Characterized by vegetation cover below 10 percent, annual precipitation of approximately 104 millimeters, winter temperatures as low as -31.5 C and summer maxima exceeding 42.2 C, this harsh setting creates major challenges for afforestation. Yet, backed by the Chinese enterprise, a durable green initiative is progressing.

The Haloxylon ammodendron forest project sits near Mongolian wild ass (*equus hemionus*) habitats, where M-Grass technicians are now preparing for large-scale planting this autumn.

"Whether Haloxylon ammodendron seedlings take root and survive depends on hydrological surveys, native vegetation assessments, seedling selection, soil testing, fertilizer comparisons, planting depth, irrigation during early growth and meticulous subsequent maintenance," said Wang Junfang, the project's technical team leader.

"Gobi afforestation must fully respect desert ecology. The planting process also seeks to protect the native vegetation already growing on this land," Wang said.

To minimize disruption to the Gobi surface and native plants, the technical team downsized the planting pit from 40 to 20 centimeters in diameter, enabling more precise operations that protect the desert ecosystem during afforestation.

The 400-hectare Haloxylon ammodendron forest project, a key component of Mongolia's "One Billion Trees" initiative, is led by a Mongolian enterprise with ecological restoration technology consultation provided by M-Grass.

The project aims to plant 330,000 Haloxylon ammodendron seedlings. The location was chosen in a Gobi area historically home to wild Haloxylon, leveraging local species' drought resilience to improve survival rates.

The project's field investigations began in May 2025, with 80 hectares planted last fall. This autumn, the project aims to plant 200 additional hectares using a proven "mechanical digging plus manual planting" method, a process expected to be completed within two months. The remaining acreage will be carried over to the following year.

In parallel with main afforestation tasks, the project has established a 10-hectare research demonstration zone. Over 20 native Mongolian species are being tested for plant biodiversity comparison, alongside adaptation trials of proven Chinese ecological products. The goal is to tailor China's experience in desertification control to Mongolia's local conditions.

Regarding irrigation design, Wang said the technical team adopts a water-saving approach based on the Gobi's water resource endowment. Natural precipitation supplemented by staged watering is planned to support seedlings during critical growth periods. Once fully established, seedlings will rely primarily on natural rainfall for maintenance.

Beyond ecological restoration, the Gobi afforestation project is designed to benefit local communities. Haloxylon ammodendron is a key desert host plant that often supports Cistanche deserticola, a medicinal parasitic plant. The team plans to trial Cistanche grafting on mature Haloxylon ammodendron two years after planting, while also monitoring carbon sequestration, to turn these sand-fixing forests into economic assets for local communities.

China-Mongolia ecological cooperation is expanding on multiple fronts.

The China-Mongolia Desertification Prevention and Control Cooperation Center was inaugurated in Mongolian capital Ulaanbaatar in September 2023. The center actively supports Mongolia's One Billion Trees initiative.

M-Grass is also collaborating with another Mongolian company to advance mine site restoration and integrated grassland-livestock projects. They plan to pilot an 8-hectare mine slope restoration, covering drainage construction, soil improvement, vegetation planting and long-term monitoring and evaluation.

Fan Lijun, director of the Belt and Road Initiative Research Institute at Inner Mongolia Academy of Social Sciences, said bringing China's mature desertification control experience to Mongolia and localizing it through resource-based practice, while pursuing both ecological protection and industrial cultivation, is a new highlight in advancing Belt and Road cooperation and the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor.

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CHINA

Scholars: Natl identity key to bolstering ties

Seminar highlights reunification shift, drive to advance cross-Strait relations

By **LI SHANGYI** in Wuhan
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Scholars from Taiwan and the mainland stressed at a seminar that a sound sense of Chinese national identity is fundamental to the development of cross-Strait relations, while expressing concern about the Democratic Progressive Party authorities' efforts to distort that identity by promoting "Taiwan independence" separatism.

Addressing the 2026 Cross-Strait Relations Seminar, which opened on Thursday in Wuhan, Hubei province, Peng Qing'en, deputy director of the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, called on Taiwan compatriots to uphold the greater national interest and recognize the broader historical trend. He also urged them to jointly oppose "Taiwan independence" separatism and external interference and safeguard the common homeland of the Chinese nation.

The two-day seminar was organized by the mainland-based cross-Strait relations research center and brought together more than 160 scholars and experts from both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Wang Yingjin, director of the Research Center for Cross-Strait Relations at Renmin University of China, said a sound sense of national identity is the first step in advancing cross-Strait relations and an important prerequisite for fostering emotional affinity between people on both sides.

Yang Yizhou, vice-president of the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots, said that, since Taiwan is part of China's territory, people in Taiwan originally had no issue with their identification with China.

He said separatist forces on the island have sought to construct a "Taiwan independence" identity through policies, which he described as false identification. "Identification with national reunification is natural, while identification with 'Taiwan independence' is artificial," Yang said.

Chi Hsing, president and publisher of The Observer, a Taiwan-based magazine, said "different systems are not an excuse for secession". She said people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait form a community with a shared future and that Taiwan compatriots should uphold the tradition of patriotism reflected in their shared historical memory.

"The status quo across the Taiwan Strait is a transitional phase towards national reunification," Chi said.

Referring to the island's "constitution", whose preamble states that it is intended to "meet the needs before national reunification", she said Taiwan has only the option of pursuing reunification, not "Taiwan independence".

Experts at the seminar noted that the mainland's continuous development and progress has contributed to a growing sense of identification with China among people on the island. They also called on people in Taiwan to gain a better understanding of the mainland.

Ting Jen-fang, president of the south Taiwan cross-Strait relations association, said new forms of traditional Chinese culture have strong appeal among young people in Taiwan. He cited popular works such as the dance drama *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* and the television series *Pursuit of Jade* as examples, saying they are opening up new avenues for cross-Strait cultural exchange.

Yang Kai-huang, director of the Cross-Strait Research Center at Ming Chuan University in Taiwan, encouraged people in Taiwan to experience the mainland's technological development, including the application of smart technologies in daily life and healthcare. Such developments, he said, offer a glimpse into future models and could also help strengthen a sense of identification.

Smart traffic controllers



An intelligent traffic management robot directs vehicles in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, on Thursday. The robot, fitted with a black police cap and fluorescent yellow-green reflective clothing, is the city's first traffic management robot and is currently in a trial phase. Equipped for tasks like routine patrols, violation detection, voice guidance and road safety education, it can operate continuously for eight to nine hours daily, effectively bolstering traffic control during nighttime and peak hours. WU FENGYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Yak fighting



Two yaks grapple during a traditional yak-fighting performance held in Panam county, Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region, on Thursday. The bout was a demonstration event of the 14th Xizang autonomous regional games, which run from Aug 15 to 22. JIGMI DORJE / XINHUA

Chinese surgeon saves lives in Africa

By **WANG XIAOYU**
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For much of the past year, Chinese neurosurgeon Zhang Shijun's most vital instrument was not the advanced craniotomy system he was accustomed to using in brain surgery, but simple, handheld skull drills.

During his one-year medical aid mission in the Northeast African nation of Eritrea, which ran from July 2025 to July 2026, Zhang, 47, learned that when stripped of the high-tech trappings of a modern operating room, a doctor's most valuable assets are solid technical skills and an unwavering resolve under pressure.

"Back in my home hospital, we're used to having a high-powered electronic drill spinning within seconds just by releasing the foot pedal," he said. "In Eritrea, we could only rely on manual equipment most of the time, putting our wrist and shoulder strength into turning the drill over and over again."

"Moving from a well-equipped surgical room to an environment with scarce resources was a tough lesson for many of us medical aid workers. But we've all learned to overcome these challenges and live up to the trust our local patients have placed in us," he said during an interview ahead of China's ninth Doctors' Day, celebrated annually on Aug 19.

Zhang is the deputy director of the neurosurgery department at Yellow River Sanmenxia Hospital in Henan province. He also served as deputy head of the 18th Chinese medical aid team to Eritrea, which comprises 18 medical experts. They all come from Henan and specialize in a broad range of fields including radiology, surgery, traditional Chinese medicine and anesthesiology.

In Eritrea, the Chinese team was based at the Orotta National Referral Hospital in the capital city of Asmara and several other local medical institutions.

Throughout the mission, the team received more than 35,600 patient visits, performed or guided over 4,100 surgeries, delivered TCM therapies to nearly 20,000 patients, conducted 9,000 CT and ultrasound examinations, and trained about 180 local medical workers.



Zhang Shijun

As one of just two neurosurgeons on the team, Zhang said they were the only surgeons in the country capable of handling complex neurosurgical cases. While he was accustomed to the high-stakes pressure and critical decisions inherent in his specialty, the realities on the ground continually challenged him in ways he had never anticipated.

His most memorable case involved a man in his 20s who was transferred from a remote area to the hospital three days after falling into a coma due to a spontaneous intracerebral hemorrhage. Such cases were not uncommon in Eritrea, where long travel distances and inconvenient transportation often left patients in critical condition before they could reach medical help.

"His one pupil was already blown and there was no movement in any limb. His brain was herniating and he could die at any moment," Zhang said. "As an emergency head CT showed a hematoma in the brain, we decided to perform emergency surgery to clear the clot."

"There was no scrub nurse, so we picked our own instruments and used them ourselves. There was no surgical microscope or other advanced equipment. We had just one hand drill, and the bit wasn't very sharp," he said. "After drilling four holes in his skull, I was drenched in sweat, and my wrist was sore and shaking."

In the middle of the surgery, the bipolar coagulator used to control bleeding suddenly malfunctioned, and Zhang had to quickly apply pressure to the surgical site using a gelatin sponge.

"We had to swap out three different bipolar units before the device started working," he said.

The surgery was eventually completed after about three hours.

"When the patient gradually woke up and his limbs started moving again, it hit me that in conditions that bad, one slip in surgery and the outcome could have been totally different," he said.

"What I had relied on in those intense moments wasn't just my technical skill, but also the trust of a man handing me his life — and I cannot fail that kind of trust," he said.

After familiarizing himself with the local conditions, Zhang said he performed about six surgeries a week on average, and occasionally four surgeries a day on their busiest days.

"We had brought a type of cranial perforator and special drainage tubes from China in advance, having learned that there was a high prevalence of chronic subdural hematoma. With the domestic device, a procedure to address the condition took only 10 minutes, compared with about an hour before," he said.

"As a result, more patients could receive timely care," he added.

Tewelde Yohannes, medical director of Orotta hospital, said Chinese doctors play an important role in filling gaps in certain areas of expertise.

"They are always available, always willing, very cooperative, smiling, humble and ready to work at any time around the clock," he said during an interview with local television station Eri-TV. "We are very thankful and grateful for the support they give us, and we want it to continue."

Gao Jielei contributed to this story.

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Story-sharing event fosters China-Nepal exchanges

By **YANG ZEKUN**
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More than 300 people representing various sectors in China and Nepal gathered in Kathmandu on Wednesday for a story-sharing event highlighting the Xizang autonomous region's progress in social stability, economic development, ecological protection and opening-up.

The event, titled "Xizang Panorama: New Era, New Development", was co-organized by the China Society for Human Rights Studies, Tribhuvan University and the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal. It brought together officials, scholars, journalists, educators and representatives from Nepal's cultural and performing arts sectors.

Jiang Jianguo, a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and deputy director of the Committee for Ethnic and Religious Affairs of the CPPCC National Committee, said this year marks the 75th anniversary of the peaceful liberation of Xizang.

Over the past 75 years, the Communist Party of China and the Chinese government have consistently regarded the rights to subsistence and development as fundamental human rights and charted a path for human rights development that follows the trend of the times and suits China's national conditions, said Jiang, who is also executive vice-president of the China Society for Human Rights Studies.

Jiang said Xizang has maintained social stability while making progress in economic development, ethnic unity, religious harmony and opening-up, with people's sense of fulfillment, happiness and security continuing to grow.

"The dramatic transformation of Xizang is the most vivid epitome of China's human rights development in the new era," Jiang said.

He called on people from various sectors to continue promoting China-Nepal friendship, observing Xizang's development and advancing exchanges between civilizations, helping more people gain an accurate, multidimensional and comprehensive understanding of the region.

Top Bahadur Magar, chairperson of Nepal's National Human Rights Commission, spoke highly of China's efforts in human rights development and said stronger exchanges and cooperation among countries and relevant institutions are important to advancing the cause.

He said the commission is willing to deepen exchanges with organizations including the China Society for Human Rights Studies, share experiences and perspectives and enhance mutual understanding through dialogue and learning.

The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal remains interested in further strengthening cooperation with China in the areas of human rights promotion and protection, he said.

Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Zhang Maoming, said Xizang's experience in promoting vitality, openness, social harmony and environmental protection could offer useful lessons for deeper cooperation across the Himalayas.

Its practices in economic and social development and grassroots governance could also provide valuable reference for Nepal, Zhang said, adding that China is willing to work with Nepal to turn development opportunities into tangible cooperation and improve the well-being of people in both countries.

The event was structured around four themes: "Open Xizang", "Vibrant Xizang", "Harmonious Xizang" and "Green Xizang", with speakers presenting their observations and experiences of the region.

Eight speakers from China and Nepal, including scholars from the Xizang autonomous region academy of social sciences and the China Tibetology Research Center, as well as representatives from Nepal's media, education and performing arts sectors, took part in the sessions.

"From the historic streets of Lhasa to the innovative ranches in the countryside, I witnessed a Xizang that is actively modernizing while deeply respecting its cultural roots and natural environment," Kumar Sharma Acharya, former chairman of Press Council Nepal, said while recalling his visit to Xizang in June.

A photography exhibition was also held on the sidelines of the event, featuring images of the region's economic development, ecological conservation, ethnic unity and opening-up.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Cause of Antarctic ice gain identified

By **LI MENGHAN**
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While the Antarctic ice sheet has lost mass at an average rate of about 140.5 billion metric tons a year over the past two decades, satellite data showed a striking reversal from 2021 to 2023, when the ice sheet gained 695 billion tons — the largest increase on record.

An international research team has now identified the mechanism behind the unusual gain, revealing a previously overlooked climate link between the tropics and the Antarctic ice sheet.

The study, conducted by researchers from institutes in China, the United States, Japan, Belgium and Hungary, was published in the journal Nature on Wednesday.

The researchers found that sustained warming in the tropical warm pool — a broad region where the western Pacific and eastern Indian oceans meet and sea surface temperatures are persistently high — sent large-scale atmospheric waves southward toward Antarctica. These waves carried unusually large amounts of moisture from the midlatitude Indian Ocean to Queen Mary Land and Wilkes Land in East Antarctica, resulting in persistent heavy snowfall.

The researchers used several types of evidence, including satellite measurements of changes in Earth's gravity, records of snowfall preserved in Antarctic ice cores and computer simulations of atmospheric circulation.

Wang Yunhe, first author of the study and an associate professor at the Institute of Oceanology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said such warming events in the tropical warm pool typically develop and persist for two to three years and occur roughly once in a decade. Similar, although smaller, fluctuations were observed around 2000, he said.

The team also examined what caused the unusual warming and snowfall. Their analysis showed that human-induced climate change accounted for only about 9 percent of the increase in snowfall, indicating that the event was driven mainly by natural fluctuations within the climate system rather than by greenhouse gas warming.

Wang, however, said the temporary increase in snowfall does not alter the Antarctic ice sheet's long-term trend.

"The West Antarctic ice sheet is still losing ice, and some outlet glaciers in East Antarctica are also threatened by ocean-driven ice shelf melting and accelerated ice flow," he said.

The findings help resolve a long-standing puzzle in Antarctic science: why the ice sheet's mass can fluctuate sharply over relatively short periods.

"Scientists have tried to explain the unusual fluctuations in Antarctic ice sheet mass," Wang said. "Most researchers have focused on the central and eastern tropical Pacific and its connection with West Antarctica, where climate signals are strongest and easiest to detect. We looked at the other side — the western Pacific warm pool and its connection with East Antarctica — and identified a pathway that had not previously been recognized."

In climate science, such a connection is known as a teleconnection, meaning that changes in one distant part of the climate system can influence weather and climate far away through atmospheric circulation.

The study identifies a previously underappreciated link between the tropical warm pool and the East Antarctic ice sheet, Wang said.

The finding provides a new framework for understanding short-term changes in Antarctic ice mass and could help guide future research into the climate of East Antarctica.

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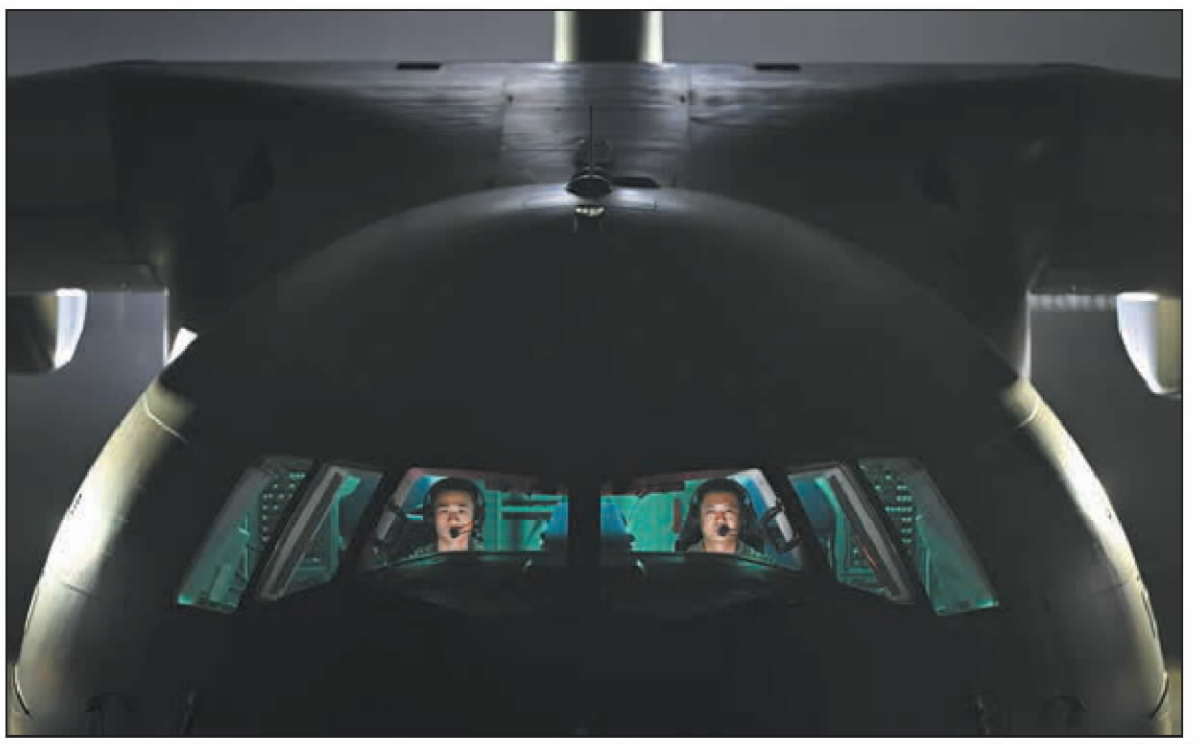
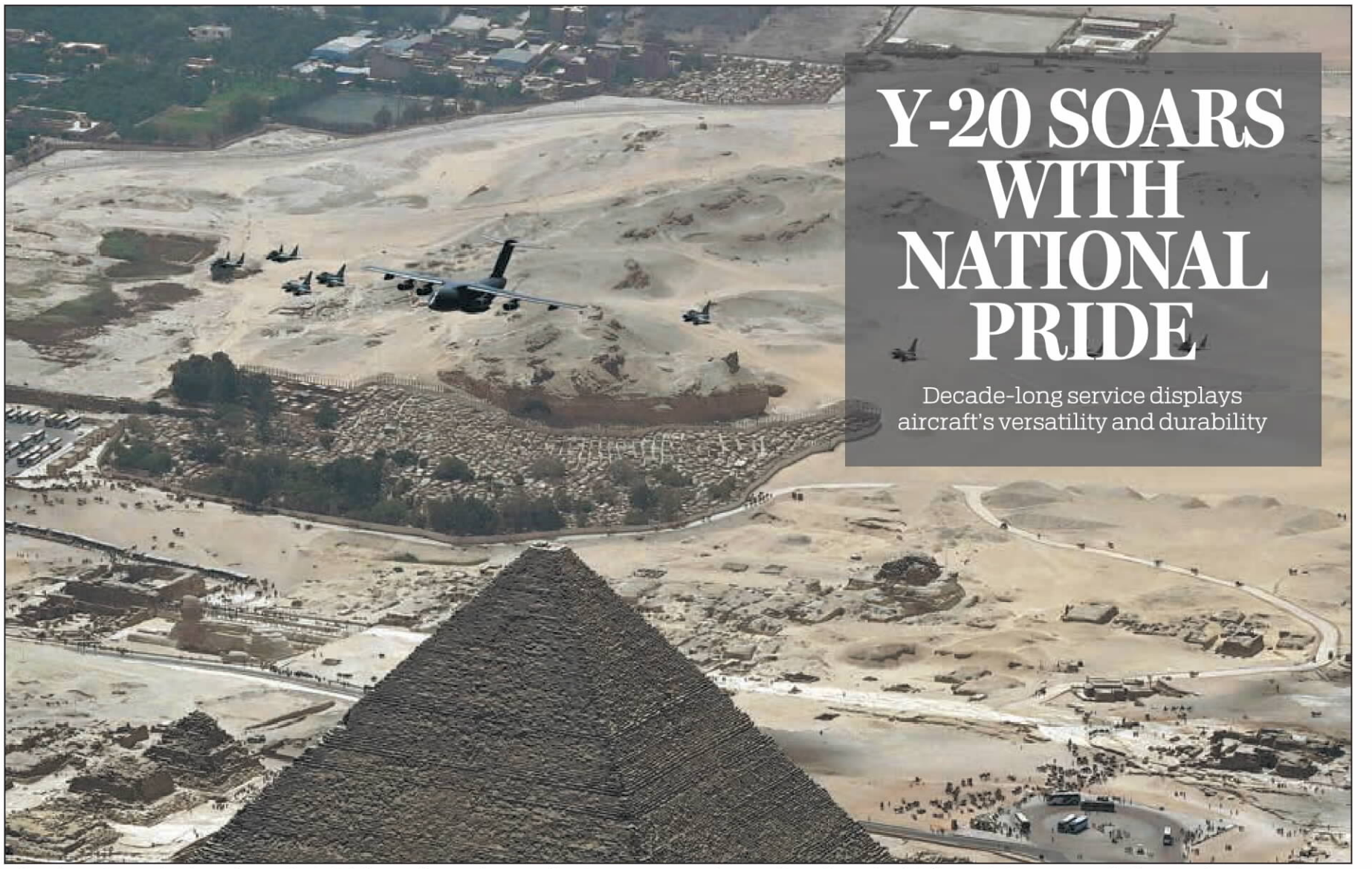
VISUAL







Clockwise from left: Y-20 pilots conduct nighttime training on April 27. Mechanics carry out maintenance work of Y-20 aircraft on April 27. Soldiers study tactics involving Y-20 aircraft on April 29.
PHOTOS BY YU HONGCHUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Y-20 SOARS WITH NATIONAL PRIDE

Decade-long service displays aircraft's versatility and durability

A fleet of a YY-20A aerial tanker and J-10 and MiG-29 fighter jets flies over the pyramids in Giza, Egypt, on May 1 last year, during the "Eagles of Civilization 2025" joint training by Chinese and Egyptian air forces.







Clockwise from above, left: Paratroopers jump out of a Y-20A aircraft during a training session on Sept 23, 2021. A YY-20A aerial tanker fuels two J-20 fighter jets midair on May 12. A fleet of Y-20B aircraft conducts training on lowering takeoff intervals on April 27.

By CHINA DAILY

The Y-20, nicknamed Kunpeng after a giant bird in Chinese mythology, is China's first domestically developed large military transport aircraft. It was officially commissioned in July 2016, marking a milestone in the strategic delivery capability of the People's Liberation Army Air Force.

The project, led by the Aviation Industry Corporation of China's Xi'an Aircraft Industrial Group Co, began in 2007. Its prototype first flew in 2013 before entering service in 2016. With a maximum takeoff weight of 220 metric tons and a payload of 66 tons, Chinese pilots affectionately call it "Chubby Girl" for its wide fuselage.

Ten years after its commissioning, the aircraft has not only deeply integrated itself into various combat readiness training sessions, but also displayed its power in non-military tasks such as disaster relief, humanitarian rescue and overseas transport missions.

Over the decade, the aircraft itself has also evolved from a single transport platform into a family consisting of multiple variants including the original Y-20A, the Y-20B with domestically developed WS-20 engines, and the YY-20A aerial tanker.

It has reached Asia, Africa, Europe and Oceania, building a channel for international exchanges and demonstrating the open, confident and pragmatic image of the Chinese military.

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CULTURE



The dance of homecoming

A traditional folk drama becomes the language through which a son finally understands his absent father, **Chen Nan** reports.

Odes to Heroes, a Chinese dance drama by the Guangzhou Song and Dance Theatre, returned to Beijing on Wednesday and Thursday before embarking on a tour of Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand in September and October. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By the time Erfan Omar's face is painted near the end of *Odes to Heroes*, his character is no longer the boy who has spent years wondering why his father left the family.

He has become the man he once imagined his absent father to be — responsible, courageous and willing to shoulder a greater duty.

"For me, the most moving part is that, in the end, I become the person I want to become," says Omar, a principal dancer with the Guangzhou Song and Dance Theatre, who plays the protagonist. "I want to become a man like my father — someone with responsibility and a sense of duty."

That transformation lies at the heart of *Odes to Heroes*, a dance drama that brings together the vigorous Lingnan folk dance *yingge* with *qiaopi*, the letters and remittances sent home by overseas Chinese.

Premiered in 2024, the production has toured extensively, with more than 150 performances in about 20 cities. It returned to Beijing on Wednesday and Thursday as part of the ongoing 7th National Ethnic Minority Art Festival before heading to Southeast Asia in September and October for performances in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

The overseas tour will take the production back to a region closely connected to its narrative: Southeast Asia, where generations of people from southern China settled, built new lives, and maintained close ties with their homeland.

Set in the late 1930s, the drama follows a family in Guangdong province. A father leaves home for Southeast Asia in search of work and eventually disappears. His wife raises their son alone. Years later, during the Lantern Festival, the son picks up a pair of *yingge* mallets left behind by his father.

The mallets draw him into a dreamlike journey through the past. As he encounters fragments of his father's life, he gradually begins to understand the struggles and sacrifices of a generation shaped by migration, war and responsibility.

"I feel that throughout the dance drama, I am actually an audience member onstage," Omar says. "It is my character who leads the audience into the story."

His character's journey mirrors the audience's own discovery of the history behind *yingge* and *qiaopi*: moving from misunderstanding to recognition, and from personal loss to a deeper understanding of family and collective memory.

Codirected by Qian Xin, the production uses *qiaopi* as a narrative thread. Emerging in the 19th and 20th centuries, *qiaopi* refers to letters sent by overseas Chinese to families in China, often accompanied by remittances. The letters carried not only financial support but news, homesickness and reassurance across thousands of kilometers.

"*Odes to Heroes* turns that history into a story of one family, but its emotional landscape is much broader," Qian says.

While *yingge* provides the production's central movement vocabulary, the stage is filled with other elements of Lingnan (a region in southern China) heritage, including wood carving, *qianci* porcelain inlay, Chaozhou embroidery, iron-branch puppetry, beef balls, and Chaozhou oil-paper lanterns, adds codirector Wang Sisi.

"These elements are more than visual embellishments. Together, they create a multifaceted portrait of Lingnan culture and show how different traditions can connect through a shared cultural heritage," she says.

The production uses these traditions to move between the personal and the collective — from the fate of one family to the broader history of migration, mutual support and shared struggle.



Scenes from the production, which captivates audiences with its moving storyline and dynamic choreography inspired by *yingge* dance, a traditional folk dance that originated during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

At the same time, *Odes to Heroes* does not simply reproduce *yingge* as a folk performance. Its traditional movements are reshaped for the theater and woven into the characters' emotional journeys.

For Omar, mastering the form has been a process of continuous learning.

He first encountered *yingge* in 2024, when the folk dance was gaining widespread attention through short videos and television programs. Its forceful rhythms and explosive energy immediately attracted him.

"I was struck by the energy and excitement of this dance form and its vibrant street culture," he says.

The theater subsequently invited practitioners of intangible cultural heritage to train the dancers. They first learned the traditional movements and techniques, and then worked with the creative team to integrate them into contemporary stage choreography.

The *yingge* mallets have proved particularly demanding. Omar's character carries a special pair throughout the drama, turning them into a recurring link between different times and stories.

"It took a long time to go from not knowing how to spin the mallets to being able to spin them well," he says. "And on every tour, in every performance, we are still constantly refining and thinking about it."

That process reflects one of the production's central challenges: how to preserve the character of a traditional folk art while giving it new theatrical possibilities.

"You can't simply move a street performance onto the stage," Omar says. "Two hours of pure *yingge* would be too much for the audience. We have to develop it creatively — give it a story, give the characters a journey, and bring in real historical stories and stories of unsung heroes."

For Omar, that task carries particular significance. Born and raised in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, he came to Beijing to study at age 10 and has lived in Guangdong for nine years. Although *yingge* comes from a cultural tradition different from his own, he sees a connection in its exuberant energy and collective spirit. The experience has also made him more conscious of the responsibility involved in interpreting a traditional culture from a different region.

"There are certainly regional cultural differences," he says. "When we encounter this outstanding traditional Chinese culture, I feel a great sense of responsibility. We can't casually change it. We need to be cautious, but at the same time, we need to be bold enough to innovate."

That balance between preservation and reinvention runs through *Odes to Heroes*. Its *yingge* dancers carry movements passed down through generations, while *qiaopi* carries the words of those who left home. Together, they create a bridge between generations and across the sea, Qian says.

The Southeast Asian tour will extend that bridge further, bringing a story about migration and homesickness back to the region where generations of Chinese migrants once began new lives, the director notes.

Contact the writer at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

Theater recalls wartime Chongqing

EDINBURGH — For people living in Chongqing, Southwest China, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, fog was more than weather. It could mean precious hours of cover from bombers overhead.

Thick fog made it harder for Japanese pilots to see the ground, giving residents some respite from repeated air raids.

A Chinese-language solo play staged recently at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which runs through Aug 31, offers audiences a glimpse into what life under such circumstances might have been like.

In *The Red Lantern*, Fan Shaolun performs alone, shifting between narration and multiple characters. Through voice, movement and sound, he re-creates wartime Chongqing through the eyes of a boy named Guang, whose unusually sensitive hearing allows him to detect danger before others do.

Beginning in 1938, Japanese warplanes bombed Chongqing, then China's provisional capital, killing and injuring more than 32,000 people. On June 5, 1941, about 2,500 people suffocated to death while seeking shelter in a tunnel during an air raid.

The play was created by Fan and Liang Yumin, who studied theater in Beijing before pursuing postgraduate studies in Britain. The idea grew from conversations about Chongqing's wartime experience and the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

For Liang, the history was personal. A native of Chongqing, she recalls hearing air-raid sirens every June 5 from primary school onward, when the city commemorated those killed in the wartime bombings.

She had learned about the history at school, but revisiting it for the play raised new questions.

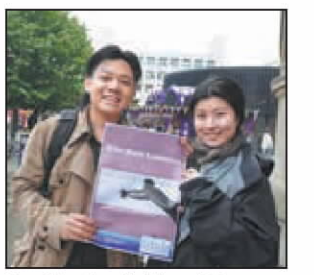
"When you really look at the history from the perspective of the people who lived through it, you begin to see how they lived and how they managed to get through those years," Liang says.

In May 2026, Fan and Liang traveled to Chongqing for field research, visiting museums, the June 5 tunnel massacre site, and the stage production *Chongqing 1949*.

One detail stood out: the fog. They found that during periods of particularly heavy fog, air raids could become less frequent. What Liang had regarded since childhood as an ordinary feature of her hometown suddenly took on a different meaning.

"For people at that time, fog was connected with survival," she says.

Fan and Liang chose to tell the story through a child's perspective.



Fan Shaolun (left) and Liang Yumin, creators of the Chinese-language solo play *The Red Lantern*, pose with the play's poster in Edinburgh on Aug 9. ZHAO JIASONG / XINHUA

"We didn't want to put the transformation of an entire city directly onto the stage," Fan says. "We wanted to follow the changes in one child and, through him, show something of the state of mind of the whole city."

One image from their research stayed with them. After an air raid, four Chinese characters were written on a surviving wall amid the ruins: "*Yu zha yu qiang*" — "The more you bomb, the stronger we are." A replica of the slogan is now displayed at a museum commemorating the June 5 bombing.

The play's Edinburgh run also coincided with an important date in the history it depicts. This year's Aug 15 marked the 81st anniversary of Japan's announcement of its unconditional surrender in World War II.

Dong Ning, chairwoman of the Beijing Performance and Arts Group, says the production offers an accessible entry point to a difficult chapter of history.

XINHUA

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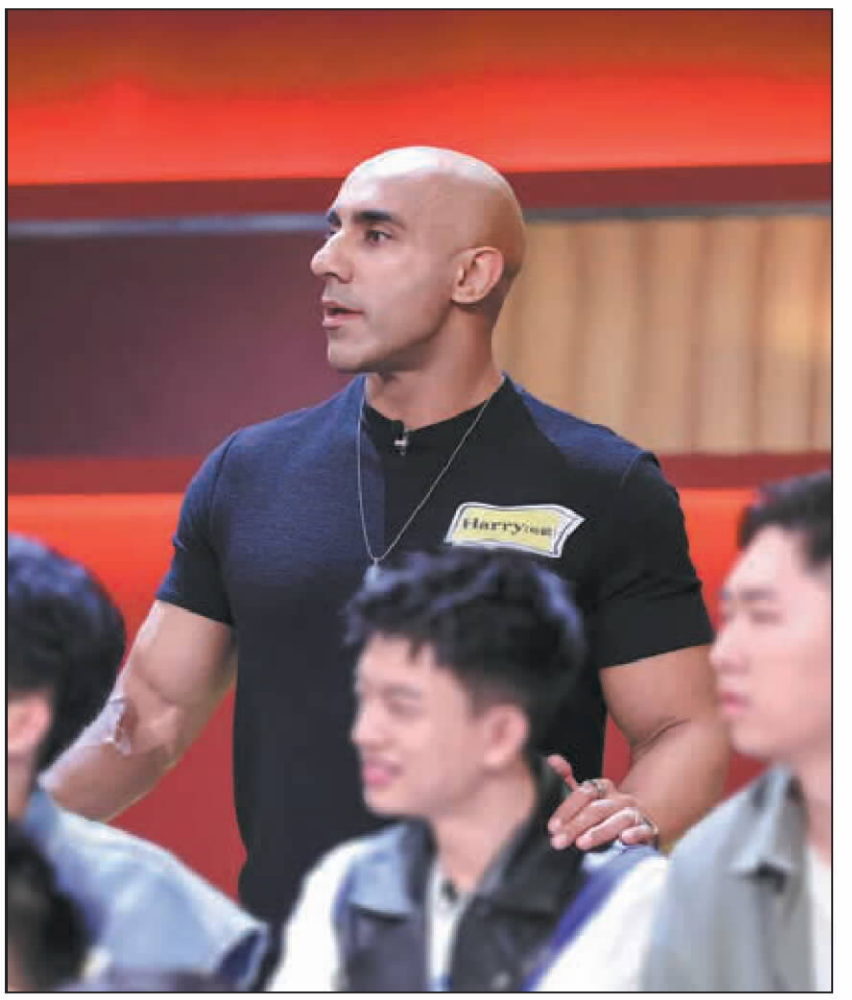
Inside jokes have outsiders laughing

Stand-up comedian delivers personal stories on the stage, with a solo special that has taken his work international, report **He Qi** and **Wu Wanzhen**.



At 7:30 pm, audience members begin filing into GOAT, a comedy club on Xiangyang North Road in Shanghai's Jing'an district. Backstage, Harry Hussain, who is known simply as Harry, eats a banana with his coffee, his pre-show ritual.

"I feel like I'm not here to do stand-up (comedy)," he says with a laugh. "I'm here to play tennis."

Printed on his T-shirt is the word "borderless" — a pun on national borders and personal boundaries. He allows the audience to write on the T-shirt following his show.

"Wars are breaking out everywhere, and it makes me uncomfortable," Harry says. "So I want to express something simple: We're all the same people." He never explains it on stage, preferring to leave it open to interpretation and letting the audience write what they want.

This British-Pakistani comedian has lived in China for 18 years and performed stand-up in Mandarin for five years. In December 2025, his first Chinese special, *Outsider*, premiered in Shanghai. In the spring, he took the show to Canada, where he completed five performances in different cities. He now plans to bring it to the United Kingdom.

"The Outsider" — that's his label and the name of his comedy special: A Briton in China can be an "outsider"; a migrant in a new city can be an "outsider". "Each of us," Harry says, "has felt like one at some point". Yet for the fans, fellow comedians, family, and friends who cheer him on across the country, he has long been an insider — one of their own.

Finding his voice

Harry came to China at 20, first studying medicine in Hebei province. After graduation, he moved to Beijing and stayed for over a decade. He even opened an Italian restaurant in the Liangmaqiao area.

But he found his true calling five years ago.

He was struggling with depression and looking for an outlet. "At first I was just writing jokes and posting them online. The more I wrote, the more I realized that I genuinely loved writing comedy," he recalls.

Having grown up watching British stand-up, full-length TV specials from age 7, he never imagined taking the stage himself. A friend persuaded him: since you've written them, why not tell them?

His first gig was at a bar in one of Beijing's *hutong* (alleyway): 10 audience members, 20 performers.

"I was so nervous, but the first day, the host forgot about me entirely," he says. The next day, the nerves had subsided. He went onstage, told a few jokes, and the response was surprisingly good.

"The laughter and applause made me realize so many people could understand me — that feeling was incredibly addictive," he says.

For Harry, performing in Chinese was a choice he made from day one.

"Honestly, most of the audiences are Chinese, so performing in their native language is more effective." In English, the audience would be smaller and at varying levels — he wouldn't know who to cater to.

But Chinese used in stand-up comedy is different from everyday Chinese. Wordplay, puns, idioms — he had to learn them all specifically for comedy.

Unlike first-arrival or character stories that other foreign comedians often cover, Harry wants to take a different path.

"What I want to be is a 'foreigner' audiences remember — sincere and truth-telling," he says.

On stage, he talks about his struggles, and the audience's empathy is therapeutic. "Things I didn't want to face before, I can now talk about openly," he says. "My mental state keeps getting healthier."

"Stand-up is my therapist," Harry always says.

Dedicated to his daughter

In the summer of 2024, Harry appeared on the variety show *Stand-Up Comedy and Friends*. Joking about English corners, training institutions and internet-famous foreigners, his first-round set brought the house down — guest judge and veteran television host Lu Yu called his material "very sophisticated".

But he didn't make it to the end. The day he was eliminated, he decided on the spot to write a special. "If I don't do a special, gigs will decrease," he says. "It's time."

He retreated to a friend's place in Hebei province's Jinshanling, not far from Beijing, to write in seclusion. "I don't like refining jokes word-by-word at an open mic (microphone)," he says. "I prefer to write the full hour first, then polish the details."

He also took a month-long acting class. "It required digging into inner feelings — childhood experiences, hidden emotions," he says. "I realized things I'd hidden for years could actually become jokes."

For Harry, a comedian's first solo show should be personal.

"Your first special should tell your story so the audience can really get to know you." TV clips are too short and edited for entertainment; a special is complete. "Some people might like me, some not — it doesn't matter."

The result is *Outsider*.

"Each of us has felt like an outsider — at work, at school, in social circles." A portion is dedicated to his daughter.

"She'll face identity issues — not just mixed race, but regional, like whether Beijing or Shanghai is home," he says. "I put my own experiences into the special, so someday it can help her."

Once the first draft of the special was complete, Shanghai became his testing ground. Three years ago, Harry moved to Shanghai, where Xiaoguo Comedy is based.

"Shanghai has the strongest stand-up scene in the country," he says. Within 15 minutes of home, there are four or five open mic venues; he hits several a night on his electric scooter. "Shanghai's audience is super diverse. If a joke works here, it will probably work anywhere."

On Dec 14, 2025, *Outsider* premiered at Sixiao Comedy in Shanghai, followed by a nationwide tour that included Beijing and Guangzhou, Guangdong province, attracting over 3,000 live audience members.

In April and May, Harry took his show to Canada — his first international tour. The audience was more diverse than he expected: Chinese, foreigners who had lived in China, local students learning Chinese, teenage immigrants, and mixed-heritage viewers. "It's amazing to have so many different backgrounds in the same room," he says.

Bridging cross-communication

"I'm a citizen of the world — I've always thought that," he says. On identity, Harry believes self-acceptance is enough. People have labeled him throughout his life, but these days they matter far less.

In China, he feels at ease. "Here, I'm just a 'foreigner'. I don't have to pretend to be Chinese, and no one keeps asking if I'm 'really Chinese'," he says. "'Foreigner' is broad — it includes every country, every identity. That's enough."

That process also shapes his view of cross-cultural communication: Stand-up is already a bridge. Chinese audiences have watched English-language stand-up for years, adapting a form developed overseas to local experiences and sensibilities. Now, Chinese stand-up is increasingly reaching audiences abroad. "It's a great cycle," he comments.

But he doesn't set out to deliver a message. "I'm just telling my real life. If people want to understand it, they can. How they interpret it is up to them. I trust the audience."

Back at GOAT, the show comes to an end.

Audiences sign Harry's T-shirt, leaving signatures, notes and well-wishes. For each performance, he prepares a new shirt and places it outside afterward for the audience to write on.

On his scooter ride home, Shanghai's night breeze hits his face. His wife and nearly 8-month-old daughter are waiting.

Harry says that parenting has become a new source of material. "I'm most interested in family stuff now — parenting differences with my in-laws, cultural gaps, traditional Chinese customs I never knew about," he says. "I'm learning them with the baby, and it's fascinating."







Clockwise from top: Harry at the variety show Stand-Up Comedy and Friends in 2024. He watches a game with friends. He takes the stage at a Shanghai open mic night. One moment of Harry and his daughter. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Contact the writers at heqi@chinadaily.com.cn

Online
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Annual jazz festival returns for its 22nd edition with a record 17-day program

By **HE QI**





The 2025 Shanghai JZ Festival was held in Qiantan area. The 22nd JZ Festival will bring a larger and longer edition to the city. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Along the autumn bank of the Huangpu River, as a cool breeze sweeps past, it carries the soft notes of a trumpet, the warm tone of a saxophone solo, the steady pulse of a double bass, and spontaneous cheers of an outdoor crowd. Across sunlit parks and vibrant avenues, the waterfront becomes a giant soundstage.

From Oct 16 to Nov 1, that vivid scene will transform Shanghai's sprawling Qiantan area in the Pudong New Area into an open-air jazz paradise, as the 22nd JZ Festival brings its largest and longest edition yet to the city's riverside.

The 17-day festival will feature over 146 performances by more than 100 musicians from 29 countries and regions, spanning 13 venues across 1.3 square kilometers, including parks, theaters and shopping streets. Except for ticketed indoor concerts, all outdoor performances and forums will be free and open to the public. According to the organizers, Lujiazui Group and JZ Music, the festival is also the centerpiece of the 2026 New Bund Chillout, running from Sept 20 to Nov 1 in Pudong.

The JZ Festival has been held in Shanghai annually since 2005. It is the largest jazz festival in China and the second-largest in Asia.

Building on last year's success, which set records in the Qiantan area with 1.23 million visits and 162 million yuan ($24 million) in consumer spending, JZ Festival founder Ren Yuqing emphasizes, "The past is just the past; we will create an innovative future."

This year's program is organized around six themes. The opening Jazz Age Carnival at Qiantan Sports Park immerses visitors in a nostalgic Jazz Age atmosphere with swing dancers, vintage cars, vinyl records, and steampunk parade floats.

Jazz Avenue expands last year's street-music format from a single stage to a cluster of four stages, turning the neighborhood into a compact festival. Jazz Riverside takes place at Qiantan Leisure Park, where a grand stage overlooks the Huangpu River. Jazz Around the Town brings pop-up performances to shopping malls, alleyways, and even basketball courts.

The closing weekend features a solo concert by five-time Grammy winner Victor Wooten, who Rolling Stone ranked among the "top 10 greatest bassists of all time", alongside two special concerts led by Chinese soul diva Yuan Yawei (Tia Ray) at the Qiantan 31 Performing Arts Centre. Additional international artists are to be announced.

Beyond performances, the Qiantan Jazz Forum, co-hosted with the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, will bring together industry players, musicians and fans for a week of discussions on topics ranging from AI in music creation to live marketing and music education. The festival has also established a long-term strategic partnership with Music China, creating an annual October collaboration through cross-promotion, a shared stage and joint industry salons.

"Culture is a city's most enduring source of competitiveness, and music is one soul of culture," states Wu Jun, deputy director of Pudong New Area's culture and tourism bureau.

"With the conservatory and the instrument exhibition on board, we hope to build a high ground for the entire music industry in Shanghai this October — hopefully a high ground for China also, a musical peak facing the world," Ren says.

Ma Tan contributed to this story.

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LIFE

Singer finds his voice on talent show

British vocalist Elliot James Reay learns to balance online success with live performance and personal authenticity, **Chen Nan** reports.



When Elliot James Reay first stepped onto the stage of *Singer 2026*, one of China's most popular music competition shows, he found himself experiencing something he had not felt for quite some time: nerves.

The young British singer had already built a substantial online following with his distinctive retro sound. But *Singer 2026* was different. It was live, competitive and placed him alongside accomplished singers, with audiences voting on their performances.

"I'd never been in a competition before, especially a talent competition," the 23-year-old singer-songwriter said in Beijing on Aug 14.

Yet the unfamiliar pressure brought an unexpected feeling.

"It made me feel like I just started my career again," he says. "It gave me a bit more hunger and a bit more fire."

For Reay, China became more than another stop on an increasingly international career. It offered an established online artist the chance, in a sense, to become a beginner again.

The invitation came while Reay was in the United States working on new material. His manager told him about the opportunity to join *Singer 2026*, and his first reaction was excitement. China was a place he had long wanted to visit.

Before becoming a full-time musician, he had traveled widely. "I went everywhere but China," he says. During his recent trip to Beijing, he also visited the zoo, where he saw pandas. He shared his trip on Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, receiving warm feedback from his fans in China.

Now he had finally arrived to do what he had dreamed of doing: making music.

Reay came with few expectations. He was entering a music market he did not yet fully understand and joining a competition unlike anything he had experienced. The language barrier and the intensity of the live performances made it a leap into unfamiliar territory, especially as he sang one song in Chinese.

But that uncertainty became part of the attraction.

Reay's musical identity, after all, is built on a journey across time. His music draws on classic rock 'n' roll and early pop, sounds that evoke nostalgia for some listeners while offering younger audiences the discovery of something new.

The same collision between old and new can be found in the way he built his career.

While his music looks back several decades, his first major platform was TikTok.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in the United Kingdom, Reay found himself with a choice: focus on writing songs or building an online audience.

"I feel like I was quite blessed in the timing of when I started social media," he says.

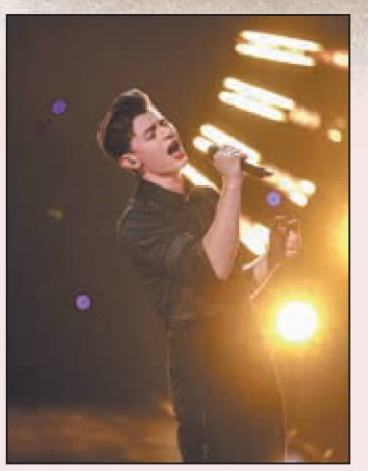
Some of his friends concentrated on songwriting. Reay chose to build a following.

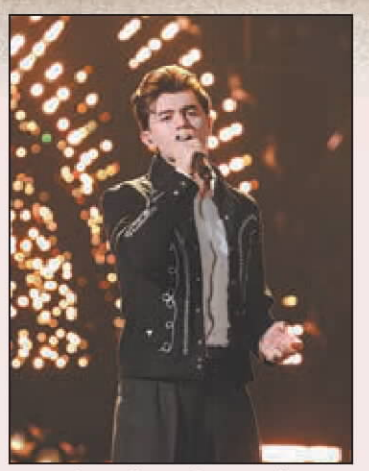
But the transition in the other direction — from online personality to a full-fledged musician — has proved more difficult.

"I've found it quite hard to go the other way — from making TikToks to writing songs and learning how to do that properly," he says.

Reay is grateful for the platform that introduced him to a global audience, but he does not want his story to end there.

"I love TikTok. It's a great platform," he says. "But I'm a musician at heart."







Top: Known for reviving the groovy sounds of 1950s rock 'n' roll, British singer Elliot James Reay rose to fame on the video platform TikTok in 2019. **Above:** Reay has gained a fan base in China after appearing on the popular TV talent contest *Singer 2026*.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

His goal is to become "a touring musician" — an artist who can bring people together in concert halls and venues, rather than simply accumulate views on a screen.

That desire is closely tied to another lesson he learned before finding his current musical direction. For a time, Reay experimented with pop music and tried to make what he believed other people wanted to hear.

Eventually, he realized that approach was taking him further away from the artist he wanted to become.

"I figured out that I needed to just do what I need to do," he says.

That experience shaped his approach to China as well. Asked what advice he would give to other international artists hoping to enter the Chinese market, his answer is simple: "Be yourself."

"It's very easy to want to try to change yourself to fit into a market," he says, "but at the end of the day, if you stay true to yourself, you'll be happy."

For Reay, authenticity is something learned through trial and error.

"If I didn't do that, I wouldn't be sitting here now," he says. "I wouldn't have done the show. My whole journey would have been different."

That philosophy was tested throughout *Singer 2026*, where the pressure to chase the next successful performance could easily lead an artist to lose sight of his own identity. Reay, however, was determined not to do so.

The competition also gave him an opportunity to reveal another side of himself. Each week brought the possibility that it could be his last, making his journey to the grand final all the more significant.

There, Reay chose to perform *I Think They Call This Love*, a song with a particularly personal place in his career. It was the first song he wrote that he truly believed in and felt ready to put out into the world.

It was also a love story.

Reay wrote the song with his girlfriend, inspired by the moment when, as he describes it, they both realized that they had fallen in love.

"So that song was not just a song," he says. "It's a true story."

When he performed it in the grand final, his girlfriend was there. Afterward, the two walked off the stage together, a moment that quickly attracted attention online.

For Reay, however, its significance was more personal than viral.

"She wrote it with me," he says. "We spent a lot of time making sure that it was perfect for the stage."

Having her there, he adds, brought him comfort.

China, meanwhile, is not a chapter Reay sees as ending with the final episode of *Singer 2026*.

For him, building an audience in a new country requires more than returning home and maintaining a presence through social media.

"To establish myself here, you have to be here," he says.

As an artist with Universal Music Group, Reay came to China as part of the company's initiative, "Go East", which was launched early this year to offer a bridge connecting international artists with the Chinese market. This is a reflection of China's growing importance as the world's third-largest music market and its booming live performance scene, which continues to attract artists worldwide.

"The rapid development of the Chinese music market and the creation of the new initiative will help guide overseas artists in establishing a lasting presence in the country," said Timothy Xu, chairman and CEO of Universal Music Greater China.

Contact the writer at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

Salvage diver-turned-rescuer navigates storms and saves lives in Zhejiang

HANGZHOU — The ache in Dong Jianhai's legs was a warning he had learned to trust. At 58, the resident of Zhoushan, a city consisting of islands off the coast of East China's Zhejiang province, knew it meant a storm was coming.

The day before Typhoon Dolphin — the 13th typhoon of the year — made landfall in Zhejiang, Dong spent the whole afternoon preparing for it, checking anchor points for vessels seeking shelter and making sure each ship was securely fastened, just as he had done hundreds of times before.

For more than three decades, Dong has seen the sea in nearly every mood. He began his career as one of Zhejiang's first professional salvage divers after earning his national diving certificate in 1991. Young, strong and ambitious, he was eager to make a name for himself underwater. Then an accident changed the course of his life.

During a salvage operation in 1994, Dong suffered severe decompression sickness, a potentially fatal condition caused by rapid changes in pressure after diving. Two months of difficult treatment saved his life, but when he finally left the hospital, he could no longer walk as he once had.

For a diver whose life had been bound to the ocean, the injury seemed to mark the end of a career. But Dong's bond with the sea endured, taking a different form.

"People told me my diving days were over, and maybe they were right about my body," he says. "But no one could convince me that my journey was over. If I couldn't go down into the water anymore, I would find another way to keep my promise."

Dong began a new chapter by bringing together people with diving and salvage experience to form his own rescue team. Over time, the team became a familiar presence along the coast, responding to sunken vessels, maritime accidents and calls to recover those lost at sea.

He would arrive at rescue sites with a cane in hand, helping divers prepare their equipment, secure hoses and ropes, and watching closely as they disappeared beneath the surface. Though he could no longer descend into the depths himself, he knew the pressure, darkness, and currents below — and the razor-thin margin for error — as well as anyone else.

When Dong could not be at the scene, he directed operations remotely. His cell phone stayed with him around the clock, and over the years his number became a trusted lifeline for people along the coast.

The calls came in for all kinds of emergencies: a vessel that needed salvaging, a missing diver, someone who had fallen into the water, a ship that had run aground, or people stranded on an island by a storm.

The team has also taken part in large-scale maritime operations. In one case, it participated in the salvage and subsequent repair of a 10,000-ton cargo ship. In another, it was called to assist a 300,000-ton Panama-registered oil tanker that had gone off course and run aground.

For Dong, the hardest calls were not always those that came in the middle of a rescue. Sometimes it was the quiet voice on the other end of the phone, telling him that another life had been lost at sea.

Such calls meant there was no longer a life to save. But Dong knew the mission was not necessarily over. For him, and for the families waiting on shore, there was still one final task: bringing their loved ones home.

Over the past 30 years, Dong has taken part in or directed the salvage of more than 120 sunken vessels, while his team has recovered more than 80 bodies.

The work is demanding and often dangerous, but Dong has never seen it as something to be carried out for a reward.

"When someone loses their life at sea, and you can bring them back to their family, that is not just a job," Dong says. "It is simply the right thing to do as a human being."

To Dong, it was all part of a promise he had made to the sea long ago — one he could not easily let go of, even though he could not have known what it would eventually cost him.

That promise has taken different forms over the course of a life intertwined with the water: the boy who lost loved ones to the sea, the diver who ventured beneath the waves, the survivor of a near-fatal underwater accident, and the man who refused to give up helping others.

Typhoon Dolphin made landfall the following evening after Dong felt his leg ache. The seasoned rescuer was out before dawn, leaning on his cane as he moved between harbors, checking vessels and directing his crew while strong winds swept the coast.

For most people, a storm is a reason to stay ashore. For Dong, it is a reason to set out. Somewhere beyond the waves, someone may be waiting — for rescue, for hope, or simply for a way home.

XINHUA



Fishing boats set sail from Shenjiamen Port in Zhoushan, East China's Zhejiang province, on Aug 11. XU YU / XINHUA

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AMERICAFOCUS

Eight Immortals cross the ocean

Animated Chinese film *All Wishes Come True!* makes a splash with moviegoers in North American premiere

By **RENA LI** in Los Angeles
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The North American premiere screening of the Chinese animated feature *All Wishes Come True!* is held in Los Angeles last Thursday, showcasing the film's fantasy world inspired by the legend of the Eight Immortals. RENA LI/ CHINA DAILY

Few would imagine that strands of life-saving hair from Sun Wukong, the legendary Monkey King, could become an unexpected weapon for the Eight Immortals as they confront the powerful Erlang Shen, or Yang Jian, in *All Wishes Come True!* — one of the latest Chinese animated films bringing the country's centuries-old mythology to global screens.

Drawing on the folk legend of the Eight Immortals while weaving in characters and imagery from *Journey to the West* and other classical tales, the fantasy comedy brings traditional cultural icons together in a newly imagined universe for contemporary audiences.

At the film's recent North American premiere in Los Angeles, Hollywood filmmakers, actors and moviegoers praised its elaborate 3D animation. But many said what interested them even more was the world behind the images — Chinese mythology, folklore and philosophical ideas that were unfamiliar to them.

Inspired by the traditional tale *The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea*, the film reimagines the immortals not as distant supernatural beings but as eight ordinary mortals whose weaknesses, ambitions and choices eventually lead them toward heroism.

Hollywood actor John Kyle Sutton said he was surprised by how completely the film held his attention despite its lengthy run time.

"Honestly, I think this movie is a masterpiece," Sutton told China Daily.

"I don't like long movies. Usually about 86 minutes is when I top out," he said. "This movie kept my attention the whole time."

Sutton said he was drawn to the themes of "brotherhood, fraternity, betrayal and greed", as well as the pacing and animation.

"I was fully engaged the whole time," he said. "I want to learn Chinese and its culture."

What impressed him in particular, Sutton said, was that the movie did not abandon its Eastern mythology in an effort to appeal to Western viewers.

Set around the celestial world of Penglai, the story begins with Lyu Dongbin and Zhongli Quan plotting to enter a divine vault, before their adventure expands into a battle involving mortals, gods and the fate of the wider world.

Film producer Stephen Nemeth described the movie as a "very, very beautiful spectacle", saying its fantasy world reminded him in some ways of the American classic *The Wizard of Oz*.

"I'm hoping hosting this movie here will bridge our cultures, in America and China, and we'll learn a lot from each other," said Nemeth.

He said he was impressed by how deeply Chinese culture draws upon "mysticism, folklore and backstory", elements that give the film a character distinct from much mainstream Western animation.

Nemeth's son Lincoln, an animation enthusiast, also noticed a visual difference.

"I think that the 3D aspect of it all looks a little more realistic," he said, comparing its attempt to reproduce aspects of real life with the visual style of American animated movies.

He said learning about unfamiliar cultural and religious themes through animation also made the experience educational.

Hollywood actor Chris Kriesa said the film's visual reconstruction of an imagined ancient China was among its most striking features.

"I was really mesmerized by the great creativity and the beauty of old China, the structures, the alleys, the buildings, and the mythology, the gods and the immortals," said Kriesa.



Audience members pose with *All Wishes Come True!* posters during the film's North American premiere in Los Angeles last Thursday. RENA LI/ CHINA DAILY

However, Kriesa said he was unfamiliar with the origins and cultural significance of the Eight Immortals, wondering whether they were characters from children's stories or something much larger in Chinese culture. Characters instantly recognizable to generations of Chinese viewers can still be unfamiliar figures to American audiences.

For Georges Chamchoum, executive director of the Asian World Film Festival, the Chinese legend was a "discovery".

Chamchoum said introducing eight principal mythological characters to audiences unfamiliar with their histories presents an obvious storytelling challenge, but the distinct personalities of the Eight Immortals helped viewers quickly connect with them.

"The characters of the Eight Immortals are so interesting. Each one has its own personality," he said. "And you hardly have enough time to breathe because the action never stops … it is exciting."

> "I was really mesmerized by the great creativity and the beauty of old China."
>
> **Chris Kriesa,** Hollywood actor who attended the LA premiere

An increasingly important task as Chinese animation expands globally, Chamchoum said, is making Chinese stories accessible to overseas audiences while preserving their cultural identity.

Rather than simply retelling *The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea*, the film blends familiar mythological figures and motifs into a newly imagined universe or celestial realm. The approach reflects a broader trend in Chinese animation: drawing inspiration from traditional culture while using contemporary storytelling and digital technology to reach younger and increasingly international audiences, according to Chamchoum.

Huang Hongjiang, Chinese deputy consul general in Los Angeles, said the movie provides another channel through which overseas audiences can learn Chinese stories and visual culture.

"Here in Los Angeles, this is the center of the entertainment and film industry," Huang said. "Over the last several decades, the cooperation between China and the US has produced good results, not only in the film industry but also in economy, trade, education and technology."

The responses come as *All Wishes Come True!* begins its international rollout following a strong performance in China.

The film's Chinese box office surpassed 1.5 billion yuan ($220 million) by Aug 13 after opening on July 18. As of Aug 16, Box Office Mojo listed its China gross at about $235.9 million, while Variety reported a cumulative total of roughly $236 million after a $13.1 million fifth weekend.

Its overseas rollout began Aug 13 in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, followed on Aug 14 by the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland and the Netherlands. Belgium and Luxembourg are scheduled for Sept 4.

The overseas push follows the global success of Chinese animation in recent years. *Ne Zha 2*, another film deeply rooted in Chinese mythology, grossed more than $2.2 billion worldwide, demonstrating the potential for stories drawn from traditional Chinese culture to reach audiences far beyond their home market.

Written and directed by Mu Zhengyang, the 144-minute animated fantasy was produced by Pearl Studio, the Chinese animation company behind *Abominable* and the Academy Award-nominated *Over the Moon*, and a co-producer of *Kung Fu Panda 3*. CMC Pictures is handling international distribution.

Proposed US grant rule sparks fears of scientific decoupling

By **LIA ZHU** in San Francisco
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A proposed US government rule that could drastically restrict federally funded research collaboration with China has sparked confusion and concern among academics, with critics warning it could lead to a near-complete decoupling of the US and Chinese scientific communities.

The Office of Management and Budget, or OMB, part of the executive office of the US president, published the proposed rule in May as part of a significant revision of regulations governing federal financial assistance awards and sponsored research programs, including all federal research grants.

The rule was originally scheduled to take effect on Oct 1. Earlier this month, however, the US Senate passed a bipartisan continuing resolution that blocks the rule from being finalized or enforced until Dec 11.

Under the proposal, political appointees would gain greater authority over grant awards that have traditionally been guided by scientific peer review. The rule cites the Wolf Amendment, which bars scientists from using NASA funding for bilateral collaborations with China, as a model for government-wide restrictions on foreign research collaboration.

Scientific, research, policy and education groups have raised concerns that the proposal could effectively prohibit federal funding for US scientific collaboration with all leading Chinese universities and academic institutions.

For scientists whose work involves close exchanges with Chinese counterparts, the potential impact could be substantial.

"In my area of quantum materials, I will lose a lot if I am not able to collaborate and exchange ideas with my theory colleagues in China," Steven Kivelson, a theoretical physicist at Stanford University, told China Daily.

"Even more drastic, however, is the harm it would do to my science not to be able to communicate directly with my experimental colleagues in China," he said. "In many aspects of making and probing the properties of bulk quantum materials, researchers in China are the world leaders."

Kivelson said that for his own research, it is important to understand the details of experiments being carried out in university laboratories at several leading Chinese institutions.

He has grants from the National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy. So far, he said, his existing collaborations have not been directly affected because the Chinese institutions involved are not among those deemed unacceptable under the proposed guidelines.

"But that may well change, and anyway, I would find it beneficial to be able to collaborate with other wonderful colleagues at various Chinese universities," he said.

The overboard and vague restrictions have also created uncertainty over what kinds of international academic engagement would remain permissible.

"Some of my other involvements with China may be precluded by the new policies," Kivelson said. "I have written to my grant managers and am waiting to hear back, for instance, about whether I am allowed to continue on in my position as one of two editors-in-chief of npj Quantum Materials."

npj Quantum Materials is a peer-reviewed, open-access scientific journal covering quantum materials, their fundamental properties, fabrication and applications. The journal is published in partnership between Nature Publishing Group and China's Nanjing University.

In an article encouraging its members to submit public comments, the American Association for the Advancement of Science said the proposal would give the OMB and selected political appointees expansive authority over how federal research and development funds are awarded, allowing political considerations to override scientific opportunity.

The organization also raised concerns that the rule would determine the eligibility of institutions and individuals to receive federal awards on the basis of vague and undefined terms.

The proposed changes have drawn widespread opposition. Nearly 500,000 public comments were submitted to the federal government before the July 13 deadline. The Washington Post analyzed 50,000 of the comments and found that at least 88 percent opposed the proposed rule. Roughly 6 percent expressed support, according to the Post, but the overwhelming majority of those supportive comments came from a single form letter that was submitted more than 2,300 times.

The Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, in a comment letter submitted to the OMB, warned that the proposed regulations "will force a near-complete decoupling between the US and Chinese scientific communities".

The institute said the proposal cited a generalized concern about US national security interests but does not provide a detailed justification for why a broad ban on US-China scientific cooperation would serve those interests.

"As China is now becoming a global research and innovation leader across a wide range of areas, this would undermine US scientific advances in these areas," the institute said in its letter. Less understanding of Chinese scientific and technological capabilities "would have a harmful impact on national security in the long run".

Kivelson said legitimate security risks should be addressed to protect the relevant portions of the US scientific and technological establishment against possible theft or cyber-attack.

"But concerning scientific research being carried out at most US universities, it is a non-issue," Kivelson said. "At Stanford, for example, all classified research and most forms of proprietary research are forbidden on campus. The goal of the research endeavor at Stanford is knowledge generation. We publish our results in the open literature."

"Bottom line: There is no danger of the theft of secret information by Chinese nationals on Stanford campus, for the good and simple reason that there are no secrets to steal," he said.

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Power of partnering

Business forum focuses on collaborations with Russia

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AI boosts future of gaming

BUSINESS, PAGE 9



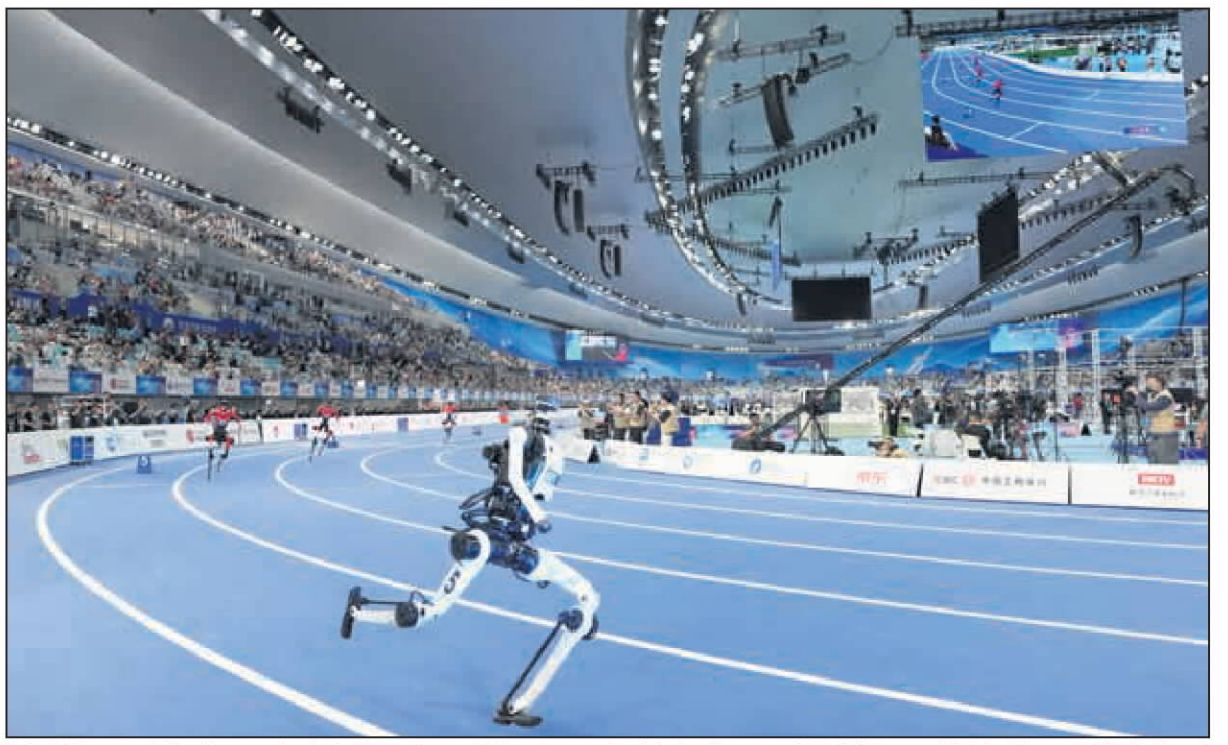
Golden threads

Greek jewelry reveals sharing of ancient artistic traditions

CULTURE, PAGE 13

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2026



Robot "Tiangong" (front) competes in the Large Group 400-meter race final during the second World Humanoid Robot Games at the National Speed Skating Oval in Beijing on Sunday. "Tiangong" won the race, clocking 38.15 seconds. JU HUANZONG / XINHUA

Swift progress of robots hailed

Bipeds push tech boundaries to beat human records at humanoid games being held in Beijing

By **MA SI** in Haikou
and **YANG CHENG** in Beijing

As biped robots shatter human world records at the second World Humanoid Robot Games, the event showcases not only China's rapid strides in embodied intelligence over the past year, but also the industry's swift progress toward real-world applications, Chinese and international executives and experts said.

Their comments came after the games opened in Beijing on Saturday, with 2,056 robots from 666 teams, representing 16 countries, set to compete in 51 events through Wednesday.

On the track, the action delivered jaw-dropping moments. A Chinese humanoid robot ran 100 meters in 9.39 seconds in a preliminary heat, beating the record of 9.58 seconds set by Jamaican Usain Bolt in 2009. The result was a sharp improvement from last year, when the 100-meter race was won in 21.50 seconds.

In a standing high jump, a robot cleared 2.88 meters, surpassing the human high jump record of 2.45 meters set by Cuba's Javier Sotomayor in 1993 as well as the 0.95-meter jump that was the best result by a humanoid in last year's games.

A Chinese humanoid robot also won the 400-meter final for large robots on Sunday in 38.15 seconds, outpacing the human world record of 43.03 seconds.

The 1,500-meter final added another record-breaking moment to the games, with 35 robots competing in seven heats and the top three all finishing ahead of the human world record of 3 minutes 26 seconds, led by the winner at 2:21.63.

Zhao Mingguo, a researcher at Tsinghua University's Department of Automation, said just as human sports push the limits of the body, the humanoid robot games are designed to extend the technological boundaries of smart machines across various scenarios and conditions.

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Shift to autonomy

According to Zhao, the defining difference this year is the shift to autonomy. Organizers have scrapped remote controls for most events, requiring robots to rely entirely on their own artificial intelligence to perceive surroundings, make autonomous decisions and execute actions.

"From 'strings-attached' puppets to autonomous athletes, that's the transformation we've witnessed in just one year," he said.

The sector's growing vitality is reflected in the numbers. Team entries have jumped 138 percent year-on-year, while the number of participating robots has quadrupled.

This momentum is underpinned by China's manufacturing strengths. In the first half, the country shipped more than 40,000 humanoid robots, accounting for 97 percent of global output, according to the Chinese Institute of Electronics. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology projected full-year production to exceed 100,000 units.

Beyond the competition, the event served as a showcase for human-robot synergy. The opening ceremony featured a "human-robot symphony" blurring the line between machine and performer, with 36 robots playing wind instruments, pianos and drums alongside a human orchestra, while 80 robots formed the games' emblem and another 80 spelled out "Beijing".

These smart machines also traded forehands with renowned Chinese athletes, including tennis star Zheng Jie. "I hope that in the future, robots can provide customized training for professional athletes and serve as a valuable auxiliary tool," Zheng said.

Beyond the games

This year's event introduced 21 scenario-based competitions, accelerating the transition of robots from the lab to real-world applications.

One such event, the dexterous-hand competition, tested micro-precision through tasks such as handling tweezers and twisting caps.

The "combined pentathlon" raised the stakes by merging sprinting with task completion, compelling robots to master physics, adapt to varied surfaces and recover from stumbles.

"The goal is to evaluate how far mass-produced robots can perform in real environments," said Chen Zilong, captain of Afu robot team.

During the hotel scenario practice, his machines struggled on thick carpet — a surface never encountered in training. Yet Chen sees the setback as providing valuable data. "When people see robots operating in hotels, malls and fire-rescue scenarios, they begin to imagine the possibilities," he said.

Zhang Feng, Party secretary of the Council of the Chinese Institute of Electronics, said the games are unfolding against a broader backdrop of technological transformation.

"Humanoid robots are moving beyond stage performances and race-track demonstrations to become genuine assistants in homes and workers in factories. They are poised to be the next game-changing innovation after computers, smartphones and new energy vehicles," Zhang said.

According to the institute, China's humanoid robot market is projected to hit 870 billion yuan ($129.4 billion) by 2030, playing a key role in advancing high-quality development.

China's technological strides also impressed international teams. Flavio Tonidandel, coach of Team Brazil, said, "We are thrilled to program the Chinese robot, the Booster, and interact with the most advanced humanoid robot we have ever seen."

Zati Hakim Azizul Hasan, mentor of Malaysia's Robotedge team, said: "China offers the best components. When you see robots that run faster and jump higher, that's the Chinese secret recipe. Chinese technology is exceptional in the world, and they can also make this software very affordable. This is what makes Chinese technology so intriguing."

Samantha Zhu, chairperson of Accenture China, said: "China is emerging as a critical testing ground for embodied intelligence such as humanoid robots. AI is no longer just a tool; it's becoming a versatile, cross-scenario capability permeating every facet of enterprise operations."

Local governments are also moving swiftly. The Beijing municipal government, for instance, has established a 10 billion yuan investment fund for robotics, which is expected to attract over 53 billion yuan in additional private capital. The city now hosts nearly 1,000 robotics companies, including seven valued at over $1 billion — the highest number in the country.

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Online
See more by scanning the code.

Counter-tariffs widen Canada-US trade rift

By **LIU JIANQIAO**
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The latest escalation in trade tensions between Canada and the United States underscores growing strains in the US' relations with its traditional allies under the "America First" policy, experts said.

Ottawa vowed retaliatory tariffs on US goods after the US announced a steep 50-percent tariff on imports from Canada.

Experts said the developments cast fresh doubts over the future of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, the cornerstone of North American free trade, as US protectionist measures and trade disputes increasingly challenge the region's deeply integrated economic ties.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney announced retaliatory tariffs on US goods on Saturday after walking away from what he called a "bad deal", as trade tensions between the longtime allies deepened following the collapse of last-ditch negotiations.

Talks between the neighboring countries broke down on Friday in Washington, DC, putting into force new 50-percent US tariffs impacting about $20 billion worth of goods, or 5.5 percent of Canada's exports to the US.

New Canadian tariffs, which will take effect on Sept 8, will notably target the US steel and dairy industries. More details will be revealed next week, Carney said. "You're at war when you get attacked. We got attacked," he added.

US President Donald Trump hit back at Canada on Sunday, saying, "Canada wants the benefits of being a State, without being one!!!" "They have also charged our great farmers, for many years, massive amounts of Tariffs. No more!!!" he wrote in a post on Truth Social.

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Trump had previously said Washington "should be able to have a deal with Canada", citing his "good relationship" with Carney.

But on Saturday, the Canadian prime minister said that Trump set conditions which were ultimately unacceptable even though earlier talks had been positive.

"In recent days, the United States proposed new terms that were uneconomic, unfair and undermined the net benefits for Canada, and called into question the reliability of any deal," Carney said in Ottawa.

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer told The New York Times on Saturday that the US had offered to reduce its tariffs on steel, aluminum and autos, as well as eliminate a recently imposed tariff on Canadian lumber. Greer told Fox News on Saturday that Washington was "moving forward with measures that respond to Canadian retaliation". He said that no new talks were planned with Canadian negotiators.

"We've been under no illusions. We recognized from the start that America has changed," Carney said on Saturday. "We recognize that sometimes, its signature was written in pencil."

The new US tariffs cover around 5 percent of Canada's exports to the US. They could severely damage vulnerable industries such as softwood lumber and wine and lead to job losses and business closures, trade experts have said.

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Paocai, or pickled vegetables, draw visitors at the 15th China International Pickle Food Expo in Meishan, Sichuan province, on April 26. LIU ZHONGJUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

PICKLES A RELIEF FROM FIERY SPICES

Specially preserved vegetables, known as *paocai*, hold Sichuan's bold flavors together as a perfect palate cleanser

By **PENG CHAO** and
ZHAO JUNFENG
in Meishan, Sichuan

In the back corner of a kitchen in Meishan, Sichuan province, beside a stove hissing with chili oil and popping peppercorns, sits a jar that never makes it onto the menu. Its contents — a colorful mix of greens, reds, yellows and whites — rest submerged in an opaque brine.

The world knows Sichuan for kung pao chicken, mapo tofu, its mouth-numbing hotpot and the mellow depth of *doubanjiang* (fermented bean paste), but ask any local what binds those bold flavors together, and the answer is likely *paocai* — pickled vegetables.

It also elevates Sichuan breakfast staples such as noodles, steamed buns and congee, imparting a signature tang to classic dishes such as fish-flavored shredded pork, sour vegetable fish and sour-radish duck soup.

"Sichuan *paocai* is crisp and not overly salty," said 56-year-old chef Jiang Ming. "The lactic fermentation yields a natural, earthy sourness that vinegar lacks, making it an ideal flavor enhancer."

In Meishan, this tradition has been elevated to an almost architectural scale. At a workshop in the China Paocai City industrial park, nearly 5,000 giant clay jars stand in neat rows, each about 1.6 meters tall.

He Yanping, 49, a provincial-level inheritor of *Dongpo paocai*-making techniques, presses his ear to a lid as a gentle gurgle escapes from within. "That's the sound of lactic acid bacteria fermenting and releasing gas," he said.

China Vibes — FOOD —

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Agriculture can plow a productive furrow

WORLD WATCH
By Dan Glickman

The US-China relationship is very challenging. While the United States and China are the world's two largest economies, they have differences in the areas of trade, market access, national security, protection of intellectual property, technology and privacy. These differences should neither be minimized nor dismissed.

Nevertheless, while the two countries are competitors on the world stage, there are many areas where cooperation can be beneficial to both countries and their peoples, and to the world at large.

These include global health and prevention of diseases and future pandemics, educational exchanges, climate change and related natural disasters, energy, and sports, entertainment and culture.

And certainly, even more significantly, cooperation and collaboration in the area of agriculture and food offer perhaps the greatest opportunity for such cooperation. Food security and agricultural production are critical domestic and global imperatives for both countries.

In 2025 the US trade in goods with China totaled an estimated $414.7 billion. US exports to China dropped nearly 26 percent to $106.3 billion, including major agricultural commodities, and imports fell nearly 30 percent to $308.4 billion.

US farmers and Chinese consumers are certainly impacted by these reductions in trade in soybeans, livestock and many other farm commodities.

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INDEPTH



Visitors explore the booth of Comtech Technology during the first Overseas Investment Fair 2026 in Shanghai on March 25. The fair's goal is to accelerate the construction of an overseas comprehensive service system for companies expanding abroad. LI GANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

A Shanghai slingshot for overseas expansion

Government services help clear obstacles for companies entering foreign markets

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Going global — a pressing goal of many Chinese companies — is not only about grasping the big picture.

Nuanced details, such as what can be demonstrated in a product commercial, for example, may jeopardize a company's future prospects in an unfamiliar new market.

With eight years' experience in overseas markets, Shanghai-based gaming company Boke Technology learned this lesson, said the company's general counsel Wang Sijia.

One product commercial for a Southeast Asian market featured exaggerated creative content. It depicted a hamburger that had accidentally fallen on the ground being stepped on, which may have been construed as disrespectful due to cultural sensitivities. Wang said sometimes it's difficult for companies to make such fine distinctions.

However, this is one of the smaller challenges Chinese companies may be confronted with when they enter a new market. Abiding by local market entry regulations and contract formats are even larger issues, she said.

"The biggest headache about going global is the information gap. Companies do not know who to turn to or what they can do when a problem occurs," she said.

When publishing companies enter a new market, for example, they often have to work with local service providers for the first time. Without access to reliable information or experience in collaboration, it is extremely difficult to find the right partners.

A company's own internal risk management capabilities are usually insufficient, Wang added. "The cost of trial and error can be prohibitively high," she said.

Easier compliance

Shanghai companies have been boldly expanding into new markets.

Apart from mature markets such as Europe and the United States, more of them are reaching into Association of Southeast Asian Nations member states, the Middle East, and Latin America, according to He Dongbin, deputy director of the Shanghai Commission of Commerce.

In the first half of this year, Shanghai registered 383 newly established or acquired outbound projects, marking a 105 percent year-on-year increase in investment value.

Diversification of investment destinations has been a major trend. Economies involved in the Belt and Road Initiative have emerged as new investment targets, he said.

This is in line with a broader trend. About 80 percent of surveyed Chinese companies plan to expand overseas in the next three years, with ASEAN continuing to serve as the first choice, according to a report released by Singapore-headquartered bank UOB in early August.

The good news is that companies are being more proactive regarding compliance management when they enter new markets, according to He.

However, Liu Yanhao, deputy director of the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Justice, said the expansion of legal service providers has not caught up with the expansion of Chinese companies and industries in overseas markets.

Companies can look for professional service providers in foreign markets on their own, Liu said. But the process will be lengthy and painstaking, and the strenuous efforts may not provide a satisfactory result.

A government-backed platform that can link lawyers with experience of overseas markets is an ideal solution, said Chen Jun, a City Development Law Firm partner, who also serves as deputy director of the foreign affairs committee of the Shanghai Bar Association.

In early August, Shanghai launched the international legal services hub, a digital platform where companies can search for institutions that provide legal services in overseas markets as well as experts who specialize in a certain country or industry. So far, 921 institutions with 413 overseas operations have been included on the platform.

Apart from connecting companies to law firms with expertise a company needs, the platform can identify potential country and industry risks.

This is especially important given the current complicated and unpredictable international situation, Chen said. Political changes can lead to policy inconsistencies or even deliberate legislative action targeting Chinese companies, he added.

"However, there is always a window of opportunity before such measures take full effect," Chen said. "Professional service providers can usually notice signs in advance. The government can provide early warnings and intelligence on the platform. The law firms on the platform serve as 'converters', interpreting the needs of Chinese enterprises and connecting them with local professional institutions. The problems can be solved more efficiently or even avoided," he added.

Asset-light initiatives

The shift toward asset-light investment has emerged as another major trend. Sectors such as technical services, the digital economy, and cultural creativity, which are asset-light yet high-value-added, have become key drivers of Shanghai's outbound investment, according to He of the Shanghai Commission of Commerce.



Customs officers inspect synthetic diamonds for export at the Shanghai Diamond Exchange on July 31. The targeted measures and checking service ensure both efficiency and security. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "Professional service providers can usually notice signs in advance. The government can provide early warnings and intelligence on the platform."
>
> **Chen Jun,** partner of City Development Law Firm

The demand for computing power and digital technologies has risen significantly as more Chinese companies expand their overseas businesses, said Zheng Maokuan, deputy secretary-general of Shanghai Digital Globalization Association. As a result, Chinese companies are bringing more digital technologies to emerging markets and developing economies to help intelligent and digital upgrading.

Shanghai Linshu AI is one such pioneer.

Founded in 2024, the company aims to digitize cultural heritage around the world and produce various cultural products, including games, animation, or immersive experiences with the help of augmented reality and virtual reality.

This will help cultural heritage across the globe be more accessible to a larger audience. Digitization can also better preserve cultural heritage, transcending the limits of time and geography, according to company partner and general manager Zhang Xiaoping.

Currently, Linshu is working with the Cambodian government to digitize Angkor Wat. This is by no means an easy job: not only because it requires interdisciplinary cooperation across cultural heritage preservation, archaeology and artificial intelligence, but, more importantly, because it needs to access data owned by Cambodia, according to Zhang.

"But gradually, the Cambodian government came to realize their data governance is still at a relatively low level. The participation of Chinese entities can bring in the most up-to-date technologies and even facilitate their own legislation for the cross-border transfer of cultural data," he said.

The Shanghai government has played an important role in helping Linshu's business move forward.

Lin-gang Special Area, a part of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone, in April 2024 introduced a special service to process cross-border data.

Lujiazui, a part of Pudong New Area financial cluster, introduced supportive policies for one-person companies to form an industrial ecosystem for game and animation production, Zhang said.

These outbound companies are mostly knowledge-intensive. Instead of bringing products to new markets, they are now introducing technologies, skills, operational capabilities and intellectual property rights, according to Adaline Zheng, president and CEO of UOB China.

Data protection key

Against this backdrop, data has become the buzzword when it comes to overseas expansion. However, when a company finds its data has been infringed on or leaked in an overseas market, its competitiveness is significantly impaired and losses are hard to measure.

The confirmation of data ownership is of great importance before a company expands into a new market, said Zuo Weibo, CEO of CRECT Group, which helps companies expand into overseas markets, especially in Southeast Asia.

Shanghai-based Hero Esports has experience in securing its IPR in foreign markets.

Founded in 2016, it has held a number of e-sports games' IPRs in overseas markets including Vietnam, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia.

Prior to the launch of Shanghai's data product IPR registration pilot program in December 2024, it was unclear how data could be registered to secure the company's interests, said Zhou Peipei, director of the company's legal and investment center.

"As e-sports games have become more popular, problems regarding data scraping, licensing boundaries and trade secret protection have all emerged. No company can tackle them single-handedly," she said.

"Companies need an official definition or confirmation as to the scope, development process and ownership of these data-driven outcomes. Otherwise, subsequent research and development, potential commercial collaborations and even internal management will be hampered," she added.

The pilot program helped the industry raise awareness of compliance and self-discipline, said Zhou.

Registered information can serve as key material for companies to assert their data rights in future infringement or trade secret disputes. Prosecutors are also involved, offering businesses quick access to expert advice on data ownership and privacy compliance, she explained.

"With the program connecting compliance, rights confirmation, legal protection and future data use, companies are more confident turning long-accumulated data into real innovation," said Zhou.

Data registration has been applauded by the AI, biomedicine, finance, education, culture and transportation industries, said Zhu Yanting, technology director of VLVE Information Technology, a service provider to technology companies.

The system is also directly linked to data trading institutions in Shanghai, so IPR certificates can be used as collateral to apply for bank loans. Data's value as an intangible asset has become clearer, Zhu said.

Shanghai's data product IPR registration is open to other places in China. By the end of July, the city had received 2,245 applications for data product IP registration.

Thirty percent of applications were from outside Shanghai. Data products registration applications came from 29 provincial-level regions. An application has yet to come from the Xizang autonomous region.

Data registration provides a snapshot of multiple efforts Shanghai has made to facilitate companies' steps to enter overseas markets.

In the first half of this year, the city launched a one-stop platform for companies to seek multiple services such as opening bank accounts, financing, legal consulting and logistics. Positioned as a service provider similar to Taobao or JD, the platform aims to make it easier to access, matching companies and service providers while tracking deals. Like the IPR registration program, the service platform is also available to companies across the country.

According to He of the Shanghai Commission of Commerce, the purposes of this open approach is to make the city "the optimal choice and the gateway" for Chinese companies seeking to reach international markets.







Left: A man uses self-service facilities at the 24-hour smart service zone of the Hongqiao Talent Service Center in Shanghai on Sept 10. The center aims to streamline administrative processes for global professionals. **Middle:** A staff member at the service center assists a woman with immigration procedures on Sept 10. **Right:** A center employee demonstrates an AI tool designed to enhance enterprises' overseas services on Sept 10. PHOTOS BY CHEN HAOMING / XINHUA

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TOP NEWS

‘Dream come true’ reunion for green hero

Teacher from the United States returns to witness transformation of deserts

By **WANG SONGSONG** in Ordos, Inner Mongolia and **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot

When Ronald Sakolsky from the United States stepped off the plane at an airport in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region at around 6 pm on Sunday, it marked the beginning of a long-awaited homecoming to the region, where trees he helped plant more than two decades ago now stand as a living testament to a green bond of international friendship.

Waiting for him at the arrival gate was Yin Yuzhen, China’s afforestation hero whose battle against desertification in the Maowusu sandy area has inspired many people. Yin and her family hugged Sakolsky warmly at what was their first in-person meeting in years.

For Sakolsky, the reunion was a miracle.

“It is a dream come true,” he said, describing Yin as the “hero of the story”.

“She made a promise 27 years ago, and she kept her promise. I never thought I would see her again. It is a miracle. She is an amazing lady. She has done many things for China.”

Sakolsky, who taught English in Luoyang, Henan province, in the late 1990s, first learned of Yin’s story through media reports. In 1999, he donated $5,000 to support her reforestation efforts, a sum that allowed Yin to purchase much-needed saplings.

At the time, Yin was already renowned for her campaign to green the barren desert landscape, but she lacked the funds to expand her planting drive. Sakolsky’s donation changed that.

Combined with Yin’s effort, the once-barren wasteland has been transformed. Those seedlings have since flourished into a sprawling forest that now carpets the dunes in emerald green.

“I am very grateful that Mr. Sakolsky could come here to meet with us,” Yin said. “In preparation for his visit, we have been growing various fruits over this period for him to sample, including the ginseng fruit.”

She described herself as deeply moved and filled with excitement, adding that she strongly desires to take him into the desert and through the forests she has nurtured for nearly three decades.

> “She (Yin Yuzhen) made a promise 27 years ago, and she kept her promise. I never thought I would see her again. It is a miracle.”
>
> **Ronald Sakolsky**

Sakolsky’s return was made possible by an official invitation from the China Education Association for International Exchange, the goal of which is to further promote educational exchanges between China and the US.

What truly made the story go viral is the bond Sakolsky and Yin forged through afforestation efforts. That bond has now blossomed into a moment of shared celebration.

“Finally, that long-awaited moment has arrived, capturing the attention of netizens across the country. From sharing the same forest to forging a friendship between two nations,” one online user wrote. “The light of humanity knows no borders.”

According to the schedule, Sakolsky will visit Yin’s home in Uxin Banner, Ordos, on Monday and Tuesday. The two will tour the fruit-planting bases and shelterbelt forests that have reshaped the local ecosystem, revisiting the plots where Sakolsky’s saplings were first planted. They will also inspect fruit trees planted in recent years, highlighting the ongoing evolution of the region’s green transformation.

Following his stay in the region, Sakolsky and Yin will travel to Henan province to reunite with his old acquaintances in Luoyang. His itinerary there includes meetings with former colleagues and students from his teaching days.

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Online See more by scanning the code.



Chinese desert afforestation hero Yin Yuzhen (left) hugs retired teacher Ronald Sakolsky (right) from the US at an airport in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region on Sunday. LIAN ZHEN / XINHUA

Winning smile



Wang Hao (second from right), captain of the Chinese team BaiSha Gaming, receives the Most Valuable Player award after the *Crossfire* final during the Esports World Cup 2026 on Saturday in Paris, France. BaiSha Gaming defeated Team Liquid 3-0 in the grand final of the first-person shooter game to claim the championship. WU HUIWO / XINHUA

Archaeological links with Peru enter new phase

By **WANG RU**
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Deepening cooperation between China and Peru in the field of cultural heritage has opened a new chapter in archaeological collaboration between the two ancient civilizations.

On Saturday, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences’ Institute of Archaeology signed cooperation agreements in Peru with the Caral Archaeological Zone of the Peruvian Ministry of Culture, and the Professional School of Archaeology at the National University of San Marcos, Lima, with the aim of jointly conducting archaeological research on Peru’s ancient Caral civilization.

This marks the first official cooperation on archaeological fieldwork between China and Peru, and the first time Chinese archaeological institutions are working in South America.

The Caral civilization, which flourished along the northern coast of Peru from approximately 3,000 BC to 1,800 BC, is the earliest-known civilization in the Americas to date.

According to the agreements, both sides will conduct comprehensive archaeological research at sites associated with the Caral civilization. Their cooperation will include field survey and excavation, scientific and technological research, as well as cultural heritage conservation and joint talent training.

Subsequent cooperation will also extend to the sites of the Inca civilization in the Andean highlands, facilitating comparative research between the ancient civilizations of China and Peru.

With the agreements signed, the China-Peru joint archaeological team will launch the first phase of a field survey, exploring the Chancay-Huaral and Supe river valleys, and conducting on-site inspections at key sites, to further refine subsequent excavation plans.

Jia Xiaobing, chair of the Department of World Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, who served as a Chinese representative at the signing ceremony, said this cooperation fills the gap for Chinese archaeological institutions in South American fieldwork.

The Chinese side will obtain first-hand archaeological materials on early American civilizations, facilitating comparative research on ancient civilizations around the Pacific Rim and contributing a Chinese academic perspective to the global study of the origins of early complex societies, Jia said.

The Peruvian side, in turn, will benefit from China’s vast practical experience in scientific and technological archaeology, as well as cultural heritage conservation, achieving mutual academic enrichment, he added.

Academic exchanges between China and Peru in the field of archaeology have spanned more than half a century. As early as 1973, Xia Nai, then director of the Institute of Archaeology, led an archaeological team to Peru to visit important sites such as the iconic Machu Picchu. The following year, a Peruvian archaeological delegation visited China, marking the beginning of academic exchanges between the two countries.

In recent years, cultural and museum exchanges between China and Peru have continued to deepen. Peruvian artifacts have attracted much attention at ongoing exhibitions such as *Maize, Gold, Jaguar: A Grand Exhibition of Ancient Maya and Andean Civilizations* at the Capital Museum in Beijing and *On Top of the World Tree: Ancient Civilizations of the Americas* at the Shanghai Museum.

Meanwhile, the artifacts from China’s ancient Shu civilization, including those from the Sanxingdui site in Guanghan, Sichuan province, and the Jinsha site in Chengdu, Sichuan, also traveled to Peru in 2024, enabling Peruvian audiences to witness a dialogue between ancient civilizations across the oceans.

Trade: Tariff threats could fracture supply chains

From page 1

Chen Hong, director of East China Normal University’s Asia Pacific Studies Center, said the tariff war initiated by the US has not only taken a toll on the Canadian economy but also severely strained a decades-old alliance, exposing the growing fragility of Washington’s ties with its traditional allies.

Although the latest tariffs cover only about 5 percent of Canada’s exports to the US and affect a relatively limited number of industries, Ottawa’s decision to respond firmly reflects its determination to safeguard its autonomy in industrial and trade policy, he said.

According to a recent survey by Abacus Data, a Canadian polling firm, 36 percent of respondents want Canada to respond with new counter-tariffs, “even if that raises prices and risks escalation”.

“Over the past several decades, the US and Canada have forged a close political alliance and deeply integrated their economies under relatively stable and preferential trade arrangements. But the current US administration’s ‘America First’ strategy has turned Canada’s heavy dependence on the US market into an increasingly significant economic and strategic vulnerability,” Chen said.

The current breakdown also complicates the future of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, he added.

“Washington’s tariff threats are now pushing companies, particularly automakers, to relocate production and sourcing to the US. This could fracture established supply chains, distort the regional division of labor and ultimately hollow out the North American free-trade system,” Chen said.

Experts also said that Canada would find it difficult to break free from its deep economic dependence on the US in the near term.

“Realistically, Canada would find it difficult to offset the losses from reduced access to the US market in the short term,” said Huang Zhong, associate researcher at the Center for Canadian Studies of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Delicacy: Ancient craft gives *paocai* unique flavor

From page 1

The craft takes its name from Su Dongpo — the celebrated Song Dynasty (960-1279) poet and gourmand who was born in Meishan. The legacy of Su, a passionate maker himself, lent the pickle its enduring cultural identity.

The roots of Chinese pickled vegetables stretch back even further, over 3,000 years in fact, to the pre-Qin period (before 221 BC), when early references to *zu*, or pickled vegetables, appear in classics such as the *Book of Songs* and the *Rites of Zhou*.

This deep historical lineage found its way into local customs. By the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), a jar of *paocai* had become an essential part of a bride’s dowry — a portable legacy of flavor carried into married life.

Traditional *Dongpo paocai* is made in a large earthenware jar. Fresh vegetables are packed inside and fully submerged in the “mother brine”, or *laomu shui* — a living culture passed down through generations. The lid is sealed with a water lock, allowing gases to escape while keeping oxygen out. What follows is daily care and patient waiting.

“The secret lies in the mother brine, teeming with the specific strains of lactic acid bacteria that give *Dongpo paocai* its distinctive flavor,” He said.

To outsiders, pickled vegetables may call to mind kimchi or sauerkraut, but Sichuan *paocai* is different. Radishes, carrots, cabbage, long beans, young ginger, red Sichuan chili peppers and bamboo shoots are packed whole or in chunks into a seasoned brine of water, salt, Sichuan peppercorns and other spices, often with a bit of *baijiu*.

Within hours or a day or two at most, they emerge with a clean, crisp sourness and a subtle fragrance.

“This water-based fermentation method sets *Dongpo paocai* apart from most other pickling methods in China or abroad,” He said. “The credit goes to the Sichuan Basin’s mild climate — free from freezing winters and scorching summers — which keeps the lactic acid bacteria active year-round.”

Another defining feature is the brief fermentation period — sometimes just hours — which yields a lower-salt product with a distinctly crisp texture.

What began as a local craft is evolving into a global curiosity, with a growing number of foreign visitors flocking to the China Paocai City industrial park to master the craft.

Among them is Hajar Wassila, a Moroccan student who joined a DIY session at the workshop of Sichuan Laotanzi Food Co. Guided by instructors, she packed her jar with vegetables, garlic, red Sichuan chili peppers and carrots, pressing them firmly beneath the brine.

“When I smell it, I want to taste it immediately,” she said, holding up the jar with a grin. “I love pickles and tried to make them before, but failed. Now I’ve finally got the secret.”

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Food: Agriculture offers a way to enhance and improve Sino-US ties

From page 1

Some of these changes in trade numbers were impacted by changes in US export policies and trade, although President Donald Trump’s visit to China offered some hope that the trade relationships between the two countries can improve.

The US has one of the largest and most historically productive agricultural sectors in the world. China also has a very significant agriculture sector. The next breakthrough in US-China relations could begin on the farm. Food is not ideological. And while trade disputes have periodically disrupted flows of agricultural commodities, both countries and their consumers and farmers benefit when these markets are transparent, predictable and certain.

In the promising area of agriculture research, collaboration in scientific research can foster solutions to the impact of climate change and the effects of droughts, floods, animal and plant disease, soil health, water resource conservation, food safety and nutrition. Both countries have suffered from the impacts of these challenges, and China has developed a major agricultural research infrastructure, with government and academic institutions working on problems affecting both countries.

The recent epidemics of zoonotic diseases (those that naturally spread between animals and humans) and related viruses, pathogens and parasites highlight the need for cooperation that US and Chinese scientists and academic institutions can provide in this area. And there are so many other public health challenges in the areas of food safety, food and nutrition, and cooperation on agro-biotechnology through modern agronomic technologies to sustainably feed a hungry world. Take genomics, for example. There is enormous potential to make rapid advances in crop productivity, livestock breeding and health, and resource use efficiency. And by properly and legally utilizing artificial intelligence, US and Chinese researchers can work together to leverage digital data to better control diseases, predict weather patterns and events and identify market trends.

Expanding academic exchanges and students studying food and agriculture is also important in developing a talent pool for the future.

None of this is easy and there are no simple answers to the disputes between the two countries, and in recent years there has been a growing lack of trust on each side of the Pacific Ocean. But cooperation in the areas of food and agriculture can help to build bilateral trust and reduce the heated rhetoric in both countries.

President Trump’s visit to Beijing in May was an important step in this process. I hope the US can resume congressional delegations to China which I participated in and also led while at the Aspen Institute. During the Bill Clinton administration, as secretary of agriculture I led a congressional delegation to China on trade issues. And as the Chairman and CEO of the Motion Picture Association, I also made several visits to China to discuss intellectual property and market access issues. I have long felt that although China and the US are serious competitors on the global stage, they are not enemies. Agriculture offers a way to enhance and improve the bilateral relationship for the benefit of both peoples.

President Xi Jinping has said that China and the US should be partners and friends, stressing that is what history has taught us and what reality needs. Mutually beneficial progress on agriculture can help build trust between the two sides and help to achieve progress in a dangerous and rapidly changing world.

The author is the former US Secretary of Agriculture under President Bill Clinton (1995-2001), and currently a Distinguished Fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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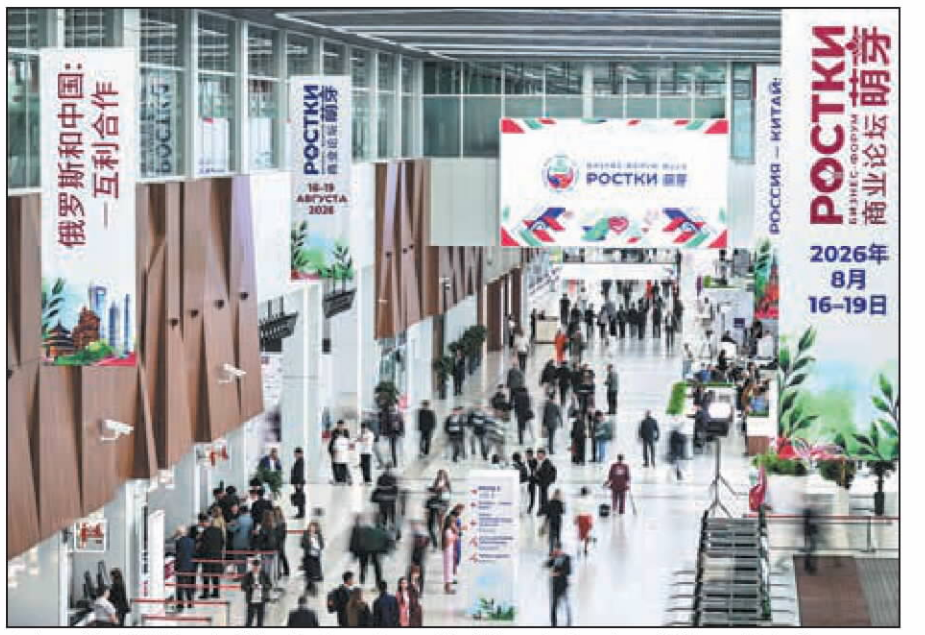
WORLD IN FOCUS



Drummers in traditional clothes at the 2026 Russia-China Business Forum at the Kazan Expo International Exhibition Center in Bolshiye Kabany, Russia, on Aug 18. YEVGENY MESSMAN / TASS



A view of the 2026 Russia-China Business Forum titled "Sprouts: Russia and China — Mutually Beneficial Cooperation" at the Kazan Expo International Exhibition Center on Aug 17. FENG KAIHUA / XINHUA

'Sprouting' partnerships

Forum highlights growing business collaborations between Beijing, Moscow

The 2026 Russia-China Business Forum titled "Sprouts: Russia and China — Mutually Beneficial Cooperation" opened on Aug 16 in Kazan, the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, bringing together over 50 business sessions, eight Chinese provincial delegations, and numerous Russian federal officials.

More than 10,000 square meters of exhibition space showcased cooperation in logistics, finance, healthcare, industry, agriculture, creative economy, and artificial intelligence.



Attendees at the forum at the Kazan Expo International Exhibition Center on Aug 18. ERIK ROMANENKO / TASS

Against this backdrop of expanding ties, Chinese Ambassador to Russia Zhang Hanhui delivered an address at the forum highlighting the latest trade figures.

"Sino-Russian trade and economic cooperation is demonstrating steady growth. From January to July 2026, the volume of bilateral trade reached $159 billion, which represents a 26 percent increase compared to the same period last year. It is quite possible that a new all-time high will be set by the end of the year," Zhang said.

Local currency settlements also took center stage. Zhou Liqun, chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce in Russia, voiced strong support for bilateral settlements in national currencies during an interview of the forum.

"We support and pay close attention to bilateral local currency settlements. Such settlements are conducive to the development of enterprises and economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.

"Regardless of the payment system or form, we will support and encourage enterprises to actively participate," Zhou told Russian media outlet Sputnik.

Taliya Minullina, head of the Tatarstan Investment Development Agency, told Xinhua News Agency that eight Chinese provincial-level delegations and governors from multiple Russian federal subjects are attending this year's event.

Tatarstan has signed intergovernmental agreements with seven Chinese provinces — Shandong, Hunan, Sichuan, Anhui, Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, and Jiangxi — as well as Chongqing municipality.

Minullina said that Tatarstan offers eight federal-level economic zones with tax benefits — the most in Russia — and over 100 industrial parks, where Chinese investors can access land or rent fully equipped facilities at favorable terms.

She also emphasized the republic's rich educational resources to support foreign-invested projects.

Beyond business, the forum featured vibrant cultural programs. Delegates enjoyed a Tatar-language performance, a Chinese Film Day, and several cultural events celebrating shared folk traditions.

CHINA DAILY—XINHUA



Participants view Chinese-brand cars at the forum on Aug 17. FENG KAIHUA / XINHUA



Participants taste Chinese tea at the forum on Aug 17. FENG KAIHUA / XINHUA



A woman makes traditional hats at the forum on Aug 17. YEVGENY MESSMAN / TASS



An artist in a giant panda suit poses with a woman during the 2026 Russia-China Business Forum at the Kazan Expo International Exhibition Center on Aug 17. ALEXANDER MELEKHOV / TASS



Chinese dragon boat races are held on Lake Nizhny Kaban as part of the 2026 Russia-China Business Forum on Aug 16. YEGOR ALEYEV / TASS

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WORLD

Search amid ruins



People look at the debris of a seven-story building under construction in Hyderabad, Telangana State, India, on Saturday. At least two people were killed in the collapse, local disaster response officials said, as rescue teams searched for possible survivors. JWALA KOTESH VIA GETTY IMAGES

Briefly

JAPAN

37 injured following magnitude 5.9 quake

At least 37 people were injured after a magnitude 5.9 earthquake struck Ibaraki Prefecture, northeast of Tokyo, early on Sunday. The earthquake also caused burst water pipes and transportation disruptions in some areas, local media reported. Japan's Fuji News Network, citing the Fire and Disaster Management Agency, reported that as of 10 am, at least 37 people were injured in Tokyo, Ibaraki Prefecture, Kanagawa Prefecture and other areas. The earthquake temporarily disrupted some train services in the Kanto region, though operations were gradually being restored. Multiple water pipes burst in Tokyo and other areas, causing temporary flooding on some roads.

UNITED STATES

$850m UN dues payment planned

The US government has notified Congress of its plans to pay $850 million of the several billion it owes to the United Nations, the largest payment that the administration would make to the world body since Washington demanded sweeping reforms in exchange for continued support as its largest donor. The US State Department laid out its plans to transfer $725 million as part of its dues to the regular UN budget and $125 million toward UN peacekeeping operations in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, according to notifications sent to lawmakers this month and obtained by The Associated Press. The US is about $5 billion behind on dues related to its membership, with more than $2 billion owed toward the regular budget, the UN says.

DR CONGO

Gov't, M23 agree on road map for talks

The government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the March 23 Movement rebel group have agreed on a road map for peace negotiations, setting out sequenced steps and timelines for further talks, according to a joint statement issued on Sunday. The two sides said that, during meetings held from Aug 17 to 21 in Switzerland, they assessed progress and challenges in the Doha peace process while discussing the implementation of existing commitments and the way forward for negotiations under the Doha Framework Agreement. Following the assessment, the two sides developed a road map outlining the sequence and timetable for future negotiations.

AGENCIES — XINHUA

More than 3 decades on, a witness to China-S. Korea ties sees shared future

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong
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Shin Jung-seung

For Shin Jung-seung, former South Korean ambassador to China, the 1992 signing of the joint communique establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries remains a vivid memory.

"Witnessing the normalization of bilateral ties with my own eyes was deeply moving," Shin said, recalling the signing ceremony at Fangfeiyuan Hall in the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on Aug 24, 1992.

At the time, Shin was director of the Northeast Asia Division II in the South Korean Foreign Ministry's Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau. In charge of China affairs, he played an active role in the negotiations that led to the establishment of diplomatic relations, often seen as a milestone that reshaped the geopolitical landscape of Northeast Asia.

Beyond the official exchanges, Shin recalled another touching moment that night at a restaurant near the state guesthouse. The owner, a member of China's Korean ethnic group, was overjoyed by the news and presented the delegation with a bottle of liquor as a gift.

"That gave me a tangible sense that the normalization of relations would greatly benefit the peoples of both nations," Shin said.

With his experience, Shin later served as a minister at South Korea's embassy in Beijing, director-general of the Foreign Ministry's Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau, and ambassador to China from 2008 to 2009.

While many countries doubted in the early 1990s that China could achieve rapid economic growth, Shin said he was confident of its economic prospects when he became ambassador.

He said China's rapid development and the achievements it showcased at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai World Expo reinforced his confidence.

"What was unexpected was the dazzling advancement of China's high-tech technology today," he added.

Shin said he was impressed by the results of active government support, companies' creativity and bold investment, and academic institutions' efforts to cultivate talent.

"This is something I believe South Korea has much to learn from," he said.

After retiring from the foreign service, Shin continued to devote himself to China studies and promoting bilateral friendship.

He was the inaugural director of the Center for Chinese Studies at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy in Seoul and now heads the Center for Chinese Studies at Dongseo University in Busan.

Shin has also served as president of the Korea-China Friendship Association since 2021.

"I've always believed in the importance of viewing things objectively," he said.

Promoting exchanges

To achieve this, Shin said he has striven to promote academic exchanges with China and engage with Chinese experts, while frequently organizing discussions with experts in South Korea.

"In exchange with China, it is important to build trust by respecting each other and engaging with goodwill," he said, adding that he still constantly ponders how to effectively convey South Korea's position to his Chinese friends whenever opportunities arise.

He said active public engagement is needed to enhance mutual understanding in the spirit of "harmony without uniformity", while upholding the principles of mutual respect, reciprocity and equality enshrined in the 1992 Joint Communique.

Vast opportunities will emerge if the two countries continue to deepen cooperation based on mutual respect and identify complementary areas for win-win outcomes, he said.

For his part, Shin said he is committed to supporting bilateral relations through academic work and friendship activities.

He highlighted mutual visa exemption and the Collective Action for Mobility Program of University Students in Asia, a student exchange and academic cooperation program jointly launched by China, South Korea and Japan in 2012, as encouraging ways to deepen youth friendship.

At Dongseo University, Shin said he has seen students from the three countries build friendships under the program while learning one another's languages and cultures.

"Facilitating as much exchange as possible among the younger generations of South Korea and China will allow them to understand each other and deepen friendship, which will bring bright prospects to the future of bilateral relations," Shin said, adding that governments should fully support such efforts.

Looking ahead to the 33rd Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in November, Shin said he expects further momentum in South Korea-China relations following last year's meeting in South Korea and state visits, even though challenges remain.

Noting that China emphasized the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a 2025 national security white paper, Shin said this is a shared goal for South Korea.

He expressed hope that closer cooperation between the two countries can contribute to peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

Iran pledges to weather 'full-scale' war

Tehran threatens retaliation against US sanctions backers as pressure mounts

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

Iran said on Sunday it is fighting a full-scale economic, military and security war as it warned that countries joining United States sanctions against Tehran would be considered an enemy.

The warning comes as US President Donald Trump said he viewed the Strait of Hormuz as an "American territory". In a social media post on Saturday, he reposted a map marking the critical waterway as a "new US territory".

Speaking at a ceremony on Sunday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said the government had faced war, sanctions, various pressures and continuous assassinations, alongside serious imbalances in water, electricity, gas, fuel, the environment and banking, but assured the public that his government is doing its best during the hardships.

"The enemies imagined that with their pressure and actions Iran would collapse. Not only did this not happen, but the power and unity of the Iranian nation amazed the world," he was quoted by the Mehr News Agency as saying.

"Of course, we are ashamed before the people that problems exist. But as long as we have breath in our bodies, we will serve our dear people, work to improve their lives and welfare, and pass through these crises with strength," he added.

In a speech published by state-run IRNA early on Sunday, Pezeshkian defended a recent memorandum of understanding as the best way for the country to move beyond what he described as a situation of "neither war nor peace".

Members of Iran's Supreme National Security Council believed the memorandum represented the best possible agreement based on dignity, wisdom and the national interest, he said.

In a televised interview on Saturday, Iran's security chief Mohsen Rezaei warned that countries joining US sanctions against Iran will be considered an enemy, and Tehran would retaliate by targeting their interests, the Tasnim News Agency reported.

Rezaei said Iran's defense strategy and international behavior have undergone significant changes following the US-Israeli war of aggression. Iran would have to adapt both its defense and diplomatic approaches considering US violation of its commitments and betrayal in negotiations, he added.

He also criticized Trump's policies, saying his "foolishness" has created a huge burden for the US people, its allies and the whole world, and that the US president has increased the logistic risk to global trade.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Sunday dismissed the threat of new US sanctions as a sign of desperation.

Describing what he said were "repetitive scenarios", Araghchi said in a video posted on Telegram, "The fact that they (US leaders) have moved on from military operations ... to bring up the same old plans shows that they are desperate."

Washington must speak to Iran respectfully to find "a solution based on justice and honor", he added.

Meanwhile, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said Tehran had received "multiple messages from neighboring countries" regarding the formation of new security arrangements and economic cooperation across the region.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said Pakistani army chief Asim Munir would visit Tehran on Monday to meet senior Iranian officials, Al Jazeera reported. The talks were said to focus on enhancing bilateral cooperation and regional peace.

Last week, Trump launched an economic campaign against Iran after Washington failed to achieve a breakthrough with Tehran as their memorandum of understanding signed in June expired on Aug 17.

Agencies contributed to this story.

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Israel raises 'serious security concerns' over Hamas disarmament deal

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel has shared "serious security concerns" with the United States regarding the proposed disarmament deal with Hamas, an Israeli official said as Israeli strikes over the weekend killed at least 17 people, including children, in Gaza.

The remarks by Doron Spielman, spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office, were some of the first public comments since US President Donald Trump announced the agreement.

Spielman told The Associated Press that Israel's intelligence assessment is that Hamas remains committed to rebuilding its military rather than genuinely demilitarizing. He said the Israeli military would not withdraw from Gaza — where it controls more than 60 percent of the territory — before Hamas disarms.

"Our assessment is that if we redeploy before Hamas is truly disarmed, it will quickly expand its presence throughout Gaza, rebuild its terrorist infrastructure, once again threaten Israeli communities, and seek to carry out another Oct 7-style attack," he said, referring to the Hamas militant attack on Israel in 2023 that triggered the conflict in the Gaza Strip.

Israel responded with a punishing military offensive that has killed more than 73,000 people, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

Spielman's comments come days after Hamas said it would begin disarming as part of the US-brokered ceasefire signed nine months ago to end the nearly three-year-long conflict. It marks a potential breakthrough in ending the conflict, but many hurdles, conditions and long timelines remain.

The 20-point ceasefire plan calls on Hamas to surrender its weapons and destroy its vast network of tunnels. It also envisions Israeli forces withdrawing from Gaza, the arrival of a new technocratic Palestinian government, deployment of an international security force and the rebuilding of the battered Palestinian enclave.

Hamas disarmament has been a sticking point and has deadlocked negotiations for months. In announcing the deal on social media on Thursday, Trump said it would be carried out in "carefully structured phases".

A copy of the agreement obtained and verified by the AP said that all weapons held by the Hamas-run police will be transferred to the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza upon its arrival in the enclave. It is unclear when that would happen, since it depends on other steps.

A process to decommission and store heavy weapons and to dismantle military production sites and tunnels will begin after the arrival of the Palestinian committee and the deployment of international forces. The process will be linked to a phased Israeli withdrawal, according to the agreement.

On Saturday, a delegation from the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, or Fatah, headed to Cairo, while Hamas affirmed its commitment to participating in the legislative elections scheduled for November as part of the broadest possible national coalition.

AGENCIES — XINHUA

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COMMENT

Editorials

US-Canada talks impasse acute reminder that Washington should review its policies

The break in the United States-Canada trade talks is more than another episode in Washington's ill-advised tariff drama. When US negotiators introduced last-minute demands that would have constrained Canada's ability to reach trade deals with third parties, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney walked away. The striking thing is not simply that the talks failed, but how revealingly they failed.

The US-Canada trade dispute is a miniature of a much larger problem: a US administration treating economic relations as a series of zero-sum contests while overlooking the costs its policies impose on the US' trading partners and the US itself.

Tariffs, technology restrictions, military escalation and an increasingly interventionist approach to currencies form a policy mix that risks aggravating the very inflationary, fiscal and financial pressures Washington claims to be fighting.

US importers pay tariffs at the border. Much of the cost is then passed on to businesses and consumers through higher prices and thinner margins, while retaliation hits US exporters. Modern manufacturing does not respect tariff boundaries. Auto parts can cross the US-Canadian border several times before becoming a finished vehicle. Taxing each crossing does not make the final product more American, just more expensive.

The same logic applies to technology policy. Washington's expanding "entity lists" and restrictions on China may become self-defeating when US companies are forced to redesign supply chains around political considerations rather than productivity. The result is greater technological fragmentation and reduced access to markets in which US companies have long been competitive.

The US administration's "transshipment" report takes this logic to an almost comic extreme. Baselessly blaming China for the disappointing economics of an arbitrary tariff regime does not change the underlying arithmetic. Once Washington creates large tariff differentials, it should hardly be surprised that businesses seek alternative routes. The policy creates the incentive and then foreign countries are absurdly criticized for responding to it.

Military escalation in the Middle East adds another inflationary shock. Washington's pressure on other nations to align themselves with its so-called toughest-ever economic measures against Iran is a telling reflection of its own strategic passivity regarding the trouble of its own making. The longer this conflict drags on, the deeper the hole the US is digging for itself.

Energy-price volatility feeds into transport, manufacturing and household budgets, while making the Federal Reserve's task harder. Monetary policy can restrain demand to help cool inflation; it cannot produce more oil or repair disrupted supply chains.

Then there is the number Washington cannot tariff away: the national debt. Annual deficits approaching $1.8 trillion and a debt burden above $40 trillion leave the US exposed to higher interest rates. Debt-service costs have climbed above $1 trillion a year, consuming resources that might otherwise finance infrastructure, education and social programs. Long-term Treasury yields remain elevated as investors demand compensation for inflation risks and the scale of future borrowing.

The weakening dollar adds another complication. A softer currency helps exporters, but also raises the domestic price of imports. In an economy already confronting tariff-induced inflation, further weakness of the dollar is hardly cost-free.

Against this backdrop, the surge in AI-related corporate borrowing deserves particular scrutiny as a potential trigger of a financial crisis. As of August, nine major US technology companies reportedly had nearly $3 trillion in off-balance-sheet commitments — almost double an estimate made only six weeks earlier. Roughly $1.9 trillion involves purchases of chips and servers and another $1.2 trillion future leases. More troubling is the potentially self-reinforcing financing cycle in which vendors finance customers who then use the funds to purchase their products. If AI revenues disappoint or higher long-term rates puncture valuations, these commitments could surface abruptly, transforming an investment boom into a financial shock potentially far larger than the dot-com bust of 2000. The damage could spread through credit markets and pension portfolios precisely when Washington has less fiscal room to respond.

According to a report, 57 senior US administration officials are worth at least $100 million, over four times the combined number of ultra-wealthy appointees in the George Walker Bush, Barack Obama and Joe Biden administrations.

For this wealthy circle, tariffs, AI contracts, energy prices and market volatility represent speculative opportunities. Policies presented as defending workers are in effect deepening wealth concentration and shifting costs downward.

But the White House tries to explain away these contradictions by blaming the previous administration, China or other trading partners, including Canada and the European Union. The US-Canada trade dispute should be read as a warning about a self-reinforcing policy circle driven by vested interests in the US.

The outward symptoms? Too much international engagement is being viewed through a transactional, zero-sum lens, turning allies into bargaining targets and trading partners into economic suspects.

The US' architecture was originally designed to restrain individual impulses through checks and balances. Those guardrails, however, become meaningless if institutions evolve from constraining personal discretion to protecting it.

Striving to realize human-robot symbiosis

At the second World Humanoid Robot Games in Beijing on Saturday, a humanoid robot from Team Tianzhuo set a milestone, clocking 100 meters in 9.39 seconds. It not only beat the previous robotic record but also eclipsed the legendary Usain Bolt's world record of 9.58 seconds, a feat of human biology deemed near the absolute limit.

This record-setting sprint was the dramatic opening act for the games that are being held from Saturday to Wednesday. The event has exploded in scale. This year's event has attracted the participation of 666 teams and 2,056 robots from 16 countries, marking a 138 percent increase in the number of teams taking part and a fourfold jump in the robot count from the inaugural event last year.

It demonstrates the speed of technological iteration. More significantly, the games reflect a global commitment to moving robots out of labs. The scenario-based events have been extended into simulated real environments such as factories, hotels, homes and logistics with tasks such as packing, unpacking and retail service, pushing humanoid robots from "demonstration tools" toward "practical productivity".

This push for real-world utility was the central theme at the 2026 World Robot Conference, which was held under the theme "Human-Robot Symbiosis, Production-Demand Convergence" from Wednesday to Sunday. Over 370 exhibitors from around the world showcased 3,000 innovative products, with 311 being global debuts. The industry's focus is increasingly on reliability, cost-effectiveness and solving real-world problems.

The market's attitude toward the industry was apparent last week when Unitree Robotics, a global leader in humanoid and quadruped robots, went public on the Shanghai Stock Exchange's sci-tech innovation board.

In a market crowded with options, investors are placing long-term bets on China's ability to translate its industrial strength into commercially viable embodied intelligence. This confidence is well-founded. Embodied intelligence, the integration of artificial intelligence with a physical form, is poised to inject new momentum into the global economy. Its applications span manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, emergency rescue and household services.

China's market is one of the world's largest testing grounds. From traffic control to package sorting, Chinese robots are already at work, demonstrating that the future is not on the horizon — it is already here. However, AI and robots will also affect the job market.

Addressing the contradiction requires a multipronged labor-market strategy: A shift from income support to employment-conditional subsidies, including wage insurance for displaced workers moving into growing sectors, alongside portable benefits to reskilling programs tied directly to employer demand. There should also be tax incentives for companies that invest in human-AI complementarity rather than wholesale automation.

In practice, to harness the opportunities of the new technological revolution, governments, businesses and universities should forge closer partnerships to enhance workforce development. This ecosystem should prioritize "learning by practicing" through internships, apprenticeships and industry-sponsored projects that bridge theory and practice.

Crucially, policymakers should pursue active labor-market policies that enhance mobility, reduce skills mismatches and ensure productivity gains translate into broad-based wage growth rather than elite capture. With proper foresight, there is no reason why the development of advanced technology cannot be a rising tide that lifts all boats.

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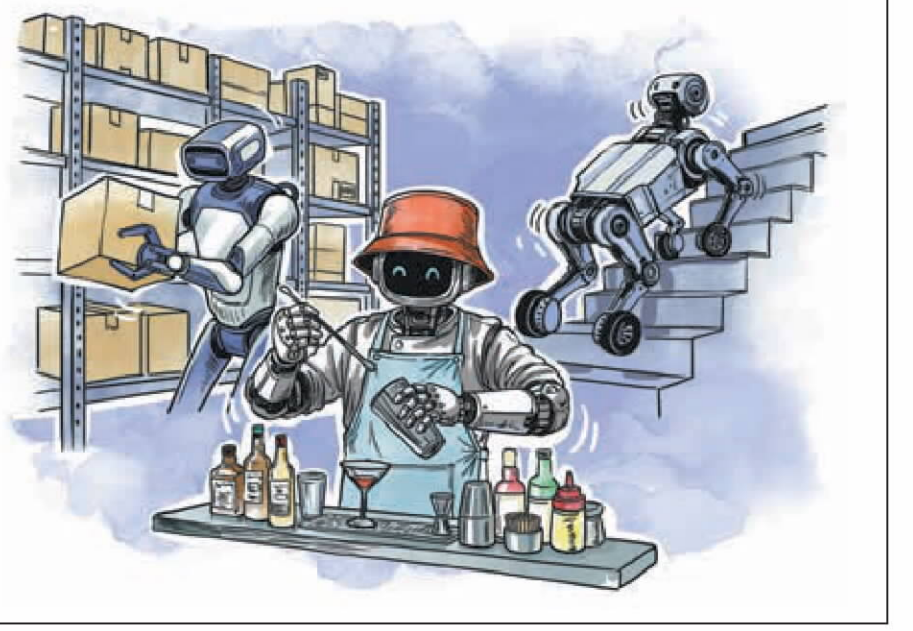

Opinion Line

China's commercial space industry demonstrates innovation energy

Watching the Zhuque-3 Y2 rocket lift off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, courtesy of LandSpace's live footage on Wednesday morning, was a moment of proud fulfillment for me. Minutes later, witnessing its first-stage booster settle vertically onto the landing zone in Minqin, Gansu province, I felt the culmination of a decade of on-the-ground reporting.

That very day, I wrote the news story on this historic mission. My visits to LandSpace's research and development facilities and the Minqin landing site just days before the launch gave me firsthand insight into the formidable technical challenges faced by the company's young engineers, making their achievement even more praiseworthy to me.

Over the past 10 years, I have observed China's commercial space industry evolve from a handful of underfunded start-ups with modest ambitions into a formidable force reshaping the country's space landscape. In the early days, I recall interviewing a veteran rocket designer from a State-owned space giant who flatly asserted that China had "no foundation for commercial space operations" and that launch services should not be entrusted to private players.

At that time, SpaceX was already demonstrating the viability of reusable rockets and lowering launch costs in the United States, yet such a path seemed unimaginable to many in China's space community. What a difference a decade can make.

The farsighted decision by the top leadership to open the space sector to private capital and enterprises — framing them as valuable complements to State-funded entities and a source of dynamism and competitiveness — has been fully vindicated. My years of reporting have tracked how private companies have moved from tentative experiments to world-class accomplishments. Today, they are an indispensable pillar of China's overall space capability, injecting innovation energy into the entire industry chain.

Wednesday's milestone — China's first successful land-based recovery of an orbital-class rocket booster — has far-reaching implications. Developed by LandSpace, the stainless-steel Zhuque-3 is specifically built for large-scale constellation deployment, offering heavy-lift capacity at reduced cost. Its proven reusability will significantly accelerate the construction of China's low-orbit satellite networks and other commercial systems, giving the country more flexible and cost-effective options for its space programs.

Beyond the direct technical gains, the success triggers a powerful "catfish effect" throughout the industry: private-sector breakthroughs press State-owned contractors to accelerate their own innovation cycles. Healthy competition also drives local suppliers to upgrade manufacturing standards, boosting the overall competitiveness of the country's space sector.

That said, maintaining a sober perspective is essential. Compared with the US, which leads the world in reusable rocket and commercial satellite technologies, China still faces notable gaps in many areas of commercial space operations. The journey to full reusability and routine, affordable access to space remains long and arduous.

As I watched the over-40-meter-tall Zhuque-3 first-stage booster stand upright on the landing pad in the middle of the desert — dust settling around its deployed legs — I recalled the skepticism of that designer years ago. What has unfolded since is a testament to the power of vision, policy support and entrepreneurial drive.

China's commercial space story is far from over, and I feel privileged to continue documenting the next chapter of reusable launch and satellite networking.

— ZHAO LEI, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

New healthcare plan has people-centered approach

Editor's note: *China released a five-year plan that aims to enhance the accessibility, affordability and sustainability of its public healthcare system. China Daily spoke to Dong Wenyong, an associate researcher at the Institute of Law at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, on the importance of the plan. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

There is a noticeable gap between the current development of healthcare provision and the growing demand for high-quality healthcare services. Factors such as urbanization, an aging population and the growth of new forms of employment are generating new demands for healthcare delivery. Also, the lack of synchronization among healthcare services, pharmaceutical supplies and medical insurance hinders the effectiveness of healthcare provision.

Addressing these challenges and seizing the opportunities requires a dedicated and comprehensive plan to drive systemic reform and development. Advances in big data and artificial intelligence present new opportunities to improve the management of the healthcare system.

Against this backdrop, the plan proactively addresses the challenges and opportunities facing the public healthcare system. It outlines six goals and guiding principles, six areas of reform, five initiatives to improve people's well-being and three major projects.

The goals are the six qualities that China's healthcare system should feature by 2030: fairness, legal compliance, security, digital and intelligent capabilities, coordination and sound management.

This is the first time that these six qualities have been systematically identified as development goals of the public healthcare system. Their introduction clarifies the sector's objectives and provides specific criteria for evaluating progress. Together, they will serve as benchmarks, offering multidimensional guidance for the development of the public healthcare system over the next five years.

The plan also outlines six major reform tasks: improving the multitiered public healthcare system; implementing long-term care insurance; deepening pharmaceutical and healthcare service reforms; improving the management and regulatory system for public healthcare funds; improving the public service system; and strengthening the foundations for the development and provision of public healthcare.

A key focus of the reforms is addressing institutional gaps, particularly those affecting individuals in flexible employment, such as food delivery couriers and ride-hailing drivers, by facilitating their coverage by medical insurance. This adaptation is crucial to meet the needs of new forms of employment. Additionally, the inclusion of long-term care insurance in the overall public healthcare system directly addresses the demands of an aging population.

The five initiatives to enhance people's well-being include efforts to consolidate and improve universal enrollment in medical insurance, develop an all-in-one service for medicine purchases, strengthen primary-level healthcare with the support of medical insurance, standardize the direct settlement of medical expenses incurred outside the insured person's place of residence, and establish a personal medical insurance cloud platform.

These measures address long-standing concerns among insured people and matters that directly affect their daily lives. They demonstrate that the plan not only addresses national-level issues but also incorporates a people-centered approach that focuses on individual needs.

Through concrete measures such as building platforms for managing insured people's information, developing applications for comparing medicine prices and supporting primary healthcare institutions in residential communities, the plan aims to advance broader institutional reform through targeted initiatives.

The three major projects are a monitoring and early-warning system for fund operations, big-data regulatory models and international cooperation on public healthcare services. These projects address the challenges and opportunities of an era defined by risk, technology and increased openness.

Through targeted development efforts, these projects will help turn the concepts of secure, digital, intelligent, and well-managed public healthcare into concrete outcomes, thereby building a modern system that meets practical needs and prepares for the future, while delivering higher-quality coverage.

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VIEWS

Muhammad Zamir Assadi

CPEC connects the dots to growth

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has transformed Pakistan's physical and strategic landscape. Journeys that once took days can now be completed in hours. Ports that were once idle are now bustling hubs of regional trade. Chronic energy shortages have been addressed by energy projects, enhancing industrial stability in the country.

However, the real evolution of the CPEC is just beginning to unfold. The second stage of the project is not just about concrete and asphalt. It's about production, innovation and shared prosperity.

The CPEC is entering a new phase of development and prosperity. This is not just a continuation of past achievements but a structural transformation.

Connectivity is evolving into industry cooperation, roads into value chains and energy generation into economic diversification. This transition is creating a new narrative on development that is focused on industrialization with people-centered growth as its goal.

At the core of this transformation are special economic zones, envisioned as engines of manufacturing and export growth. Pakistan has long grappled with insufficient industrialization and a lack of diversified export bases. Breaking this cycle requires attracting foreign investment into the CPEC's industrial zones and fostering collaboration between Chinese and Pakistani companies.

Regulatory reforms and skills development will be crucial to the success of these zones as well as infrastructure. Early initiatives are already showcasing this transformation, with emerging technology companies, textile units and engineering workshops starting to cluster in industrial parks along transport corridors.

For the next stage, deeper integration with global supply chains and stronger linkages between local suppliers and large industrial operators are essential. This integration will ensure the benefits of industrialization are felt across all industries.

Agriculture is another domain where CPEC 2.0 is likely to make a significant difference. Though it is the cornerstone of Pakistan's economy, the agricultural sector is plagued by low productivity due to outdated technology and minimal value addition.

Coordinated irrigation systems and advanced cold storage facilities for seeds and seedlings could revolutionize the sector. Technology-driven agriculture can reduce waste, enhance yields and boost export competitiveness.

It's not just an economic issue but a social one as well.

A large portion of Pakistan's population lives in rural areas where farming is the primary livelihood. Modern farming methods can alleviate poverty and reduce urban migration pressures. They can also help generate new opportunities for agro-based industries, linking farms more effectively with markets.

Another key feature of CPEC 2.0 is technology. Artificial intelligence and telecommunications have become integral to economic planning and digital infrastructure. These efforts can help bridge Pakistan's digital divide and improve public service delivery through enhanced cooperation. Smart logistics systems, digital payment platforms and e-commerce networks are already reshaping the country's business landscape.

Technology cooperation also impacts education and human capital development, as more universities and training institutions equip students with skills for emerging industries. This needs a change in curriculum design and stronger academic-industry linkages.

If technological infrastructure is to underpin sustainable growth, people must have the skills to drive it. Job creation is a key objective of the CPEC, and the transition from infrastructure to industrialization offers new opportunities.

But the quality of employment is as important as the quantity. The focus should be on skilled employment that provides stability and career progression, rather than short-term labor-intensive jobs. This can be done through vocational training programs, technical education and entrepreneurship support. Small and medium enterprises will be key enablers of this change.

Most economies rely on SMEs, which employ the majority of the population. Integrating SMEs into CPEC-related supply chains can distribute the economic benefits more widely and promote innovation at the local level, where businesses are more responsive to market changes.

Green development is another important aspect of CPEC 2.0. As the world focuses on climate change, development projects are increasingly held to green standards. The use of renewable energy, energy-efficient industrial systems and environmentally friendly construction measures not only helps achieve environmental objectives but also increases economic resilience. Renewable energy, particularly solar and hydropower, also reduces reliance on imported fuels and enhances energy security.

The central tenet of the next phase is people-centered development. The true success of infrastructure lies in improving everyday lives. Access to education, health care, clean water and economic opportunity determines whether large-scale projects are truly successful.

This transformation requires greater community involvement. Local populations should be active participants in development projects, not passive beneficiaries. This can be achieved through consultation processes, local hiring policies and inclusive planning frameworks. A sense of community ownership significantly enhances the sustainability of development projects.

CPEC also brings regional benefits. Greater connectivity and economic integration between China, Pakistan and neighboring countries can strengthen trade and economic ties across Asia.

The project can also connect remote regions that have been cut off from international markets. In this sense, the CPEC is not just a bilateral project but a catalyst for regional transformation.

Strategic infrastructure cooperation has already proven its worth in the context of the CPEC. The next chapter will determine whether this foundation can turn into sustainable industrial development and widespread prosperity. Infrastructure does not automatically lead to industrialization. It involves planning, investment and partnerships. The significance of this moment lies not only in the magnitude of the opportunity but also in the depth of transformation it offers.

If properly implemented, CPEC 2.0 can transform Pakistan's economy, diversify its industries and open new avenues for inclusive development.

It can also serve as a template for turning connectivity projects into comprehensive development partnerships.

The journey ahead is multifaceted and the direction is clear. Infrastructure laid the foundation; industrialization will define the future.

The author is the director of the China desk at Lord Media Network, Pakistan. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Digby James Wren

Robust H1 performance confirms China's stabilizing role

China's economic performance in the first half of 2026 demonstrated its growing resilience against external headwinds, such as disruptions in the Middle East, tariffs and sanctions.

The country's GDP reached 69.57 trillion yuan ($10.3 trillion), up 4.7 percent year-on-year, keeping it on track to meet its full-year growth target.

While second-quarter growth moderated to 4.3 percent following a stronger 5 percent in the first quarter, industrial output, retail sales and services all continued to expand. Furthermore, urban unemployment eased to 5 percent in June, while per capita disposable income rose 5.2 percent. Notably, the GDP deflator has turned positive after 12 quarters of deflation.

New growth drivers, such as high-end manufacturing, the digital economy and modern services, which capitalize on speed, scale, and technological integration, contributed over 40 percent of first-half growth.

The World Bank projected a steady 4.4 percent growth for China in 2026, noting that high-tech investment rose 4.5 percent year-on-year in January-May. The OECD has forecast 4.5 percent growth, citing strong semiconductor production and exports.

China's foreign trade reached a record high of 25.47 trillion yuan during the first half of 2026, the impressive 16.9 percent year-on-year growth reinforcing China's status as the world's leading goods trading nation. A key feature was a shift in trade dynamics. With the growth in imports outpacing the growth in exports, China has made substantial progress toward a balanced trade structure and increased consumer demand.

The transition to new growth drivers was decisive. Mechanical and electrical equipment exports saw a 20.1 percent increase, accounting for 63.5 percent of all exports. High-tech exports surged by 39 percent while AI and computing components posted double-digit growth due to global data center construction. Exports of electric vehicles grew by 68.7 percent, lithium-ion batteries increased 37.6 percent, while export volumes of wind turbines and associated green power generators shot up 35.6 percent.

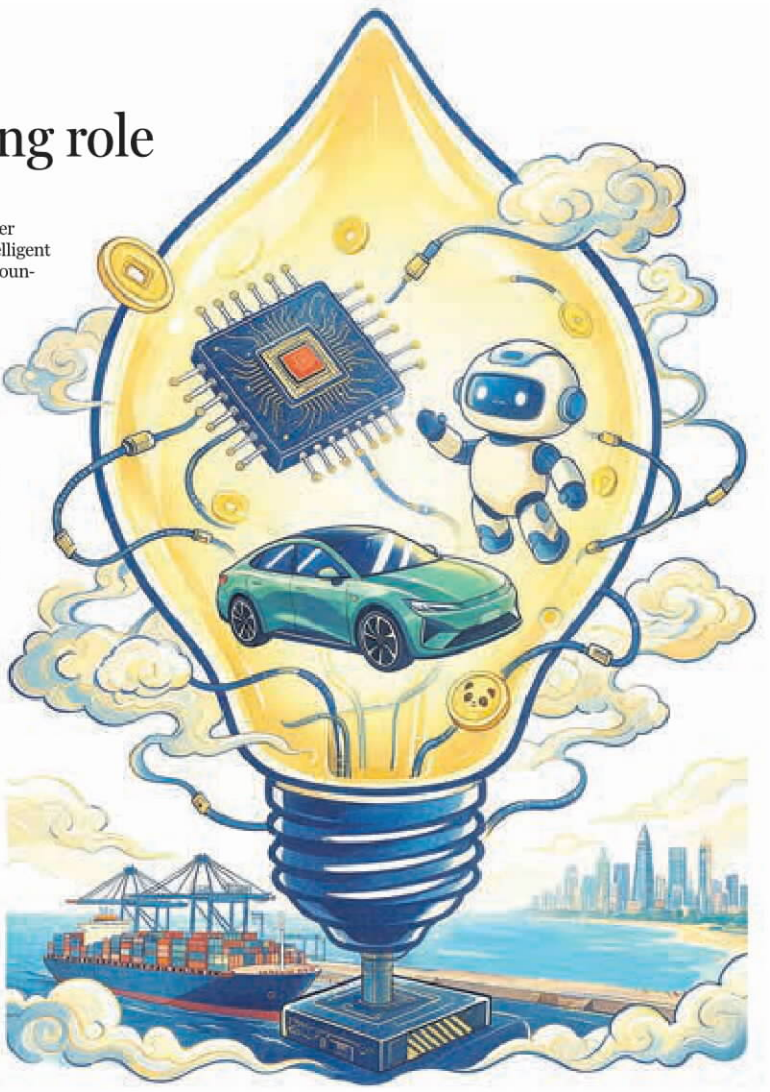
Nextgen green mobility exports of railway locomotives grew 45.1 percent and electric motorcycles and bicycles rose by 31.5 percent. China exported over 10,000 units of AI-powered intelligent bionic robots to more than 90 countries and regions. Exports of medical and surgical robots grew 3.3-fold to 480 million yuan, expanding their markets from 23 countries to 49 in 12 months.

For 17 consecutive years, China has been the world's second-largest import market, accounting for roughly 10 percent of global import demand.

By granting zero-tariff treatment to 63 developing nations, the Chinese market facilitated import growth from more than 150 countries and regions.

Trade with Belt and Road countries rose 14.8 percent to 12.97 trillion yuan, representing 50.9 percent of China's total foreign trade volume. Trade with Africa rose by 19.6 percent, Latin American trade expanded by 16.2 percent, and commerce with regional neighbors jumped 20.6 percent to 9.44 trillion yuan.

Trade with the European Union also registered a solid 10.2 percent increase. Foreign-invested enterprises and multinationals remain highly integrated within this ecosystem, shifting from "manufacturing in China" to "innovating in China".



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

While the European Central Bank notes that stronger Asian emerging economies, including China, lifted global momentum, French Finance Minister Roland Lescure says China is "under-consuming", the US is "over-consuming" and Europe is "under-investing". Banque de France Governor François Villeroy de Galhau has called for Chinese investment in Europe that creates local value and supports technology transfer. Germany's Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil says Germany is "not afraid of competition, but it needs to be fair".

Malaysia and Singapore have pointed to spillover effects from weaker demand, tariffs, and supply-chain disruption. Nevertheless, the global market's deep reliance on China's high-value, tech-driven exports creates mutual interdependence, rendering complete decoupling economically unfeasible.

China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are each other's largest trade partners, which means any domestic slowdown would quickly impact Southeast Asia through trade demand, supply chains and commodity prices.

However, China's strong first-half performance has provided a vital economic buffer. Indonesia's trade with China rose in early 2026, Cambodia's total first-half trade with China exceeded $11 billion, and Thailand's export sector is projected to grow 8 percent to 10 percent driven by electronics and AI-related demand.

China's first-half performance in 2026 confirms the wisdom of transitioning to new growth drivers and strengthening resilience built on innovation. Its robust GDP growth of 4.7 percent reflects nuanced fiscal support and policy responses to external disruptions and domestic challenges in the property sector as consumption remains soft.

The underlying story, however, is one of sustained growth. As the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) begins, the central task for the second half of 2026 is to localize policy inputs, maintain fiscal flexibility and balance domestic property and consumption challenges with export and manufacturing strengths.

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

Xue Jinwen

Taking the local history of Lyuliang to the world

In Lyuliang, the past is always present. Visitors to the city in Shanxi province will find history almost everywhere: in former revolutionary sites, in village stories and in the songs that endured the years of war.

During the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), Lyuliang was integral to the Jin-Sui border region. The struggle during that period gave rise to what is now known as the Lyuliang Spirit, a tribute to the sacrifices of soldiers and civilians during wartime, and a source of inspiration to overcome severe poverty and adversity.

That rich history deserves to be known beyond China. But sharing it with a global audience is a challenge. For those unfamiliar with China's revolutionary history, the stories of Lyuliang might seem distant. The key lies in finding effective ways to communicate the revolutionary heritage to an international audience.

Instead of presenting it as a lesson for the world, the focus should be on making the history accessible and engaging.

The first step is ensuring historical accuracy. The Lyuliang University has established the Jin-Sui Research Institute, bringing together researchers in history, literature, art and foreign languages.

They have preserved and digitized vast amounts of historical material, including wartime newspapers and other documents.

Archives may seem less glamorous than documentaries or viral videos, but without reliable sources, international storytelling quickly becomes little more than publicity. Digitized newspapers give researchers abroad access to authentic historical data.

Researching the writings of foreign journalists, such as United States reporter Harrison Forman, can also help contextualize the Jin-Sui experience within a broader international narrative. Readers outside China may approach Chinese history with different assumptions, but this is no reason to rewrite the past to make it more palatable to outsiders.

Instead, providing sufficient context enables readers to understand what they see and then form their own opinions.

Lyuliang's traditional culture — paper-cutting, shadow puppetry and dough sculpture — is not merely local handicrafts.

The greater challenge is fostering a connection with this history. While historical arguments can explain why the Lyuliang Spirit matters, cultural expressions — songs, novels or films — can evoke an emotional understanding of its importance. That is also why cultural forms should play a central role in sharing Lyuliang's history abroad.

The university has produced musical works and other projects drawing on local folk traditions. The revolutionary novel *The Lyuliang Heroes* is being translated into English and a documentary is being produced about artistic life in the Jin-Sui border region.

These projects should avoid the common mistake of over-explaining to foreign audiences. Often, what they need is a better story. Instead of simply stating that people in the revolutionary base areas demonstrated self-sacrifice and solidarity, it may be more compelling to depict the personal choices faced by families, villages or artists during wartime. The first approach tells an audience what to admire. The second gives them something to think about.

This is where digital technology can be useful. Virtual exhibitions, digital archives, short videos, and social-media platforms can bring Lyuliang's history to audiences thousands of miles away.

Lyuliang's traditional culture — paper-cutting, shadow puppetry and dough sculpture — is not merely local handicrafts. Properly presented, it can serve as a natural introduction to the region's history. A piece of folk art can spark curiosity, leading to a story, and ultimately fostering understanding.

Lyuliang University is exploring ways to weave stories of the region into such traditions, through bilingual embroidery, digital paper-cutting and online heritage experiences.

But technology is only the delivery mechanism. It cannot determine what stories are worth telling. A million views do not necessarily mean a million people understood the story. Nor does technological novelty make a historical narrative more convincing.

The true test is whether audiences feel invited into the history or are being lectured about it.

We need to rethink the approach to international cultural communication. Local history does not become universal simply because it has been translated into English or posted on foreign social platforms.

It becomes meaningful when it answers questions that resonate beyond its place of origin: How do ordinary people endure a catastrophe? What unites a community? How do memories of sacrifice endure when the generation that experienced them is gone?

Lyuliang has no shortage of answers to those questions. The challenge is to present them in a way that doesn't assume that the rest of the world already understands their significance.

Rather than asking others to share a memory that is not theirs, give them a way into it through the people who lived it and the choices they made.

That is what could give Lyuliang's revolutionary past a wider meaning. What began as a local history could evolve into a narrative for the rest of the world.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

SHAHOBJON RAKHMONOVICH KUBATOV

New quality partnership

Uzbekistan's 35 years of independence demonstrate that sovereignty and international cooperation are not mutually exclusive



The year 2026 marks the 35th anniversary of Uzbekistan's independence. This date represents the long journey of a state that gained the right to determine its own development, build relations with the world and assume responsibility for its future. The development of relations between Uzbekistan and China is particularly instructive.

Over the past 35 years, China has evolved from one of the first states to recognize Uzbekistan's independence to become the country's largest trade and economic partner, a major investor and a participant in large-scale infrastructure, industrial and technological projects. Yet the central question concerns more than the number of agreements signed or the volume of trade. It is far more important to understand the new quality this partnership is acquiring and how it relates to the national interests of an independent Uzbekistan.

The partnership reflects a high degree of political trust and a shared intention to ensure the resilience of cooperation regardless of shifts in the international environment. At the same time, it does not imply the creation of a closed alliance or any restriction on Uzbekistan's relations with other states.

This is an important political quality of the Uzbekistan-China partnership. It is built on respect for territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs and the right of every nation to choose its own path of modernization. The two countries differ in their systems of government, historical experience and scale, but these differences do not impede cooperation when sovereign equality remains its foundation.

Openness is not the opposite of sovereignty. The experience of independent Uzbekistan allows us to speak of the principle of sovereign openness. Its meaning is straightforward: the state expands its trade, investment, technological and humanitarian ties while retaining the right to determine their direction and align them with the objectives of national development.

China is now Uzbekistan's largest trading partner. According to preliminary national statistics, China accounted for 21.2 percent of the country's foreign trade turnover in 2025 — approximately $17.2 billion. These figures demonstrate the scale of interaction. They also require careful analysis of the structure of trade rather than simple satisfaction with the results achieved.

Uzbekistan imports machinery, equipment, components and technologies from China that are essential to the modernization of its economy. A high volume of such imports is not inherently negative. The decisive question is whether the equipment acquired translates into higher national productivity, the training of engineers, the development of service enterprises, the localization of components and the expansion of Uzbekistan's own exports.

This is why the quality of cooperation matters more than simple arithmetic. When external resources generate new knowledge, skilled employment and modern industries within the country, interdependence strengthens sovereignty. When cooperation primarily entrenches the import of finished goods and the export of raw materials, however, the risk of structural vulnerability increases.

The production of BYD electric vehicles in Uzbekistan may offer an illustrative example. Its strategic impact will be determined not only by the number of vehicles produced, but also by the depth of localization, the participation of domestic suppliers, the training of technical specialists and the ability to enter third-country markets. The same logic applies to solar and wind energy. Long-term results depend not only on generating capacity brought online, but also on local equipment production, the transfer of expertise, environmental responsibility and the ability of Uzbek specialists to maintain new systems independently.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

Transport connectivity is equally important. Uzbekistan is one of only two doubly landlocked countries in the world — countries separated from the sea by the territories of other landlocked states. For such a country, reliable access to external markets is not merely an economic question, but an element of strategic autonomy.

From this perspective, the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway carries significance far beyond the transport sector. An intergovernmental agreement on the project was signed in June 2024, and a ceremony marking the start of construction was held in December of the same year. The new railway is expected to shorten the route between China and Central Asia and open additional connections to the markets of South and West Asia.

There is, however, a fundamental distinction between a transit route and a development corridor. Transit generates freight flows and related revenues, but it does not by itself transform the structure of an economy. A development corridor emerges only when logistics centers, industrial zones, processing facilities, educational institutions, service companies and modern customs systems are established along the railway.

Uzbekistan's national interest lies not merely in increasing the number of trains crossing its territory. More important is the creation of a productive ecosystem around the new railway.

The project also demonstrates Central Asia's growing agency. Its implementation requires the interests of three states to be coordinated. China provides a substantial share of the market, capital and technology; Kyrgyzstan provides the crucial geographic section; and Uzbekistan connects the route to subsequent western and southern corridors. The participants' mutual dependence creates a foundation for equitable consultation and shared responsibility for the outcome.

Uzbekistan-China relations extend beyond the bilateral level. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the China-Central Asia mechanism provide broader platforms for regional cooperation. Their significance will depend in part on whether Central Asian states can develop a coordinated vision on transport, trade, energy, water resources and digital connectivity.

For Chinese partners, it is essential to view Uzbekistan not only as a market, a transit territory or a source of resources, but also as a co-author of a new regional order. Joint projects will be more sustainable if they are assessed not only in terms of financial returns and transport capacity, but also by their contribution to industrialization, employment, environmental security and human-capital development.

A resilient partnership also requires stronger ties between universities, researchers and citizens. Confucius Institutes operate in Tashkent and Samarkand, while joint educational programs and research centers continue to develop. The Uzbek language is taught at Beijing Foreign Studies University. The visa-free regime that entered into force on June 1, 2025, allowing visits of up to 30 days, has created additional opportunities for tourism, entrepreneurship, academic contacts and direct interaction between the peoples of the two countries. The next stage should focus on the joint production of knowledge through research cooperation, academic exchanges and stronger ties between think tanks.

The political meaning of the Uzbekistan-China partnership lies in demonstrating that states of different sizes can build enduring cooperation without compromising sovereign equality.

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LI XUAN

'RAMageddon' fallout

US' technology-denial strategy is driving China's pursuit of endogenous capabilities to ease memory-chip shortage



The severe global memory chip shortage, dubbed "RAMageddon", is more than a supply-chain disruption linked to artificial intelligence demand: it exposes the limits of weaponized interdependence as a coercive strategy.

While many analyses find no quick resolution in sight as the shortage is structural, reflecting a reallocation of the memory fabrication base toward AI infrastructure that spurs consumption of memory chips by data centers, the geopolitical implication of RAMageddon lies in what it reveals about the United States' technology-denial strategy toward China.

Since 2022, the US has pursued escalating semiconductor export controls premised on what US scholars Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman term "weaponized interdependence" — the exploitation of chokepoints in global networks to exercise coercive power.

In October 2022, the US Bureau of Industry and Security issued sweeping export controls targeting advanced chips and chipmaking equipment destined for China. In October 2023, these rules were tightened further, closing loopholes that had allowed third-country rerouting and expanding the Entity List to cover additional Chinese AI companies. The 2024 amendments extended controls to high-bandwidth memory (HBM) specifically, while pressuring the Netherlands and Japan to impose restrictions on equipment exports to China by ASML and Tokyo Electron.

Early this year, the US imposed additional licensing requirements on manufacturing equipment related to dynamic random-access-memory (DRAM), potentially constraining Chinese producers' expansion plans.

The apparent logic of weaponized interdependence is straightforward: because advanced semiconductor manufacturing depends on irreplaceable nodes — ASML's extreme ultraviolet (EUV) lithography system, US-designed electronic-design-automation (EDA) software and the memory oligopoly itself — restricting China's access is intended to constrain its AI development. Interdependence thus becomes an asymmetric lever for geopolitical control.

However, the phenomenon of RAMageddon challenges that logic in two fundamental ways.

First, chokepoint control is a double-edged sword. As major memory giants redirect capacity toward a more lucrative AI-related industry, the resulting scarcity of conventional DRAM can harm the entire global electronics ecosystem, including US companies and allied economies. This is the "boomerang effect" in international relations: sanctions generate unintended costs that erode the sanctioner's own position. In this context, nine US industry associations warned the administration that the imbalance could raise the price of electronic goods for US customers.

Second, and more critically, the crisis creates the very market conditions that enable China's memory industry to achieve viability at scale — precisely the outcome that the US policy sought to prevent. By forcing incumbents to prioritize the high end, export controls and AI demand have jointly left openings in the middle of the market, offering ChangXin Memory Technologies (CXMT) and other manufacturers a strategic opening.

CXMT is not an isolated case. Across the semiconductor value chain, Chinese companies have leveraged exclusion as an accelerant. Huawei's semiconductor arm, HiSilicon, has pivoted to designing AI chips manufactured by SMIC on its most advanced available process node — currently 7nm using multi-patterning deep ultraviolet (DUV) lithography — circumventing the blockade of EUV lithography. SMIC has expanded capacity in Beijing and Shanghai, and its reported record revenue in 2025 makes it the world's third-largest foundry. Yangtze Memory Technologies Corp, despite being placed on the US Entity List in late 2022, now accounts for 13 percent of the global NAND flash market and reportedly supplies domestic smartphone makers.

The pattern is revealing: US restrictions have triggered a burst of new Chinese investment and market adaptation, contributing to the development of indigenous capability.

As US economist Albert Hirschman argued in his foundational work on the political economy of trade, economic coercion works best when the target lacks alternatives. When coercion persists over time, however, it incentivizes the target to develop substitutes, and those substitutes, once built, permanently reduce the coercer's leverage. This is precisely what is occurring in the memory chip sector.

The structural market crisis, especially the HBM-driven supply crunch, has created a demand vacuum that may lower the barrier to entry for new producers including those from China. Industrial policy matters, but market opportunity is the enabling condition.

The growth of CXMT, SMIC and Huawei maps precisely onto Hirschman's argument of how coercion erodes its own foundations. The dominant power's own strategic choices, including export controls and AI preference, interact with market dynamics to produce conditions that inadvertently accelerate the challenger's rise.

This phenomenon can be described as "displacement through a market structural crisis". The more aggressively the US pursues AI supremacy in memory-intensive computing, the more it starves the conventional memory market, and the more space it opens for Chinese producers. The definition of "strategic technology" thus requires dynamic and dialectic thinking.

US controls focus on the leading edge, such as EUV, HBM and advanced logic. But when conventional DRAM becomes scarce because the leading edge has absorbed most, if not all, capacity, the frontier of competition shifts. Controlling the top of the stack matters less if the system cannot supply the middle.

The shift in competition is already visible. The history of semiconductor technology shows that yesterday's leading edge becomes accessible through alternative engineering pathways: SMIC's achievement of functional 7nm chips without EUV lithography is the most striking recent demonstration. The risk for the US is not merely that it loses market share in conventional memory, but that the cumulative learning and capital formation enabled by the mid-market eventually propel Chinese companies toward the high end as well.



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RAMageddon is more than a supply-chain crisis; it is a natural experiment in the limits of technological hegemony, demonstrating that weaponizing chokepoints generates second-order effects that can undermine the original strategic intent.

For China, the path to semiconductor self-sufficiency need not run through the most advanced nodes first; it can run through the vast, underserved middle of the market. For the US, the lesson is revealing: a strategy predicated on permanent technological denial must contend with the possibility that denial itself creates the conditions for displacement. The question is no longer whether China has to be at the top in the global memory industry, but how quickly the displacement will happen. Continued rigidity in US export controls will not necessarily reverse China's progress, but will only ensure that the transition occurs on terms less favorable to US industry and consumers alike.

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BUSINESS

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AI amping up gaming developers

Rapid development of technology fundamentally restructuring process

By **WANG XIN** in Shanghai
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The effective application of artificial intelligence technologies and further global business expansion are seen as the key drivers shaping the future of China's gaming industry, business leaders and developers said at the 23rd China Digital Entertainment Expo and Conference (ChinaJoy), which took place from July 31 to Aug 3 in Shanghai.

The rapid development of AI technologies — such as large language models, multimodal models and AI agents — is fundamentally restructuring the entire game development and operations process. Targeting specifically the gaming industry, the AI gaming cloud has been booming over the past few years.

According to a recent research report by United States-based market consultancy IDC, the AI gaming cloud basically refers to the AI technologies, products and services used by game developers throughout the production process, from game design and prototyping to game development and testing, as well as game publishing and operations.

The report showed that China's AI gaming cloud market reached 1.86 billion yuan ($275 million) last year. The sector is expected to maintain a compound annual growth rate of about 91.6 percent over the next five years, hitting 11 billion yuan by 2029 and contributing more than half of the overall gaming cloud market.

Baidu AI Cloud, one of the earliest Chinese tech giants engaging in the sector, took about 51 percent of the nation's AI gaming cloud market share, said the report. To date, it has established in-depth partnerships with more than half of the nation's leading game companies and over 100 innovative AI gaming firms, providing full-stack AI capabilities to companies such as miHoYo, NetEase Games, 37 Interactive Entertainment and Unity China.

Among Baidu AI Cloud's offerings, its AI Heterogeneous Compute serves as the AI infrastructure that allows game developers to focus on essential content creation without worrying about computing power management.

Baidu Qianfan, an enterprise-grade, all-in-one large model platform, is built around agents, providing the gaming industry with a one-stop platform for model access, agent development and data intelligence services. It can support end-to-end AI collaboration across the entire workflow from text creation and character design to 3D modeling, animation production and code development, helping game developers improve both creative efficiency and quality.

"What AI truly unlocks is not just the content production capacity, but the gaming industry's ability to continuously create new gameplay, new characters and new experiences," said Zhang Wei, vice-president of Baidu Intelligent Cloud.

Baidu's AI solutions have empowered gaming businesses, such as SingularDance and SEELE AI. SingularDance is an innovative tech firm focused on the development of AI emotional companionship and hyper-personified intelligent agents.

Edward Lu Hongyi, founder and CEO of SingularDance, highlighted that they are committed to creating virtual characters that not only know how to chat with users, but also possess distinct, stable, independent and continuously evolving personalities with a "soul".

With a core focus on restructuring traditional game development workflows, SEELE AI is a tech firm focused on AI-native games and interactive worlds powered by foundational models. Collaborating with Baidu, it enables users to automatically generate interactive 3D game worlds via natural language using multimodal inputs, such as text and images, to complete the entire workflow, including character modeling, animation generation, scene construction, game mechanics and narrative presentation.

"We aim to enable every creative individual to collaborate with AI agents via natural language, quickly transforming their ideas into game worlds that are accessible, playable, editable and continuously iterable. So every gamer can actually become a game developer, and generate income from their creation," said Liu Bo, the company's partner of business operations.

Hu Xin, assistant to the chairman of Zhejiang Century Huatong Group, said that currently, AI has been fully integrated into more than 80 percent of the company's entire workflow of game development, which is also the case for most businesses in the gaming industry. The future competition within the industry would be much about "creativity, aesthetics and user insights".

The group, which is the parent company of Shengqu Games and Century Games, is also actively ramping up efforts in globalization and international collaboration for sustained growth. Following a fruitful 17-year partnership with South Korea's NC Corp, Shengqu Games unveiled the two sides' new collaboration on the much anticipated game *AION 2* on July 30 during the ChinaJoy 2026 expo.

As one of China's leading game companies, the group began its overseas expansion early and has achieved remarkable growth over the years. In 2025, the group saw its total revenue surge 67.55 percent year-on-year to nearly 37.9 billion yuan, with overseas' sales accounting for 58.63 percent. In the first quarter, the group raked in 11.01 billion yuan in markets overseas, up 35.19 percent year-on-year, according to the company.

In June, the group's hit game *Whiteout Survival* topped the global mobile game revenue chart, with its another hit *Kingshot* standing in seventh place, according to app data analysis firm Sensor Tower.

"For China's gaming industry, globalization is a goal that will never be fully achieved. The overseas markets are far from saturated and we still have huge potential to grow. Chinese game productions have high quality, and our developers and culture are gaining increasing recognition globally. We're proud to see such changes," said Hu.

The accelerating pace of Chinese game companies' globalization is also bringing vast opportunities for global emerging businesses. Aiming to better help game developers and companies acquire users worldwide in competitive markets, Berlin-based adtech company Almedia — which specializes in rewarded user acquisition — joined this year's ChinaJoy to find more Chinese partners.

Moritz Hollander, 24-year-old founder and CEO of the company established six years ago, said their approach involves a "better form of marketing or advertising" by offering cash rewards to users for engaging with advertisers' games and apps. He believes that in the future, this reward-based approach will be the new way people discover games and engage with brands, similar to loyalty and cashback systems with credit cards.

Hollander said the global gaming industry is very fast and competitive, so developers need to be very agile in various aspects. He said it is very efficient to work with Chinese developers, who are generally very fast, flexible, open-minded to new ideas, advanced and sophisticated.

"We focus more on mobile games and China — with a huge gaming market — is particularly successful and dominant in mobile gaming. It is one of the key growth markets and also the most important market for us right now.

"We hope to work with both big Chinese game companies and smaller game developers to together build an ecosystem of rewards, and help them expand their global presence with our users, platforms and global network across 16 nations," said Hollander.

Aiming to offer users more fun and rewarding gaming experience, Almedia's platforms have garnered over 80 million users worldwide. The company also launched a new Link product targeting the Chinese market during ChinaJoy, further reinforcing its long-term commitment to the nation's game developers for their global growth.

The global games market closed 2025 at $201.6 billion, marking a 9.1 percent year-on-year increase. Revenue for mobile games are expected to grow 6.8 percent year-on-year to reach $121.1 billion in 2026, said gaming industry consultancy Newzoo.



Visitors play a racing game during the ChinaJoy 2026 expo in Shanghai on July 31.



Visitors experience an extended reality game during the ChinaJoy 2026 expo in Shanghai on July 31.
PHOTOS BY XU PEIQIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Evolution of esports into economic force

By **WANG XIN** in Shanghai

An estimated 400 million Gen Z regularly engage with esports, representing an increasingly powerful opportunity for global brands to reach the potentially lucrative youth market through the games, platforms and communities where they already devote their time and attention, said a report.

A white paper titled "The Esports Generation: Who They Are and Why They Spend" was released in collaboration with Shanghai-based Hero Esports, one of Asia's leading esports companies, ESL FACEIT Group, a global leader in esports and gaming entertainment, and market research and consulting firm Niko Partners specializing in video games, esports and livestreaming across Asia and the Middle East and North Africa.

The report draws on survey data from 8,000 Gen Z esports fans aged 13-30 from across eight global markets, and found that esports has become a global entertainment force, attracting digitally-native Gen Z audiences who find the same passion, identity, community and excitement traditionally found in other sports.

According to the report, Gen Z esports fans are not a niche, they are extensively engaged in esports in various ways. They mostly watch gaming content, gaming livestreams and gaming podcasts, while also actively posting in game forums and social media groups, as well as regularly attending gaming conventions and esports events.

While esports audiences are still predominantly male, female representation in the culture is growing globally, especially at live esports events where female attendance is often higher. In China, over half of the attendees at the Peacekeeper Elite League and King Pro League were female.

The report highlighted that Gen Z esports enthusiasts are deeply loyal to the teams, titles, events and partnerships that earn their trust and energize their passions. They connect with esports fandom in the same ways previous generations connected with other sports — with genuine emotional investment, community identity and long-term loyalty.

Critically, they extend that affinity to the brands that show up authentically within this space, said the report. About 85 percent of this highly engaged audience said they take notice of branding in esports and 74 percent of them reported that this has had an effect on their purchasing behavior. Two thirds of esports fans have purchased a product because of a collaboration or co-branding partnership with an esports team, game or player.

Esports partnerships heavily influence consumer behavior, with a significant portion of fans purchasing products promoted within the sector, including food and beverage products, electronics and fashion. Similar engagement also extends beyond traditional categories, driving fans to purchase esports-related collectibles, makeup, beauty or skincare products as well partnered brands in other miscellaneous categories, said the report.

Jascha Braeker, senior partnerships development manager at ESL FACEIT Group, said during this year's ChinaJoy digital entertainment expo in Shanghai that many renowned brands are also actively engaging with the esports community for credibility within the gaming culture and even for talent acquisition.

Lamborghini joined EFG's gaming lifestyle festival DreamHack for the third time in May to connect and grow with the younger audiences. And DHL, one of the festival's longest partners, has built distinct recruitment campaigns tailored for tech savvy *Dota 2* and *Counter-Strike* fans, which brought it millions of career site visits and thousands of job applications from the Gen Z community.



People try out new gaming products during the DreamHack esports contest in Shanghai in May 2025. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"Esports has evolved into one of the most effective channels for companies looking to connect with Gen Z audiences at scale. What makes it unique is not just its reach, but the depth of engagement and trust that exists between fans, players, teams and events," said EFG's CEO Niccolo Maisto.

Danny Tang, co-founder and CEO of Hero Esports, added: "This whitepaper confirms that esports has evolved into a global cultural and economic force. For brands, the message is clear — esports is no longer a niche market, but a premier platform to connect with the next generation of consumers."

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BUSINESS INSIGHT

‘Overcapacity’ claim masks anxiety over China’s green edge

EAGLE EYE
By Zhang Monan



AI PRODUCED BY CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

The West’s renewed warnings about Chinese “overcapacity” reflect a deeper concern: China’s growing strength in clean energy and advanced manufacturing is challenging long-established Western advantages in some of the industries expected to shape the global economy.

In recent months, politicians and media commentators in the United States and other Western economies have increasingly portrayed the expansion of China’s electric vehicle, lithium battery, solar and advanced manufacturing industries as a new “China shock”. What began as a debate over industrial capacity has increasingly become an argument for higher tariffs, tighter investment restrictions and supply chains organized around geopolitical considerations.

China’s Ministry of Commerce recently responded with a position paper, arguing that industrial capacity should be assessed against global supply and demand, growth potential and business performance rather than simply comparing production with domestic consumption in a single country.

This distinction matters. Major manufacturing economies routinely produce more of certain goods than their domestic markets consume. German automakers depend heavily on overseas sales, and Airbus and Boeing manufacture aircraft for customers worldwide. Few would describe their export-oriented production as evidence of overcapacity simply because output exceeds domestic demand.

Applying such a test selectively to China risks turning an economic concept into an instrument of trade policy. Genuine overcapacity can exist in individual sectors, but large exports or rapid production expansion alone do not establish that capacity is excessive.

Much of China’s manufacturing strength has been built through years of intense domestic competition, investment and technological upgrading. This is particularly evident in EVs, lithium batteries and photovoltaic equipment, where companies compete fiercely on price, technology, quality and speed of commercialization.

China’s EV industry, for example, rests on an extensive industrial ecosystem covering critical mineral processing, batteries, motors, electronic control systems, vehicle manufacturing and charging infrastructure. Close links between suppliers and manufacturers have shortened development cycles, lowered costs and enabled companies to respond quickly to changes in demand.

Technological progress has reinforced these advantages. Chinese battery producers have made advances in lithium iron phosphate batteries, battery integration and safety, and solar manufacturers have continuously improved photovoltaic technology and production efficiency. Large-scale manufacturing has further reduced unit costs and made new technologies more affordable.

These are characteristics of industrial competitiveness, and don’t necessarily point to examples of market distortion.

Government policy has undoubtedly played a role in China’s industrial development. But industrial policy is hardly unique to China. The US has committed hundreds of billions of dollars in incentives for clean energy, EVs, batteries and other strategic industries, including measures favoring production in the US or North America. European governments and institutions have similarly provided extensive support for renewable energy, batteries and advanced manufacturing.

It is therefore increasingly difficult to divide the world neatly between Chinese “State intervention” and Western “market competition”. A more credible approach would examine whether specific policies create identifiable distortions and address them through transparent, proportionate and rules-based measures.

There is another weakness in the overcapacity argument: capacity cannot be assessed solely against today’s demand, particularly in industries central to the global energy transition.

The world is still far from completing the shift to low-carbon energy. The International Energy Agency expects renewable energy deployment to expand substantially through the end of the decade. Electrification will require enormous quantities of solar panels, batteries, power equipment, EVs and support infrastructure.

Viewed against those requirements, the challenge may not be too much high-quality green manufacturing capacity, but whether enough affordable capacity can be supplied at the speed and scale required.

Chinese production has helped reduce the cost of solar panels, batteries and other clean-energy technologies. This matters particularly for developing economies, where affordability can determine whether large-scale energy transition projects are commercially viable. Cheaper machinery, components and technologies can also lower barriers to industrialization and help emerging economies develop manufacturing capacity of their own.

The intensity of the Western debate therefore points to a broader source of anxiety: the changing geography of industrial competitiveness.

For decades, advanced Western economies dominated many high-value manufacturing industries, while China’s role in global value chains was largely concentrated in labor-intensive production and assembly for multinational companies. That division of labor has changed rapidly.

Chinese companies are increasingly competing in sectors with higher technological barriers and greater strategic importance. EVs, renewable energy equipment, batteries, industrial machinery and sophisticated electronics are becoming important parts of China’s manufacturing and export base.

This creates genuine pressure on established producers. But competition from increasingly efficient rivals is not in and of itself evidence of unfair trade.

The lesson is not that governments should ignore unfair competition, but that restricting one competitor does not eliminate the economic forces reshaping an industry.

A similar pattern could emerge in clean technology. Barriers against Chinese EVs, lithium batteries and solar products may alter trade flows, and they can also increase costs for consumers and manufacturers, encourage production to move through third countries and make supply chains more complicated without addressing the underlying competitiveness gap.

The greater danger is that ordinary economic competition becomes increasingly treated as a national security issue. Once industrial capacity, exports and investment are routinely framed through the language of security, almost any competitive advantage can become grounds for tariffs, export controls, investment screening or exclusion from supply chains.

The result could be higher energy and production costs, slower technological progress and innovation, and greater risks of retaliation and supply-chain decoupling. Such fragmentation would ultimately undermine the broader interests of the global economy.

Industrial capacity should be assessed comprehensively, taking into account global supply and demand, growth potential and corporate performance, rather than simply comparing exports with domestic demand. China’s manufacturing strengths should not be broadly characterized as “overcapacity” simply because its products are competitive in global markets.

Markets require rules, and governments have a legitimate responsibility to enforce them. But those rules should protect fair competition rather than particular competitors. Issues related to industrial capacity should not be politicized or turned into tools of geopolitical competition.

Allowing markets to play their role, maintaining transparent international rules and keeping trade and investment channels open offer a more sustainable path. The alternative is a cycle in which anxiety produces protectionism, protectionism accelerates fragmentation and fragmentation raises costs for everyone.

The debate over “overcapacity” is therefore about more than how much China produces. It is about how the global economy responds to a shift in industrial competitiveness. Adapting through innovation and competition may be difficult for established producers, but trying to hold back that shift through protectionism risks leaving everyone worse off.

The writer is a research fellow and deputy director of the Institute of American and European Studies at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges.
The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Meeting signals stronger H2 policy push

MAIN STREET
By Yang Zekun

The symposium chaired by Premier Li Qiang with experts and entrepreneurs in July came at a critical juncture in mid-year. Against the backdrop of the current economic situation and with an eye to China’s long-term development, the meeting laid out systematic arrangements for economic work in the second half.

The meeting highlighted three major priorities in policy focus. Macroeconomic policy is moving from implementing existing measures to giving greater emphasis to both existing and incremental policies.

Efforts to expand domestic demand are shifting from investment primarily in physical assets to a coordinated approach that combines investment in physical assets with investment in people.

At the same time, industrial upgrading is moving beyond technological breakthroughs to focus more on the large-scale commercial application of such advances.

The meeting called for making full use of existing policies while conducting advanced studies and preparing additional policy measures.

This message carries particular significance near the midpoint of the year, signaling that macroeconomic policy is moving from a phase of implementing and consolidating existing measures, to one in which existing and incremental policies work in tandem.

At the theoretical level, this reflects the principle that macroeconomic regulation should be targeted and effective.

Marxist political economy requires a proper balance between overall economic equilibrium and structural optimization. China’s economy currently faces structural challenges, including insufficient effective demand and overcapacity in some industries.

As the marginal impact of relying solely on existing policy measures diminishes, additional measures are needed to generate new growth momentum.

The call to “conduct advanced studies and prepare” incremental policies indicates that preliminary work on measures in key areas has largely been completed and that they can be introduced when conditions warrant.

This approach of preparing policy tools in advance — while acting in accordance with changing circumstances — maintains strategic resolve while leaving room for policy flexibility, providing greater space to respond to uncertainties that may emerge in the second half.

The urgency is also evident in the current economic climate. As China begins implementation of its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), profound changes are taking place in both the domestic and international environment, while the economy faces prominent challenges such as relatively strong supply and weak demand. The shift in growth drivers has reached a critical stage.

Against this backdrop, preparing additional policy measures itself serves as a strong signal to the market. It shows that policymakers have reached a basic consensus on the need to strengthen policy support, with macroeconomic policies in the second half moving from providing a floor for growth toward taking more proactive action.

A clear policy signal is particularly important for stabilizing expectations among market entities and boosting confidence in investment. It provides greater certainty at a time when economic agents are seeking greater clarity about policy direction.

The meeting called for a systematic approach and for “coordinated efforts in investment in things and investment in people”, while stressing the need to improve public services such as healthcare, eldercare and childcare in order to expand domestic demand through improving people’s livelihoods. This signals a significant shift in the policy approach to expanding domestic demand.

The concept of “investment in people” has a strong theoretical foundation. Human capital theory, which emerged in the mid-20th century, has shown that economic growth driven mainly by the expansion of physical capital can be distorted and unsustainable. Sustainable growth requires coordinated development of human, physical and natural capital.

“Investment in people” can help expand domestic demand through both the supply and demand sides.

On the supply side, investment in people can improve the quality of the workforce and strengthen technological innovation capabilities, providing key factor support for the development of new quality productive forces.

On the demand side, greater investment in areas such as education, healthcare and eldercare can directly reduce households’ need for precautionary savings, increase their propensity to consume and unlock suppressed consumption demand.

Research shows that investment in people’s livelihoods can generate a stronger multiplier effect on household consumption than any indirect transmission effects from infrastructure investment.

This creates a virtuous cycle in which improvements in people’s livelihoods stimulate consumption while stronger human capital supports supply-side upgrading. It represents a concrete application, particularly the principle of safeguarding and improving people’s livelihoods through development.

The participation of the founder of Pang Donglai, a retail company, at the symposium offered a micro-level reflection of this policy approach.

By improving employee benefits and enhancing the consumer experience, the company has achieved growth, demonstrating that investment in people can serve not only as a government policy priority, but also as a competitive advantage for businesses.

Its approach to improving supply-side quality and stimulating domestic demand through better services provides a potentially replicable model for addressing weak consumer confidence.

The meeting placed particular emphasis on promoting the “large-scale commercial application of new technologies such as artificial intelligence”.

The focus on commercialization signals a shift in industrial policy from encouraging research and innovation to facilitating the application and commercialization of technological achievements.

In terms of technological evolution, AI is moving from breakthroughs at the theoretical level toward a new stage of industrial transformation. This is not simply a matter of adding AI to existing businesses as an external tool. Rather, the development of “AI+” represents a fundamental shift in the way industries operate.

AI is evolving from an auxiliary tool into an underlying infrastructure, from optimizing individual processes to reshaping entire systems, and from isolated applications to broad-based empowerment across industries.

In August 2025, the State Council — the nation’s Cabinet — issued guidelines on implementing the “AI+” initiative in depth, elevating the initiative to the national strategic level and calling for broad and deep integration of AI with different sectors and fields of the economy and society. The latest meeting’s emphasis is in line with this top-level policy design and sends a further signal that implementation should be sped up.

China also has distinctive advantages in promoting the large-scale commercial application of AI.

On the technology side, several Chinese large language models have reached internationally advanced levels in overall capabilities. On the industrial side, China has a complete range of industries and abundant application scenarios, while its strong manufacturing capabilities allow AI technologies to be rapidly turned into physical products and commercial applications.

On the institutional side, China’s socialist system provides strong capabilities for coordinating resources and mobilizing strengths from different sectors.

Overall, the signals from the symposium represent a practical application at a critical stage of China’s economic development.

The effectiveness of policy ultimately depends on implementation.

In the second half, as existing and incremental policies work together, the concept of investment in people is being translated into concrete measures in areas such as fiscal policy, employment and social security. And as the large-scale commercial application of AI accelerates, China’s economy has the conditions and capacity to consolidate its recovery and achieve its economic and social development targets for the year.

This will demonstrate China’s commitment to getting off to a strong start during the 15th Five-Year Plan period, while also providing further confidence in the path toward Chinese modernization.

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CHINA

Tech, AI key to cyberspace action plan

Top internet regulator lays out social and economic high-quality objectives

By **CAO YIN**
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China's top internet regulator unveiled an action plan on Friday to make cyberspace enterprises a significant driver of high-quality social and economic development by 2030.

Released on Friday by the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, the plan outlines strategic goals for 2026 through 2030, aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of cyberspace enterprises through advancements in technological innovation, product quality and service delivery.

The plan envisions a robust industrial ecosystem and a supportive development environment for the cyberspace sector. It emphasizes the necessity of a strong institutional framework to ensure safe, standardized and orderly growth.

"Network information technology is highlighted as a critical area of innovation, attracting substantial global research and development investment," the commission said. "This sector consistently achieves breakthroughs, finds widespread applications and exerts a powerful influence across various industries."

The commission highlights that companies focused on cybersecurity and informatization are crucial to China's cyber strength initiatives. These enterprises are instrumental in building new productive forces and enhancing global competitiveness. The plan aims to invigorate cyberspace enterprises while ensuring their orderly and healthy development.

To achieve these objectives, the plan calls for intensified efforts in breakthrough technologies such as high-end chips, basic and industrial software, network communications, cybersecurity and data security.

Priority will be given to advancing frontier technologies, including quantum computing, blockchain, brain-computer interfaces, digital twins and next-generation displays.

Resources will be allocated to companies engaged in artificial intelligence research, with a strong emphasis on developing high-end AI chips, improving large language model performance and promoting agentic AI technologies. The plan encourages enterprises to actively participate in open-source projects and community building.

Security is a key focus, with promises of robust technological support to enhance risk identification, alert systems, monitoring and emergency response capabilities. Enterprises are urged to strengthen personal data protection systems and optimize algorithm management. According to the plan, preventing the misuse of AI-related technologies is essential to safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of netizens and workers.

It also mandates improvements in the quality of content provided by cyberspace enterprises and effective regulation of monopolistic practices in key areas.

"We will demonstrate greater resolve in upholding security, curbing disorderly competition and reinforcing the rule of law in cyberspace governance," the commission said. It pledges to collaborate closely with other authorities to implement the plan and will regularly seek feedback from cyberspace enterprises to address any challenges in its execution.

Masterpiece comes to Zhejiang



Visitors take photos of a Song Dynasty (960-1279) copy of *The Night Revels of Han Xizai* at the Zhejiang Provincial Museum in Hangzhou on Saturday. The work, part of the collection of the Palace Museum, is being exhibited publicly in Zhejiang for the first time and will remain on display through Sept 20. Traditionally attributed to the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960) painter Gu Hongzhong, the artwork is regarded as a pinnacle of ancient Chinese figure painting. CHEN ZHONGQIU / FOR CHINA DAILY

China postpones Chang'e 7 robotic lunar mission

By **ZHAO LEI** in Wenchang, Hainan
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China's Chang'e 7 robotic lunar mission has been postponed, the China Manned Space Agency announced on Sunday.

In a brief statement, the agency said that after comprehensive assessments, the Chang'e 7 mission headquarters had reached a conclusion that the lunar expedition cannot be carried out within this year's scheduled launch window as it had failed to meet launch criteria.

The decision was made in accordance with the principles of prudence, reliability and absolute safety, the statement explained without providing more details.

A launch window is a specific period of time during which a rocket must lift off in order to reach its intended orbital destination.

According to experts, choosing a launch window for a space mission is not a matter of convenience, but a mixture of multiple factors that require careful calculations.

Because Earth rotates on its axis and the target, such as the moon or another planet, is also moving, the geometry between the launch site and the final destination changes constantly. A rocket can only reach its preset position when all the orbital, communication and other conditions align simultaneously. If the liftoff point misses that window, the mission must wait until the next opportunity, which could be days, weeks or even months later.

While the Earth-moon transfer windows open roughly once a month, Chang'e 7's destination — the lunar south pole — imposes far stricter constraints, restricting usable launch opportunities to just one or two per year.

The Chang'e 7 is set to become China's seventh robotic mission to the moon, tasked mainly with searching for traces of water on the silver celestial body.

A Long March 5 carrier rocket, with the Chang'e 7 probe on top of it, was moved to its launch service tower at the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Hainan province on Wednesday, when the space agency announced that launch would take place "in due course in the coming days".

The Chang'e 7 was transported by air to the coastal spaceport in April, while the Long March 5 rocket arrived in July by ship.

They were assembled and tested at the spaceport.

To date, China has conducted six robotic missions to explore the moon. The most recent, a 53-day Chang'e 6 mission, took place in the summer of 2024, representing the world's first attempt to bring back samples from the far side of the moon.

The historic mission successfully retrieved a total of 1,935.3 grams of samples from the far side.

CSSC-developed podded propulsors rival imports

By **ZHAO LEI**
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Engineers at China State Shipbuilding Corp have developed a series of high-power podded propulsors, helping domestic shipyards break foreign manufacturers' long-standing dominance in this critical marine technology sector.

After 18 years of dedicated research, engineers at the Shanghai Marine Equipment Research Institute, a CSSC subsidiary specializing in ship mechanical and electronic systems, have designed and built three types of podded propulsors under the brand of S-POD to cover diverse operational needs, according to Zheng Jian, an engineer in charge of the S-POD products.

The L-type, with a propulsion power range of 1.3 to 5 megawatts, is a compact and efficient model suited for research vessels and law-enforcement ships that have displacements of more than 1,000 metric tons. When used on research vessels, it can save up to 30 percent of internal space.

The type has been deployed on the *Zhuhai Yun*, an unmanned system mother ship, and the *Tongji*, a research vessel operated by Tongji University.

The T-type, covering 1.3 to 18 MW of propulsion power, is designed for large vessels including cruise ships, passenger ro-ro vessels and offshore platforms.

The Shanghai institute has constructed China's first 10-MW podded propulsor and secured orders for it.

The model features a propulsion power equivalent to the traction power of an eight-carriage *Fuxing* high-speed train, with technical performance matching international advanced levels.

The TI-type, ranging from 2 to 15 MW of propulsion power, is an ice-breaking model specifically designed for polar environments, suitable for polar research vessels, icebreakers and polar operation platforms.

According to Zheng, podded propulsors are among the world's most advanced electric marine propulsion systems, serving as a core component for large cruise ships, research vessels and icebreakers.

"Unlike traditional propulsion systems with complex mechanical transmission, the S-POD propulsors integrate a permanent magnet synchronous motor and propeller inside a single pod mounted beneath the hull, enabling 360-degree full rotation for vector thrust," he said.

Zheng noted that compared with conventional propulsors, the podded systems have several advantages — their energy efficiency is improved by over 20 percent, while vibration and noise are substantially reduced. The 360-degree rotation capability allows vessels to perform complex maneuvers such as turning on the spot, greatly enhancing navigation flexibility and safety.

According to Zheng, the Shanghai institute launched research and development of podded propulsors in 2007. Engineers made the first conceptual prototype in 2015, and built a 5-MW prototype in 2018 for operating tests.

In 2023, the institute completed the construction of a dedicated manufacturing factory. The next year, design work on the 10-MW model was completed.

Prior to the development of the S-POD series, China's podded propulsion market had been monopolized by foreign suppliers for many years, with domestic shipyards relying entirely on imports.

300 strangers attend Uygur wedding after viral post

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

Earlier this month, a Uygur wedding in Yarkant county of Kashgar prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, became an unexpected nationwide celebration. More than 300 strangers traveled from across the country to share in the joy and blessings of the occasion. The scene that followed, brimming with music and dance, cheer and laughter, was later captured in online posts and videos that spread the festive vibes even farther and wider.

The story began when the groom's mother Zoram Seyit posted a digital invitation on the short-video sharing platform Douyin on Aug 3, expecting only family and friends to respond. But when a curious user from Central China's Henan province asked if they could attend and the host family replied with a simple "yes", the post went viral overnight.

On Aug 8, the wedding day, the banquet hall was filled with guests from diverse regions and ethnic backgrounds, all gathered for the same celebration. Men and women, many in their finest attire, sang and danced throughout the day.

Groom Akramjan Omar said his online guests joined in every part of the celebration, from the midday procession to escort the bride to the wedding hall and the main ceremony in the afternoon, to the after-party that stretched past 9 pm.

He had been unaware of his mother's post until the next morning, when he woke up to find it had already racked up over 10,000 likes. For a family that has run a Xinjiang cuisine restaurant in Henan for nearly three decades, more guests meant more joy.

However, as the numbers kept climbing — likes, comments and promises to attend — the initial excitement gave way to a practical concern: how to take good care of these guests, especially when they had no way of knowing how many would actually show up.

The family then trimmed their original guest list from 500 relatives and friends on each of the bride's and groom's sides to 200 per side and reserved the second floor, which offered a full view of the hall, for strangers traveling from afar. Food supplies were doubled, featuring local specialties such as pilaf, baked stuffed buns, seasonal and dried fruits, as well as wedding sweets, while a Mandarin-speaking partner was added alongside the Uygur-language master of ceremonies.

Many guests attempted to hand over their cash gifts, following Chinese wedding customs, but the host family declined most of them. Akramjan Omar said he was touched at one point seeing people who clearly didn't really know how to dance moving anyway, their faces lit up with pure enjoyment. At the end of the night, the newlyweds and their unexpected guests gathered for a group photo.



A newlywed couple share an intimate dance at their wedding on Aug 8 in Yarkant county, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, in front of family, friends and more than 300 strangers coming from across the country. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Warm hospitality

Wei Lixi, 20, from South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, was on a solo road trip in Kashgar city when he saw the invitation on Douyin. He had his vehicle washed for the occasion and joined the groom's procession early that morning. The groom led everyone in a dance, and guests were handed party poppers to set off during the liveliest moments.

At first, Wei worried about intruding — but the hosts welcomed the out-of-town visitors with open arms. "The air was electric. I felt like part of one big family," he said.

Hao Shuhui, 24, from Henan, married into a Xinjiang family earlier this year. She dug through her wardrobe for a bright red dress and made her way to the Uygur family that has long-standing ties with her hometown.

The hosts were warm enough to ease her shyness. A groomsman had set up a WeChat group in advance, sharing a few do's and don'ts and encouraging the guests to speak up about any needs. The netizens, meanwhile, were worried about causing trouble.

A guest in his 30s surnamed Tang from Shandong province said, "It was incredibly infectious, even for those of us Han people who aren't particularly good at singing or dancing."

He added that he had immersed himself in the warmth, hospitality and optimism of the Uygur friends, and felt a genuine bond between people of different ethnic backgrounds. Guests like him, too, began chatting and sharing stories of their travels and lives.

Emerging tourism draw

Grand and lively Uygur weddings have long attracted visitors and sparked fascination across China.

In May 2025, the variety show *HAHAHAHAHA* re-created a ceremony through role-play.

On Aug 12, the Uygur wedding of celebrity couple Madina Memet and Jiang Chao sparked heated online discussions. Some Douyin posts generated several hundred thousand likes, with the most popular exceeding 2 million.

A typical Uygur wedding unfolds with a morning session hosted by the bride's family, followed by the bride-pickup and a transitional segment for the younger crowd that features dancing, the bouquet toss and photo sessions, as well as a banquet by the groom's side with a formal veil-lifting ceremony. Singing and dancing accompany every stage of the wedding. Days before, a "consultation tea party" allows both families to get acquainted and exchange betrothal gifts, while days after, close family members and friends will gather at the bride's home for a visit.

The invitation post for the Yarkant wedding has to date accumulated more than 10 million views and some 77,000 comments. Some netizens posted their own wedding invitations on Douyin, while others simply asked: "Can I come?"

Experiencing a Uygur wedding has gradually become a tourism draw in Xinjiang. Some banquet venues in Urumqi and Kashgar offer viewing areas on the second-floor mezzanines for tourists to watch real ceremonies live. In Kashgar city, 26-year-old visitor Zhang Yao observed a wedding this way. "The women wore an abundance of ornate jewelry. Their dresses had a bold, vivid theme color but were different in design, all absolutely stunning," she said, while also noting the importance of respecting the hosts on their big day.

Yao Jiahui tried her luck on Thursday and happened upon a wedding. A bridesmaid took her along on the dance floor. Aunties asked her in Uygur if she was enjoying the event. "It's all in the dance," she said.

Han Yawei and Hu Dongyue contributed to this story.

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

Tradition and tech team up to preserve 'orchard in the sky'

Ming Dynasty pear trees still thriving in Gansu along the banks of the Yellow River

By **MA JINGNA** and **HU YUMENG** in Lanzhou

High above the terraces of the Yellow River in Northwest China's Gansu province, centuries-old pear branches weave together across elevated wooden scaffolding, casting a dense green roof over the basin below. These structures in Gaolan county are known locally as *gaojia yunpeng* — the "high-frame cloud canopy"— and create the illusion of an orchard floating in the sky.

A closer look at one of these massive, twisted trunks reveals more than ancient bark. Attached to the wood is a weather-resistant QR code.

A quick smartphone scan brings up a complete digital file showing the tree's age — approximately 345 years — health status, variety and the name of the local family responsible for its care. It is part of a sweeping "one tree, one archive" management system introduced by the Shichuan Ancient Pear Orchard Protection Center, bridging Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) farming traditions with modern data tracking.

That blend of deep history and living ecology has earned the site an official designation as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2025. It adds to a list of accolades that includes a Guinness World Record as the "World's First Ancient Pear Orchard".

Yet behind the UN recognition and the spectacular spring blossoms that draw nearly a million tourists each year lies a delicate rescue operation — a race to blend ancient ecological wisdom with modern science before the orchard's aging caretakers retire.



Wei Zhouyu, a local farmer, uses a timber support stand to carry out artificial pollination in the Shichuan Ancient Pear Orchard in Gaolan, Gansu province, on April 14. PHOTOS BY YANG MINGZE / CHINA DAILY





Left: Visitors tour the Shichuan Ancient Pear Orchard in April.
Right: A close-up of pear blossoms in the orchard.

Ming legacy

The story of Shichuan began nearly five centuries ago during the Ming Dynasty, when farmers first recognized the unique microclimate of this Gansu basin.

"Shichuan is located in a basin with deep and fertile soil, large day-night temperature differences and a long frost-free period," said Li Xiaoli, a staff member at the Ancient Pear Orchard Protection Center. "These natural conditions are ideal for growing pears."

Over generations, local farmers developed a cultivation system adapted to the area's unique geography. Rather than reshaping the environment, they learned to work with the Yellow River's water resources and the Loess Plateau's terrain.

They planted deep-rooted pear trees on upper terraces to stabilize slopes, stop soil erosion, and conserve water, while cultivating crops on lower levels.

To maximize space and sunlight in the semi-arid environment, farmers developed the elevated canopy system. Supported by wooden frames, mature branches spread high above the ground, improving airflow, cutting disease risks, and creating space below for livestock, vegetables and medicinal herbs.

Today, the site shelters 9,423 pear trees that are over a century old, including more than 2,600 that have survived for over 300 years.

According to the FAO, the orchard follows a low-density planting model, with roughly 150 trees per hectare, creating favorable conditions for light penetration, airflow and intercropping.

In its assessment, the organization noted that this integrated agroforestry landscape creates a resilient ecological barrier along the Yellow River, improving nutrient cycling, strengthening local food security, and demonstrating how traditional knowledge can adapt to harsh environments.

"The knowledge developed in these orchards has been adapted and applied in newer plantations and surrounding landscapes, creating a coherent and ecologically sound agroforestry system," the FAO said in its description of the site.

Heritage plus science

Keeping 300-year-old trees alive requires constant intervention, but orchard managers are increasingly swapping chemical inputs for ecological solutions.

At a nursery near the orchard, rows of wild pear saplings are carefully cultivated for conservation work. According to orchard caretaker Wei Wanyi, these naturally occurring seedlings possess strong root systems and strong resistance to drought, disease and saline-alkaline conditions.

"They are valuable genetic resources," Wei said. "We use them for bridge grafting, trunk grafting and replanting endangered ancient trees."

Traditional restoration methods continue to play an important role in extending the lifespan of aging trees. Grafting, bridge grafting and cavity repair techniques are used to revive weakened specimens and improve their health.

Meanwhile, conservation efforts increasingly rely on environmentally friendly pest-control strategies.

Instead of depending heavily on chemical pesticides, orchard managers use a combination of physical and biological methods to manage major orchard pests including aphids, pear psyllids and several species of fruit-boring insects.

Yellow adhesive bands wrapped around tree trunks trap crawling insects before they reach the canopy. The practice evolved from a traditional local technique in which farmers piled sand around tree trunks to prevent pests from climbing upward.

"We improved the old method by replacing the sand barriers with adhesive bands," said Li Xiaoli, a staff member at the Ancient Pear Orchard Protection Center. "When insects climb up the trunk, they become trapped on the sticky surface."

Pheromone traps suspended among the branches provide another layer of protection, while beneficial insects are released to help maintain a natural balance between pest and predator populations, Li added.

Wei Zhouyu, a local farmer whose family has planted pear trees for generations, pointed to several triangular traps hanging among the branches, part of the orchard's biological pest-control system.

Such tools have become a common sight in recent years as the orchard expands the use of green management practices.

According to orchard managers, reducing chemical inputs has become a key principle of conservation. The goal is not only to protect fruit quality, but also to preserve the biodiversity that supports the orchard's long-term health.

While traditional knowledge remains central to orchard management, modern technology has become an increasingly important tool.

A major milestone came in 2019 with the implementation of the Regulations on the Protection of Shichuan Ancient Pear Trees, which established a legal framework for conservation and brought orchard management onto a more systematic footing.

Since the establishment of the Ancient Pear Orchard Protection Center in 2014, every tree has its own digital identity. Pointing to a tree estimated to be 345 years old, local farmer Wei Zhouyu showed the identification plate attached to its trunk. "The sign tells you the tree's variety, age and caretaker," he said.

The digital records also document each tree's health condition and maintenance history, allowing conservation teams to monitor changes over time and respond more quickly to emerging risks.

Today, more than 1,760 conservation agreements have been signed with farmers and agritourism operators, ensuring that local communities remain directly involved in protecting the orchard.

Growing together

Another factor that makes Shichuan particularly unusual is that the orchard is not separated from daily life.

Ancient pear trees stand beside and even inside homes, line village roads and spread across family courtyards. Generations of residents have lived among the trees, creating a landscape in which agriculture, ecology and community life are deeply intertwined.

"We don't just grow pear trees. We grow up with them," said Wei Zhouyu, who cares for 16 pear trees and learned orchard management skills from his father and grandfather.

The orchard is protected through a community-based management system that reflects this long-standing relationship between people and trees.

More than 6,000 ancient trees are cared for by farming households, over 2,600 by agritourism operators and around 600 by the orchard's protection center. In total, 1,765 households remain involved in cultivating and protecting the orchard.

Yet many of the caretakers are between 50 and 70 years old, highlighting the challenge of passing traditional knowledge to younger generations.

To encourage continued stewardship, local authorities provide annual subsidies totaling around 2.4 million yuan ($350,000) for irrigation and tree maintenance, while conservation staff take responsibility for trees that no longer have dedicated caretakers.

"We need to preserve these traditional skills, but we also need to attract new generations to join the effort," said Han Lei, deputy director of the protection center.

The close relationship between people and trees has also created economic opportunities for local communities.

In addition to pear production, residents operate farm stays, restaurants and tourism-related businesses linked to the orchard's seasonal landscape and agricultural traditions.

According to local authorities, the annual pear blossom season attracts more than 900,000 visitors and generates tourism revenue exceeding 90 million yuan.

"Visitors come to see the blossoms in spring and pick pears in autumn. We sell pears and run farm stays, and tourism has brought us new sources of income," said local farmer Wei Konglu.

For the FAO, this integration of ecological conservation, traditional agriculture and rural livelihoods is one of the orchard's defining strengths.

During a field assessment conducted before its GIAHS designation, FAO experts examined the orchard's conservation practices, traditional farming knowledge and local agricultural industries, describing it as an example of how agricultural heritage can continue to generate economic value while preserving ecological and cultural resources.

"Resilient to droughts and floods, the system sustains agrobiodiversity, food security and rural livelihoods, reflecting harmony between tradition and ecology," the organization said.

Supported by both inherited knowledge and modern conservation measures, the orchard remains a working agricultural landscape where ecological protection and rural livelihoods continue side by side.

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Traditional ladders keep farmers high up in canopy

By **MA JINGNA** and **HU YUMENG**

Beneath the sprawling canopy of centuries-old pear trees in Shichuan town, Lanzhou, orchard work takes place high above the ground, within trees that can reach more than 10 meters in height.

Farmers here rely on a traditional wooden scaling ladder system known as *tianbashi*, a practice passed down through generations and recognized as a provincial-level intangible cultural heritage in Gansu.

Rather than a single tool, *tianbashi* represents a complete system of high-altitude farming knowledge used to access, manage and care for some of the world's oldest pear trees.

The system is closely tied to an elevated cultivation model known locally as *gaotian*, or "fields in the sky", in which branches are lifted and supported by wooden frames, forming a layered orchard structure above the ground.

"In other places, farmers plant on the ground, but here they plant in the sky," said Li Xiaoli, a staff member of the orchard's protection center.

"Mechanized operations can lead to soil compaction and surface hardening over time. In contrast, the *tianbashi* system places far less pressure on the ground. As farmers work above the soil using wooden ladders, the impact on the orchard floor is minimal, helping preserve soil structure and ecological stability," Li said. "It also offers greater flexibility, allowing workers to move through dense canopies and reach branches more precisely than machinery."

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, this reflects a long-evolved traditional knowledge system in which seasonal ecological practices are embedded in every stage of orchard management.

Using *tianbashi*, farmers carry out key seasonal tasks including pruning, flower management, pollination, fruit thinning, harvesting and ecological pest control, all guided by agricultural calendars shaped by flowering cycles and tree growth patterns.

For local farmers, *tianbashi* is more than a working method — it is inherited memory. Techniques such as high-altitude pruning, bark treatment and seasonal canopy care are learned through generations rather than formal training.

"These old pear trees are like our ancestors," said 63-year-old farmer Wei Zhouyu. "We must care for them using traditional methods."

Among these tasks, flower management is especially important. During blooming season, farmers perform flower thinning by gently shaking branches from elevated positions. The practice reduces excessive blossoms so nutrients concentrate in fewer fruits, improving size and quality, while also dislodging insects and eggs.

Equally important is pollination. Because main varieties such as the Dongguo and Ruan'er pears depend on cross-pollination, farmers plant compatible trees like Sumu and Changba pears throughout the orchard. Climbing the wooden ladders, they manually transfer pollen between varieties to ensure stable yields and high fruit quality.

Wei also practices winter bark scraping, a traditional technique that removes old bark, helps eliminate overwintering pests and improves tree health. "Removing the old bark helps the tree breathe more easily," he said.

Wei manages 16 ancient pear trees, including some over 400 years old.

The work remains demanding. Pruning, pollination and harvesting all require long hours in the canopy, and many young people are reluctant to take over. "It's hard and sometimes dangerous," Wei said.



A villager harvests pears while scaling the *tianbashi* ladder system at the Shichuan orchard in Gaolan, Gansu province, in October.
LI YALONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

To address this, local authorities have incorporated *tianbashi* into heritage protection programs and training systems to encourage knowledge transfer. The orchard's protection center has also established a nursery with more than 2,000 saplings for restoration, while experts train farmers in green pest control and scientific orchard management.

The FAO said that the Shichuan system demonstrates how traditional agricultural knowledge continues to function as a living system rather than a relic of the past.

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CULTURE



A gold octadrachm in the name of Arsinoe II Philadelphos on display at the Xi'an exhibition.

The golden thread of social exchange

Xi'an exhibition uses Hellenistic jewelry to explore how ancient civilizations shared artistic traditions, **Zhao Xu** reports.



Periammata, chains or straps worn diagonally across the torso or fastened over the breast.



Head ornaments on display captivate visitors at the exhibition, *Art in Gold: Jewellery in Hellenistic Times*, at the Shaanxi History Museum in Xi'an, Shaanxi province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

When Alexander the Great's armies swept eastward in the fourth century BC, they carried far more than military power. Across the vast world that emerged — from the Adriatic to Afghanistan — people, languages, beliefs, and artistic traditions circulated on an unprecedented scale.

The kingdoms founded by Alexander's successors forged a shared cultural idiom linking cities such as Alexandria, Antioch and Pergamon, while local traditions remained remarkably resilient. In this first great experiment in globalization, gold jewelry became one of its most eloquent witnesses.

Fashioned from gold seized from Persian treasuries, adorned with gemstones from distant lands and shaped by craftsmen drawing on multiple artistic traditions, these objects embodied both the cosmopolitan ambitions and cultural diversity of the Hellenistic world.

More than ornaments, they accompanied their owners through marriage, worship and death, carrying the traces of commercial, artistic and spiritual exchanges that connected continents.

More than two millennia later, some of the finest examples of this cultural fusion are on display at the Shaanxi History Museum in Xi'an. *Art in Gold: Jewellery in Hellenistic Times*, which runs through the end of the year, offers a glimpse into the interconnected world that emerged in the wake of Alexander's conquests.

"The concept of exchange anchors the exhibition," says Ren Xueli of the Shaanxi History Museum, which has brought together more than 180 artifacts from 24 Greek archaeological museums alongside 70 objects from the Benaki Museum in Athens.

Ren was also referring to the exhibition's Chinese title, *Wenming Yi Zhi*, a phrase from *I Ching (Book of Changes)*. Here, *wenming*, commonly translated as "civilization", encompasses ritual, moral cultivation and the social order that binds communities together. *Zhi*, meaning "restraint", suggests the wisdom to recognize limits and exercise self-discipline. Together, they imply that civilization reaches its highest expression not through the pursuit of power, but through the ability to temper military might with moral restraint and imperial ambition with cultural understanding.

"Alexander's greatest achievement may not have been the lands he conquered, but the world of exchange that emerged from them and outlived him — a reminder that civilizations endure not through expansion alone, but through their capacity to transform power into connection," Ren says.

Prominence of queens

One striking example of this cultural synthesis is a gold coin minted in Alexandria in the name of the deified Queen Arsinoe II Philadelphos.

After Alexander's death in 323 BC, his empire was divided among his generals, one of whom, Ptolemy I Soter, founded the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt. Arsinoe is depicted wearing a draped Greek-style head covering and a royal headband (diadem) associated with Hera while holding a lotus-tipped scepter that evokes Egyptian royal iconography.

By equating her marriage to her brother Ptolemy II — the Ptolemaic dynasty is famous for sibling marriage within the royal family — with the sacred union of Zeus and Hera, the coin transformed dynastic politics into divine mythology, weaving Greek and Egyptian traditions together to legitimize royal authority.

The influence of Ptolemaic queens extended well beyond royal portraiture. Two pairs of gold sphinx earrings demonstrate how female authority reshaped one of Egypt's oldest royal symbols. Traditionally depicted as male and embodying the divine authority of the pharaoh, the sphinx gradually assumed female form during the Ptolemaic period, likely reflecting the growing prominence of queens such as Arsinoe II. One remarkable earring depicts a wingless sphinx wearing the Hathor crown with its solar disc and cow's horns — an unmistakably Egyptian emblem — rendered with the refined craftsmanship of a Hellenistic goldsmith. Rather than replacing Egyptian tradition, the Ptolemies reinterpreted it, creating a new visual language of female power.

The same spirit of cultural synthesis found expression in another defining motif of Hellenistic jewelry: Dionysus. According to Greek curator Irini Papageorgiou, his growing popularity may have reflected the prominence of his cult at the Ptolemaic court, though his appeal reached far beyond royal fashion.

In the Orphic tradition, the infant Dionysus, or Zagreus, was slain by the Titans and reborn, making him a symbol of regeneration and immortality. The Dionysian Mysteries, unusually open to women, likewise promised initiates that death was not an end but a new beginning.

It is therefore no coincidence that ivy leaves, grape clusters and vines — emblems of Dionysus — adorn Hellenistic wreaths, earrings and necklaces. Yet, the exhibition reveals a side of the god less familiar to many Chinese audiences. Along the ancient Silk Roads, Dionysus is best known as the god of wine, appearing on silver vessels and luxury wares that testify to the spread of Mediterranean drinking culture eastward. The jewelry tells a different story. Here, his symbols evoke marriage, fertility, death and renewal, revealing Dionysus not simply as the god of celebration, but as a guardian of life's greatest transformations.

A stolen necklace

Asked to choose the exhibition's most compelling storytelling object, Papageorgiou points instead to a humble lead curse tablet from the small Greek island of Delos. Dating to the late Hellenistic or early Roman period, it preserves the desperate plea of a woman who, seeing that her gold necklace had been stolen, calls upon both local and foreign gods and goddesses to expose and punish everyone involved. Her curse is relentless, condemning the thief's mind, soul, limbs, hands, fingers, and even genitalia, whether the culprit was "woman or man".

"The curse she directs at the thief is terrifying, yet it also highlights the deep emotional bond between a piece of jewelry and its owner — a connection that I believe is timeless," Papageorgiou says. "Reading her words, I feel as if I am hearing the innermost thoughts of any woman, from any era, whose most cherished possession has been stolen."

The impulse to protect what is precious transcends cultures, Ren observes. When archaeologists opened the early seventh-century tomb of the 9-year-old noble girl Li Jingxun in Xi'an in 1957, they found four stark characters carved onto her coffin: "*kai guan ji si*" (Whoever opens the coffin will die).

The Hellenistic gold exhibition was deliberately designed so that visitors leaving *Art in Gold* step directly into another exhibition devoted to China's ritual bronzes, Ren explains. Known as *jijin*, or "auspicious metal", these bronzes date from the Shang and Zhou dynasties (c. 16th century BC-256 BC).

"*Ji* means 'auspicious', while *jin*, though now commonly understood as 'gold', originally referred broadly to metal — in this case, bronze," she says.

Serving as sacred mediators between the living and their ancestors, the vessels bear inscriptions documenting political events, military campaigns, ritual ceremonies and family histories, forming some of the earliest written records of Chinese civilization.

"The juxtaposition of the two exhibitions is intended as a dialogue between ancient civilizations," Ren says.

"At first glance, Hellenistic gold jewelry and China's ritual bronzes belong to entirely different worlds: one intimate and wearable, the other monumental and ceremonial. Yet, both transformed precious metal into a vessel of memory.

"Hellenistic gold accompanied individuals through marriage, worship and death, preserving personal identity, affection and the hope of renewal. China's ritual bronzes, by contrast, embodied collective memory and ritual authority, sustaining the bonds between the living, their ancestors and the state. Together, they reveal a shared human impulse to fashion enduring objects that bridge the living and the dead, the earthly and the sacred, and the fleeting moment with the permanence of history."

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When adornments became symbols of love and loss

By ZHAO XU

Long before she became a wife, she first became a bride. On a fourth-century BC Attic vase displayed at the Shaanxi History Museum, a young woman sits at the center of the Epaulia — the celebration held the day after a wedding. Around her, female companions gather as fairies and doves present gifts: a diadem, a bracelet and a necklace. She wears a myrtle wreath, earrings and bracelets, while delicate buttons adorn her garment. Rendered in gilded applied clay, these ornaments shimmer not merely as embellishments, but as symbols of identity, affection and expectation.

More than two millennia later, they provide a fitting introduction to *Art in Gold: Jewellery in Hellenistic Times*, an exhibition that tells the story of Hellenistic gold through the lives of the women who wore it.

Yet, the vase tells another, quieter story. Excavated from the eastern cemetery of Pella in ancient Macedonia, it had served as a funerary urn. Inside were the cremated remains of a young girl, together with part of a gilded bronze myrtle wreath — the very kind depicted in the painted wedding scene — and a silver bracelet so small it could only have belonged to someone who died before reaching marriageable age.

According to Irini Papageorgiou, curator of the exhibition, the painted Epaulia became a final act of remembrance, allowing in death what life had denied.

"The ancient Greeks regarded the death of an unmarried girl as the greatest possible misfortune, since she was deprived of fulfilling her social and biological destiny — that is, marriage and motherhood," she says.

The belief found one of its most enduring literary expressions in *Antigone*, the tragedy by fifth-century BC playwright Sophocles. Betrothed yet never married, Antigone laments that she is destined not for a bridal chamber but for a tomb, with death rather than a mortal husband claiming her as his bride. As in the painted Epaulia on the Pella vase, marriage and death become two rites of passage that tragically converge.

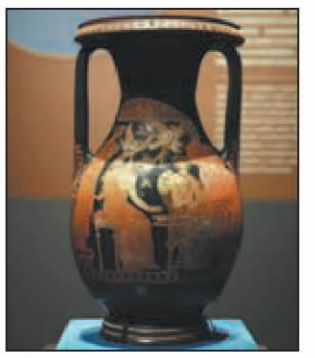
"In Hellenistic times, it was believed that the souls of those who had suffered untimely deaths — before marrying and having children — were unable to complete their passage to the Underworld," Papageorgiou says. "Instead, they wandered restlessly between the worlds of the living and the dead. Specific grave goods, including certain types of jewelry, together with particular burial rituals, were intended to assist their passage into the afterlife and appease their anger."

One such object is the Heracles knot, an ornamental motif of two interlocking loops resembling a reef knot. Originating in Egypt in the second millennium BC and later associated with the lion skin of Heracles, it became especially popular in Macedonia after Alexander the Great's conquests, appearing prominently on necklaces and other adornments worn by women.

Its appeal lay in the convergence of politics, mythology and popular belief. For the Macedonian royal house, which traced its lineage to Heracles, the knot evoked heroic virtue and divine ancestry. Yet it also functioned as a protective amulet. As a Greek hero believed to have attained Mount Olympus, Heracles offered those buried with his knot the hope that death itself might be overcome.

Another revealing category of ornaments is the *periammata*, chains or straps worn diagonally across the torso or fastened over the breast. Depicted on mortal maidens as well as goddesses such as Athena, Artemis and Aphrodite, the term derives from the Greek verb *periapto* — "to bind" or "to fasten". More than decoration, it served as an amulet, a marker of virginity and perhaps a symbolic restraint before marriage. Similar meanings attached to thigh-bands and garters dedicated by adolescent girls in sanctuaries as they approached adulthood. For those who died before crossing that threshold, such bonds acquired an even deeper resonance.





A fourth-century BC Attic vase (above) depicts a wedding scene featuring a young woman adorned with a gold wreath — a similar wreath (center) is on display at the Xi'an exhibition. Another highlight is an elaborate diadem (top) with its central part crafted as a Heracles knot.

Another exhibit, a terracotta figurine of a seated young woman with movable arms, wears a painted diadem and earrings that imitate gold jewelry. Unearthed in Pella and dating to the third or second century BC, it belongs to a type known as *plangona* — jointed dolls or puppets. More than playthings, these figures accompanied girls from childhood to the threshold of marriage and were often dedicated to the gods before a wedding. Buried in tombs, they became poignant reminders of lives interrupted before that final rite of passage.

Also associated with the prenuptial stage of life are the astragals, or knucklebones, which evoke a game of erotic divination once played with the knucklebones of sheep or goats. Papageorgiou explains that astragalus-shaped ornaments imitate the tarsal bone of mammals, believed in antiquity to possess protective and healing powers. Their frequent appearance in the graves of young women and children suggests they served as amulets, safeguarding their owners through life's most vulnerable transitions.

The spinning top, also found in the burials of Hellenistic women, similarly united play with symbolism. Its ceaseless whirl may have metaphorically expressed a bride's transformation while foreshadowing the course of her future life.

Perhaps the most emotionally evocative objects in the exhibition are the gold wreaths, like the one worn by the young woman depicted on the fourth-century BC Attic vase.

Accompanying their owners through life's defining moments — marriage, coming of age, religious initiation, and, ultimately, death — these exquisitely crafted crowns of myrtle, oak, laurel, and ivy adorned aristocrats, priests, victors, and initiates in sacred mysteries, signifying an individual's place within the social and spiritual order of the Hellenistic world. Yet it was in the funerary sphere that they acquired their deepest significance.

"Relatives gave the deceased, among others, a wreath as to those who had competed in life, reflecting a concept that assimilated the deceased to an athlete. Since the athletic ideal in antiquity was closely associated with the concept of virtue, this idea carries profound moral content," says the curator, referring to an ancient commentary on the works of the Athenian comic playwright Aristophanes (c. 446-386 BC).

Plutarch, in his *Moralia*, states that the deceased deserved to be rewarded, having competed like athletes, and to receive the honors due to them. In other words, placing a wreath upon the dead was, perhaps, to proclaim that life itself had been a contest worthy of honor. Like victorious athletes, the departed were believed to have completed their earthly struggle and earned the final reward: vindication, remembrance, and the hope of eternal life among the virtuous.

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LIFE





From left: Chaozhou (in Guangdong province)-style preserved olives with abalone; oyster sauce; wild mushrooms from Yunnan province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinese food is the world's oyster

Documentary follows the pursuit of *xian* among chefs, scientists and families, from mountains to sea, and from East to West, **Li Yingxue** reports.

In Fujian, an oyster has many lives. Layered with cabbage, laver and slices of pork, then coated in rice batter and fried, it becomes a golden, crispy oyster fritter. Dropped into a bowl of *laohua*, a local rice-noodle soup, it adds another layer of briny sweetness.

As China's largest oyster-producing province, Fujian has developed many methods of preparing the humble shellfish, from frying and boiling to steaming and more. But the oyster is only one chapter in China's long pursuit of *xian*, a culinary ideal encompassing umami, freshness and a broader sense of savory deliciousness.

Generations of Chinese chefs have transformed nature's bounty through accumulated knowledge, heat and time.

Now streaming on Tencent Video, *Oyster Sauce: A Drop of Umami* is China's first food and culinary culture documentary devoted to oyster sauce, taking *xian* as the starting point for a journey across mountains and seas.

Produced by Tencent Video and co-produced by DOClabs Beijing, the documentary traces the history of oyster farming, the origins of oyster sauce and the evolution of regional flavors, while exploring how Chinese cuisine has traveled around the world.

Through fishermen, chefs, scientists, and families, the series traces Chinese food culture across generations.

"When we make food documentaries, we often use something delicious as a pretext, hoping that audiences will see richer and various ways of living," says Chen Xiaoqing, the documentary's chief producer.

"What we really hope people will learn is why people eat certain foods, why they love certain flavors, and how much love, craftsmanship and time go into creating them."

The first episode begins deep in the Cangshan Mountains in Dali, Yunnan province, where an 11-year-old girl follows her grandfather into the forest in search of black tiger's paw mushrooms.

Mushrooms have long been regarded in China as a mountain delicacy. Although ancient people did not understand the chemistry behind umami, generations of experience taught them to recognize the distinctive value of fungi. Modern food science has shown that free amino acids and taste-active nucleotides in mushrooms work together during cooking to create rich, complex flavors.

The camera then travels to Zhengzhou, Henan province, where a local restaurant offers another example of Chinese culinary ingenuity.

To make a broth that is both clear and flavorful, the cook finely minces chicken breast or lean pork, mixes it with water, and adds it to the boiling broth. The meat forms flocculent masses that absorb suspended particles, blood foam, excess fat, and other impurities.

Known in Chinese cooking as *saotang*, or "sweeping the broth", the technique appears to be an exercise in subtraction, but ultimately allows the broth's flavor to emerge with greater clarity.

From mushrooms in the mountains to broth in the Central Plains, the documentary repeatedly asks: Where does *xian* come from?

"We wanted to find out," says Zhu Lexian, the documentary's supervising producer. The production team uses the history of China's pursuit of *xian* as its narrative thread, exploring it across time and space.

"We start with fishermen by the sea, then follow the journey through harvesting and simmering, and eventually to people applying new technologies. Then we connect all these stories," Zhu says.

The search links culinary knowledge, cooking practices, production technology, and everyday life.

"Eastern and Western understandings of *xian* are different," Chen says at the documentary's premiere.

In his view, Western discussions of freshness often emphasize the original state and immediate quality of an ingredient. The Chinese idea of *xian*, by contrast, can refer to a more layered form of deliciousness created through cooking, fermentation, concentration, and time.

"Westerners can be very concrete in their approach to food, while Chinese culinary life can sometimes be more abstract," Chen says.






Top: Fishermen in Fuding, Fujian province, haul in oysters. **Left:** The poster of *Oyster Sauce: A Drop of Umami*. **Right:** The documentary's production team (from left) Chen Xiaoqing, Zhu Lexian and Li Jie share insights into the making of the series.

Chinese cooking, he explains, often allows ingredients to transform, extracting and reshaping their flavors before using them in other dishes.

Behind this is a broader philosophy of eating. Chinese cooks have continually explored how one flavor can bring out another, how heat and time can transform ingredients, and how flavors from mountains, fields and oceans can complement one another at the same table.

For the filmmakers, the central challenge was how to turn the intangible quality of *xian* into something viewers could see and imagine tasting.

"People cannot actually taste the food or experience its *xian* through the screen," says producer Li Jie. But visual and auditory stimuli can activate memories associated with taste.

"Rather than simply presenting flavor, we are stimulating people's senses and building connections between them, so their brains can fill in the taste," Li says.

The filmmakers found visual counterparts for flavor: the texture of ingredients, bubbling broth, rising steam, and the colors of finished dishes. Images such as a flower blossoming or honey dripping evoke sweetness and roasted aromas through visual association.

"First, you have to give *xian* something tangible to attach itself to. Second, you have to give it movement," Li says.

The documentary was filmed over about four months in nearly 20 Chinese cities and abroad. From coastal aquaculture farms and remote forests to neighborhood eateries and family kitchens, the camera sought to connect flavors with people.

A modern food factory became another important stop on the journey. The production team was struck by the complexity of its production lines, research systems and laboratories.

"We had never imagined that oyster sauce was made on such a complex production line," Li says. After seeing the raw materials, production process, and research and testing systems, the team realized that this side of food production was "particularly worth documenting".

While food documentaries often focus on flames, traditional utensils and the hands of craftspeople, *Oyster Sauce: A Drop of Umami* also turns automated production lines, laboratories and machinery into subjects.

"We wanted to use images to show the beauty of science, industry and order," Li says.

The documentary also follows Chinese culinary influences overseas.

In Thailand, celebrity chef Pichaya Soontornyanakij, known as Pam, opened her family home to the production team for the first time.

Pam's mother is of Chaozhou heritage, and the family's everyday meals combine Thai and Chinese influences. Her mother takes the production team to the market before the family prepares a meal together.

Chinese food culture is expressed not through overt symbols but through ingredients, seasonings and cooking habits.

"When I saw Chinese seasonings in a Thai family kitchen, and saw Thai and Chinese elements blended into their everyday meals, I felt the subtle influence of Chinese food culture," Li says.

Such cultural transmission is not simply a matter of taking a particular Chinese dish overseas. As people migrate, and trade and cultural exchanges expand, Chinese flavors enter new environments, interact with local ingredients and traditions, and develop new forms.

Flavor thus becomes a form of cultural memory. It can cross linguistic boundaries and be passed from one generation to the next.

As the camera moves from the sea to the dining table, the documentary reveals more than how a flavor is created. It shows how Chinese food culture evolves through inheritance and exchange, continuing to find new life as it travels.

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Time-honored pharmacy brings TCM to the modern age

In the bustling Dashilar area, a renowned tourist destination in downtown Beijing, Melvyn, a young man from Brussels, stepped into the Tong Ren Tang pharmacy, a time-honored brand with over 350 years of history.

This was Melvyn's second visit to China. Besides sightseeing, he intended to learn more about traditional Chinese medicine.

Accompanying him was Mana, a young lady from Pakistan, who was experiencing back pain and decided to seek relief while sightseeing. With the help of the store's staff, Mana quickly obtained the medicine she needed.

"I have a keen interest in TCM. I enjoy TCM massages and also like taking ginseng," said Mana.

Melvyn and Mana are among a growing number of young people from China and abroad who turn to TCM for health problems.

The Tong Ren Tang pharmacy, established in 1669, serves as a window for cultural exchange and knowledge in TCM.

The building itself retains its antiquated charm, with shelves inside the building stocked with an array of products.

Visitors can not only see a doctor, get prescriptions, and purchase medicine, but also buy nutritional supplements, food items, cosmetics, and herbal drinks.




Left: A pharmacist dispenses Chinese herbal medicine at a Tong Ren Tang pharmacy in Beijing on Feb 25, 2025. **Right:** A staff member displays Chinese herbal medicine drinks at a Tong Ren Tang branch on the same day. PHOTOS BY LI XIN / XINHUA

In the cosmetics section, Guo Haiyan, who oversees quality control, has introduced an anti-freckle cream, describing it as highly effective.

"We used to focus mainly on pharmaceuticals, but later we found that tourists to this area have a huge demand for cosmetics," she said.

She also pointed to incense sticks, noting that they have gained popularity abroad in recent years.

Herbal drinks are another distinctive offering. Tong Ren Tang has blended coffee with TCM ingredients to create beverages infused with herbal elements.

"Tourists can choose drinks suited to their body condition for health preservation," Guo said.

Near the beverage counter stands a wheel that visitors spin as part of a puzzle game to guess the names of TCM herbs based on photo prompts.

The store also sells TCM bracelets, sachets and other souvenirs that can be worn to help prevent ailments.

Children can try on *hanfu*, traditional Chinese attire, and experience TCM customs firsthand.

A tourist surnamed Lin from Guangdong province brought his family to Beijing during the summer vacation. They visited the third floor, which houses a TCM culture exhibition center and serves as a venue for educational tours. His son and daughter showed great interest in handling traditional pill-making tools and observing various plant specimens.

An on-site virtual reality display allows visitors to don headsets and watch immersive demonstrations of how these tools were used to make pills in the past.

"Just like making tiny glutinous rice balls, the TCM practitioner adds water and herbal powder and shakes the mixture back and forth. It takes about 40 minutes to complete the process," Guo said. "Factories usually have specialized machines for this, but we have preserved the traditional method here."

At the TCM digital health cabin, visitors can use machines for basic health check-ups. They can also see a doctor for further diagnosis.

On nearby tables, paper and pigments — the latter made from TCM herbs or minerals — are available for children to paint. They can also use TCM herbs and cloth to craft their own sachets.

Guo said that since the summer vacation began, the center has seen an influx of children.

There are many such TCM experiential centers across China. In Cangzhou, Hebei province, just over two hours' drive from Beijing, some schools have herbal gardens to help children learn about medicinal plants. In Chengdu, Sichuan province, Tianfu Medicine City attracts many enthusiasts from both home and abroad.

Back in Beijing, just a few minutes' walk from Dashilar, a smart health experience center at the Beijing Fun complex offers visitors exercise routines similar to *baduanjin* — a traditional form of *qigong*. The complex is a branch of Tong Ren Tang. Visitors can also use AI-powered machines that integrate TCM wisdom with large language models for health consultations.

"We aim to create a showcase for TCM culture. New technologies help us do a better job in promoting TCM culture," said Guo.

XINHUA

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LIFE

Grandma behind the counter

At 86, Qingdao cafe owner has turned a struggling business into a place where coffee, companionship and purpose meet

A young woman arrives at Rona Coffee carrying a camera, having decided to feature its 86-year-old owner Zhao Qiying in a graduation documentary after seeing her online.

"If I can help young people, that is a good thing," Zhao says, before giving a customer entering the shop her customary greeting: "What would you like to drink?"

There is no printed menu inside the ground-floor storefront, located in an apartment building in Qingdao, a coastal city in East China's Shandong province.

Zhao points to a small whiteboard on the wall, where she has written the drinks and prices herself. She opens a notebook and records the order: "Matcha latte, hot, 25 yuan, WeChat Pay." Then she grinds the beans, steams the milk and carries the cup to the table.

The students helping the woman with her project begin filming. Off camera, they help Zhao carry cups and clear tables. Zhao lives only a 10-minute walk away from the cafe, yet the shop brings a much wider world to her door. She has also managed to turn a once-failing business into a success.

Residents from the surrounding neighborhood stop by for coffee. Students settle in with books. People from across China arrive after seeing Zhao online, some opening the door with the question, "Is Grandma here?"

Visitors from abroad have also found their way to the shop. When language becomes a barrier, Zhao points to the cups or asks a younger customer to interpret.

Customers have also suggested new additions to the menu, prompting her to learn how to make avocado, hazelnut and ice-cream coffees.

Zhao accepts mobile payments, but the orders still go into a handwritten ledger.

"I can't figure out those electronic ordering systems," she says. "Writing it down feels more reliable."

Zhao's decision to take over the cafe began not with a passion for coffee, but with a practical goal — the fully equipped shop should not simply be abandoned.

Her son had opened the cafe under a franchise more than a decade ago, spending more than 400,000 yuan ($58,900) on renovations, equipment and furniture. Zhao says the franchise arrangement later fell apart. With few customers and the business running at a loss, her son considered closing the shop in 2014.

Zhao, who had worked as an accountant at a Qingdao factory, looked at the furnished room and saw money already spent. "Wouldn't all that work go to waste?" she recalls asking. "How about I try running the place?"

She was then 74 and had never tasted coffee.



Zhao Qiying (left) chats with a customer at Rona Coffee in Qingdao, East China's Shandong province, on June 15. PHOTOS BY ZHANG LIYUAN / XINHUA



Zhao serves coffee at Rona Coffee in Qingdao.

Her first cup struck her as bitter. To her, different types of coffee seemed to differ only in how bitter they were. Still, she became familiar with the coffee machine button by button, replaying online videos and writing each step in a notebook.

Milk foam and latte art were the hardest skills to master. Unwilling to keep wasting cartons of milk, Zhao mixed laundry detergent with water to imitate milk foam and diluted soy sauce to stand in for espresso. She practiced with the two liquids at home every day. Within six months, she could pour a decent heart shape.

For years, Rona Coffee sold only 20 or 30 cups a day. Online attention changed that. Zhao now makes 50 or 60 cups on an ordinary weekday and as many as 70 or 80 during holidays. The cafe, where she is both the licensed proprietor and the only worker, now turns a profit.

The attention has also changed who comes through the door and how customers interact with Zhao. One wall is covered in notes praising her coffee and wishing her good health. Seeing her busy at work, regulars sometimes offer to collect their own drinks. If a latte-art pattern goes wrong, Zhao tries to keep the cup for herself, but customers usually reassure her that it still looks and tastes good.

"They tell me it looks good even when it doesn't, and I know they are sometimes just trying to make me happy," she says. "The kinder they are to me, the less I can afford to be careless. I have to take every cup seriously."

Younger people have also left their mark on the cafe. Zhao's grandson refreshed its playlist, while customers encouraged her to add new drinks. Zhao, in turn, gives them a place to study, talk or simply spend time. Some confide in her about breakups or failed attempts to lose weight. She offers a few words of comfort and marvels at the sheer variety of troubles young people encounter.

A longtime customer, Wang Xintian, says Zhao feels less like a shopkeeper and more like a familiar elder.

Zhao works about 10 hours a day. She gets tired, but says being idle would not necessarily feel any better. Before taking over the cafe, she imagined retirement as chores, errands and television. Life with the shop, she says, turned out very differently.

"Every morning, I know why I am getting up," she says. "At the cafe, I know what I have to do. When I go home after work, I know I have something to look forward to the next day."

Her son now often comes by for coffee. Zhao likes to joke that the cafe he once wanted to close has made him a regular.

Twelve years later, coffee remains bitter to her. But the 10-minute walk from home has opened onto a larger world of work, companionship and daily purpose.

The coffee, Zhao says, is "still just different degrees of bitterness".

Her days are not.

XINHUA

Fishing heritage finds a new shore

HAIKOU — When the tide retreats at Tanmen, people go after it. During the fishing town's summer beachcombing season, visitors spread across the exposed shore. Locals call the activity *ganhai* — literally, going out to "catch the sea".

This year's festival features a beachcombing treasure hunt, a fishermen's market, a long seafood dinner and intangible cultural heritage performances, turning traditions of an old fishing community into experiences visitors can join.

A tourist surnamed Hu from East China's Jiangsu province had been traveling with her family in Sanya when she heard about the festival and made a detour to Tanmen. "It was my first time watching the fishing fleet set out. It was spectacular," she says, adding that she plans to take her child *ganhai* and then visit the China (Hainan) Museum of the South China Sea.

The fleet she came to see belongs to a much less leisurely world. Tanmen is home to 86 medium and large fishing vessels, most weighing between 400 and 500 metric tons. At noon on Aug 16, when the summer fishing moratorium ended, firecrackers sounded over the harbor and hundreds of boats streamed toward the South China Sea.

For generations, fishing families preserved their knowledge of sea routes in handwritten sailing manuals known as Geng Lu Bu. The books recorded routes, island and reef features, positions and bearings; a *geng* was roughly equivalent to 10 nautical miles. Together, they turned hard-earned experience into practical guides for long voyages.

For three and a half months each summer, however, much of the fishing activity comes to a halt. This year's summer moratorium in designated South China Sea waters ran from noon on May 1 to noon on Aug 16.

Seasonal closures are also part of the region's fisheries-management tool kit. In its Thailand country profile, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations describes area and seasonal closures in the Gulf of Thailand imposed mainly for the recovery of Indo-Pacific mackerel, with restrictions on trawlers and purse seiners during designated periods.

The larger boats' return to sea is only one part of Tanmen's fishing economy. Closer to shore, a recreational-fishing pier serves smaller leisure vessels.

This summer, tourists have flocked to Tanmen Port and nearby fishing villages for *ganhai* and waterside sightseeing. Visitors have also stopped in Paigang village beside the harbor and visited the Geng Lu Bu museum, where sailing knowledge passed down through generations of fishermen is preserved.

The shift is also showing up in local livelihoods. More than 500 traditional fishermen in Tanmen have moved into leisure- and tourism-related work. More than 400 fishermen have formed five recreational-fishing cooperatives, and the town's recreational-fishery output value topped 100 million yuan ($14.87 million) in 2025.



An aerial view of fishing boats heading out to sea from Tanmen Port in Qionghai, South China's Hainan province. PU XIAOXU / XINHUA

Paigang village now has 13 fishermen's homestays, along with businesses offering sea angling, snorkeling and beachcombing. At the harbor, a 310-meter wharf dedicated to recreational fishing can accommodate 19 leisure fishing boats at a time.

Li Zhi, Party chief of Tanmen town, says the harbor upgrade is intended to serve both traditional fishing and the growing recreational sector, with leisure boats used for sightseeing and sea angling.

The result is a waterfront where commercial fishing and recreational activities increasingly sit side by side, widening the ways local residents make a living from the sea.

Fishing life also reaches shore through food and ritual. Tanmen's catches include Spanish mackerel, grouper, squid, sea cucumber and conch. This year's beachcombing season — the town's 12th — brings local traditions together with performances ranging from Hainan's carp-lantern performance to 24 Festive Drums, Indonesian folk songs and Thai finger dancing.

Before long voyages, another tradition comes into view: a ceremony honoring the Xiongdi Gong, also known as the "108 Brothers". Dating back to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the ritual was traditionally performed by Hainan fishermen before long-distance fishing and trading voyages in the South China Sea.

It was included in the fifth batch of China's national list of representative items of intangible cultural heritage in 2021. The official heritage record says its community of practitioners later expanded beyond fishermen to include people from Hainan living in Southeast Asia and elsewhere around the world.

Hainan itself is opening wider. This is the island's first summer since the Hainan Free Trade Port began island-wide special customs operations on Dec 18, 2025. In the first half of 2026, Hainan recorded 1.6 million inbound and outbound passenger trips, including 883,000 by foreign nationals.

Local officials say foreign guests visiting nearby Boao for the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference also make their way to Tanmen, where volunteers provide foreign-language services at major visitor sites during the forum.

Inside Tanmen's Geng Lu Bu museum, handwritten manuals preserve old sailing knowledge. Outside, commercial boats leave for fishing grounds, families head to the shore for *ganhai*, and smaller boats take visitors out with rods. The water is the same; there are simply more ways now to know it — and to make a living from it.

XINHUA

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SPORTS

SOCCER

Mourinho decries alleged bullying of Vinicius

'Special One' goes to bat for his star player, claiming Brazilian was targeted during Madrid's win over Espanyol

Real Madrid manager Jose Mourinho accused opponents and supporters of bullying Vinicius Jr, after the Brazil winger was targeted with rough treatment in the club's opening 2-1 La Liga win at Espanyol on Saturday.

Real, which kicked off Mourinho's return to the club with a late victory, was furious inside the opening five minutes when Alex Calatrava brought down Vinicius from behind and then appeared to catch him again while the forward was on the ground.

Madrid's players appealed for a red card, but the referee took no action against Calatrava, who later scored Espanyol's equalizer after Jude Bellingham had put Real ahead.

Late Real substitute Carlos Espi struck in the 90th minute to give the visitor the victory.

Mourinho said the treatment of Vinicius had become a recurring theme.

"Vinicius is no saint, but what they were doing to him was too much. Right from the first minute. It's a pattern that repeats itself from one opponent to the next," Mourinho said.

"I'll give him one, now you give him one. If I get a yellow card, you give him one. If I'm substituted, another player comes on who hasn't been booked yet, and you give him one."

The Portuguese coach said Vinicius, who has often been the focus of abuse from rival defenders and crowds, needed to stay composed despite the provocation.

"He needs to have a lot of emotional control. I've told him that if he scores a goal, he needs to be careful how he celebrates it," Mourinho said.

> "Vinicius is no saint, but what they were doing to him was too much. Right from the first minute. It's a pattern that repeats itself from one opponent to the next."
>
> **Jose Mourinho,** Real Madrid manager

"We're in an era where society is against bullying, yet, with Vini, we're still seeing bullying from opponents and from the crowd. We have to educate him and prepare him as best we can, and that's it."

The controversy also carried echoes of last season, when Mourinho was Benfica manager and Vinicius was subjected to discriminatory abuse by Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni during a Champions League match against Real Madrid.

Prestianni was later handed a six-match suspension by UEFA for discriminatory conduct that was deemed to be homophobic in nature.

Mourinho was heavily criticized at the time for defending Prestianni, saying Vinicius had incited the crowd with his goal celebrations, and Benfica was anything but racist because the Portuguese club's greatest player, Eusebio, was also Black.

With Vinicius opting to stay at the Bernabeu, signing a contract extension earlier this month, Mourinho insisted in the Spanish media that the Brazilian now knows his coach is on his side.

He told Spanish outlet AS last week: "Prestianni was my player. That's it. Twenty players can come at me, and I'm still (with my player). I think Vini knows now ... he can look at me and count on me to stand alongside him."

Espi grabs the glory

Bellingham opened the scoring, and new signing Espi secured the points at the death, starting Mourinho's second spell at the club with last-minute win.

"I think that we deserved to win, but Espanyol didn't deserve to lose," Mourinho told reporters.

"They didn't have any players at the World Cup and have been working together for a long time, and you could see that."

Back in charge of Madrid 13 years after leaving, the Portuguese veteran must bring the dressing room under control after the chaos of last season, and, much like his last stint at the Bernabeu, he has been tasked with ending Barcelona's domestic dominance.

Mourinho started his superstars Kylian Mbappe, Vinicius and Bellingham, as well as handing debuts to Bernardo Silva, Denzel Dumfries and Ibrahima Konate.

Bellingham had an excellent first season at Madrid after arriving from Borussia Dortmund, but the subsequent two were disappointing, both for him and the club, which failed to win a major trophy in either.

Mourinho installed him in attacking midfield with licence to roam, and England's World Cup star was heavily involved before netting the first goal of Mourinho's second tenure, heading home Arda Guler's dangerously crossed freekick.

Espanyol threatened midway through the first half, as Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois beat away Clemens Riedel's drive and Roberto Fernandez hooked a shot over the bar shortly afterwards.

Madrid did not heed the warning and Espanyol leveled in the 30th minute, Calatrava slotting home a Javi Hernandez cut-back after a fine team move.

Espanyol stopper Marko Dmitrovic made a good save to deny Mbappe after he got in behind on the right of the area.

The French forward, La Liga's top scorer in both of his two seasons at Madrid, was not at his lethal best.

Mourinho sent on two more new arrivals in the form of record signing Yan Diomande and Marc Cucurella, as Madrid sought a winner.

Federico Valverde hit the outside of the post with a low effort from the edge of the box, as Espanyol dug deep to deny Madrid. However, in the 90th minute, Madrid found the goal it needed when former Levante striker Espi, the lowest profile purchase for Los Blancos this summer, capitalized on a loose ball in the box and fired home.

"We carried out our plan well and then let in that goal at the end," said Calatrava.

"That was a gut-punch."

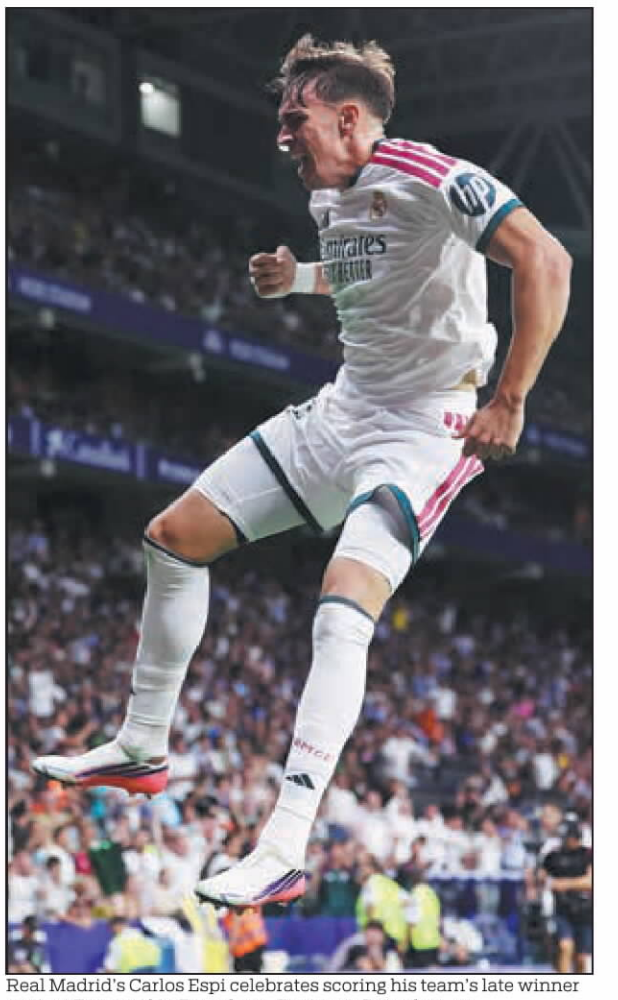
AGENCIES



Jude Bellingham celebrates scoring Madrid's opening goal against Espanyol at RCDE Stadium in Barcelona, Spain, on Saturday. AFP



Real Madrid's head coach Jose Mourinho gestures during his side's 2-1 La Liga win over Espanyol in Barcelona on Saturday. AP



Real Madrid's Carlos Espi celebrates scoring his team's late winner against Espanyol in Barcelona, Spain, on Saturday. AFP

Carrick calm despite United loss, while De Zerbi's big-spending Spurs get thrashed



Manchester United's Matheus Cunha reacts during his side's 2-0 Premier League loss to newly promoted Hull on Saturday. REUTERS



Tottenham Hotspur coach Roberto De Zerbi looks dejected during his side's 3-0 Premier League loss to Brentford on Saturday. REUTERS

Michael Carrick insisted he would not blast his Manchester United flops, despite a dismal 2-0 defeat away to Hull in their opening game of the Premier League season, while big-spending Tottenham slumped to an embarrassing 3-0 away loss to Brentford.

Carrick's side was rocked by first half goals from Semi Ajayi and Nobel Mendy at the MKM Stadium on Saturday.

Hull, which is back in the Premier League for the first time since 2017, was without 10 players due to injury, but still put woeful United to the sword with a vibrant display.

It was a chastening start for United, which many expected to mount a title challenge after finishing third last term.

There was scant evidence that United is capable of going toe to toe with champion Arsenal.

But the stoic Carrick was determined to keep his composure and to avoid the kind of emotional outburst that helped doom his predecessor Ruben Amorim to the sack last season.

"We came here to win, so to not take anything away is hugely disappointing. It is not a nice feeling, but it is not going to change our direction as a team or a club," Carrick said.

"You have to carry on as normal. We just don't all have to shout and scream and create some chaos. Calmness doesn't mean there is not emotion."

United finished the game with 72 percent possession, but it felt like possession without purpose.

Center-back Harry Maguire was among their most threatening attacking outlets.

Bryan Mbeumo forced one of the few meaningful saves from Konstantinos Tzolakis, but Hull's goalkeeper was otherwise little more than a spectator.

Even Marcus Rashford's long-awaited return could not spark a comeback.

Making his first United appearance since December 2024 after his exile under Amorim and loan spells at Aston Villa and Barcelona, Rashford showed flashes of sharpness, but received precious little service.

For Hull, it was a first league victory over United in 52 years.

For Carrick, it was a reminder that momentum is fragile.

Familiar collapse

Tottenham, meanwhile, has splashed out over 200 million pounds ($272 million) in a bid to improve a squad that narrowly avoided relegation to the Championship on the final day of last season.

But Spurs' lavish close-season spending failed to disguise the side's familiar shortcomings.

Roberto De Zerbi gave debuts to four of his new recruits as Sandro Tonali, Andy Robertson, Marcos Senesi and Jan Paul van Hecke all started, while the 85 million-pound Mateus Fernandes came off the bench in the second half.

But Brentford, offered another example of what continuity and smart recruitment can achieve, looking cohesive and confident despite operating on a fraction of Tottenham's budget.

The Bees swarmed west London with a dynamic display that exposed the flaws in the visitor's costly rebuilding plan.

Keane Lewis-Potter and Vitaly Janelt netted for Keith Andrews' side in the first half, before Michael Kayode struck after the interval.

It could have been even worse for Tottenham, as Igor Thiago missed a penalty that would have put Brentford four goals up.

"I am sorry for the defeat. I know we have to improve in our physical condition and the organization. There were many new players, but it was the first game. It's part of our journey," De Zerbi said.

Bolstered by impressive record signing Mamadou Sangare, who set up the second goal for Janelt, Brentford looked capable of surpassing last season's ninth-placed finish.

Spurs, meanwhile, looked bereft of ideas and were comprehensively outplayed and outfought, failing to register a shot on target in the first half.

Italian De Zerbi saved Tottenham from the drop in his seven games in charge last season and has been handsomely backed.

Brazilian winger Savinho is expected to arrive from Manchester City to bolster the attack.

City forward Omar Marmoush is also being pursued.

Yet, however many players Spurs bring in, De Zerbi knows the basics must be addressed to make progress.

"We lost and suffered the difference in the duels. It was the key of this game. We didn't fight in the right way," De Zerbi said.

"Our physical condition was not at the right level for all players, because many came later after the World Cup and there were many new players in the squad and starting lineup.

"But we have to analyze this game better, because we can't play this way in this type of game."

Sage suffers

Pierre Sage, Crystal Palace's new French manager, endured a miserable start in a 2-0 loss at Everton.

Under Sage's predecessor Oliver Glasner, the Eagles won the FA Cup in 2025 and the UEFA Conference League last season.

But Glasner left for Nottingham Forest in the summer, with Sage hired after leading Lens to a second-place finish in Ligue 1 and a French Cup triumph last season.

Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall gave Everton the lead against the run of play in the 42nd minute.

Thierno Barry added to Sage's misery with a bullet header from Iliman Ndiaye's 53rd minute cross.

AGENCIES

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Dishing out a hit
Chinese film on war uses food as symbol of harmony
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Nepal safari ruling sparks job worries
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Smart logistics
AI-powered robots, systems help reshape country's parcel network
CHINA, PAGE 12

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2026

Xi reiterates China's Mideast peace stance

Importance of two-state solution emphasized at meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan

By **CAO DESHENG**
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President Xi Jinping reiterated on Monday China's position on the political settlement of the Middle East issue with the Palestinian question at its core, urging efforts to push for the resumption of talks between Palestine and Israel based on the two-state solution and the early establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Xi made the remarks during his talks with King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein in Beijing. The Jordanian monarch was on a weeklong state visit to China, which concluded on Monday.

Xi emphasized that China has consistently advocated a comprehensive ceasefire, cessation of hostilities and the resolution of disputes through political and diplomatic means, and it maintains that the sovereignty and security of countries in the region, including Jordan, should be respected.

Noting that the principle of "the Palestinians governing Palestine" must be upheld, Xi said that Palestine is the home of all Palestinians, and this principle should be implemented in advancing the governance of the West Bank and postwar reconstruction of Gaza.

He stressed the need to adhere to humanitarianism, with the international community, especially the United Nations Security Council, taking responsibility for protecting the safety of civilians, ensuring humanitarian aid and preventing humanitarian disasters.

Xi called for upholding fairness and justice, following international law, addressing both symptoms and root causes, and taking pragmatic actions to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question at an early date.

China values Jordan's unique and important role in the region and firmly supports it in safeguarding its national sovereignty, security and development interests, he added.

King Abdullah II expressed Jordan's high appreciation for China's fair stance on the Middle East issue as well as its support for the just cause of the Arab states, saying that China's just position is very important to countries in the region.

Jordan is willing to maintain close communication with China and continue making positive efforts to ease the current situation to enable the people of Middle East countries to enjoy peace and prosperity.

Regarding bilateral ties, Xi said that since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Jordan, both countries have consistently respected each other, treated each other as equals, and engaged in mutually beneficial cooperation, setting a vivid example of win-win cooperation and mutual learning between small and big countries with different social systems.

In the face of international and regional situations of turmoil and transformation, building a more substantial and dynamic China-Jordan relationship meets the common expectations of the two peoples and aligns with the trend of solidarity and self-strengthening among countries of the Global South, he said.

Xi called on both countries to promote their traditional friendship, enhance strategic mutual trust, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, strengthen multilateral coordination, and push for greater development of the China-Jordan strategic partnership to make positive contributions to regional peace, stability and prosperity.

China is willing to engage with Jordan at all levels of government, parties, legislative bodies and local exchanges, and to strengthen the exchange of governance experiences, he said.

Saying that the nature of China-Jordan cooperation is of mutual benefit and win-win, Xi underlined the need for both sides to further deepen the alignment of their development strategies, strengthen cooperation in traditional fields such as economy and trade, infrastructure construction, transportation and minerals, and expand new growth areas of partnership in digital economy, artificial intelligence and green energy.

China is willing to work with Jordan to implement the four global initiatives, strengthen coordination and cooperation in multilateral institutions such as the UN, jointly uphold an international system with the UN at its core and an international order governed by international law, and promote the building of a community with a shared future for humanity, he said.

King Abdullah II said China is a great country that has achieved remarkable and admirable development accomplishments under the leadership of President Xi.

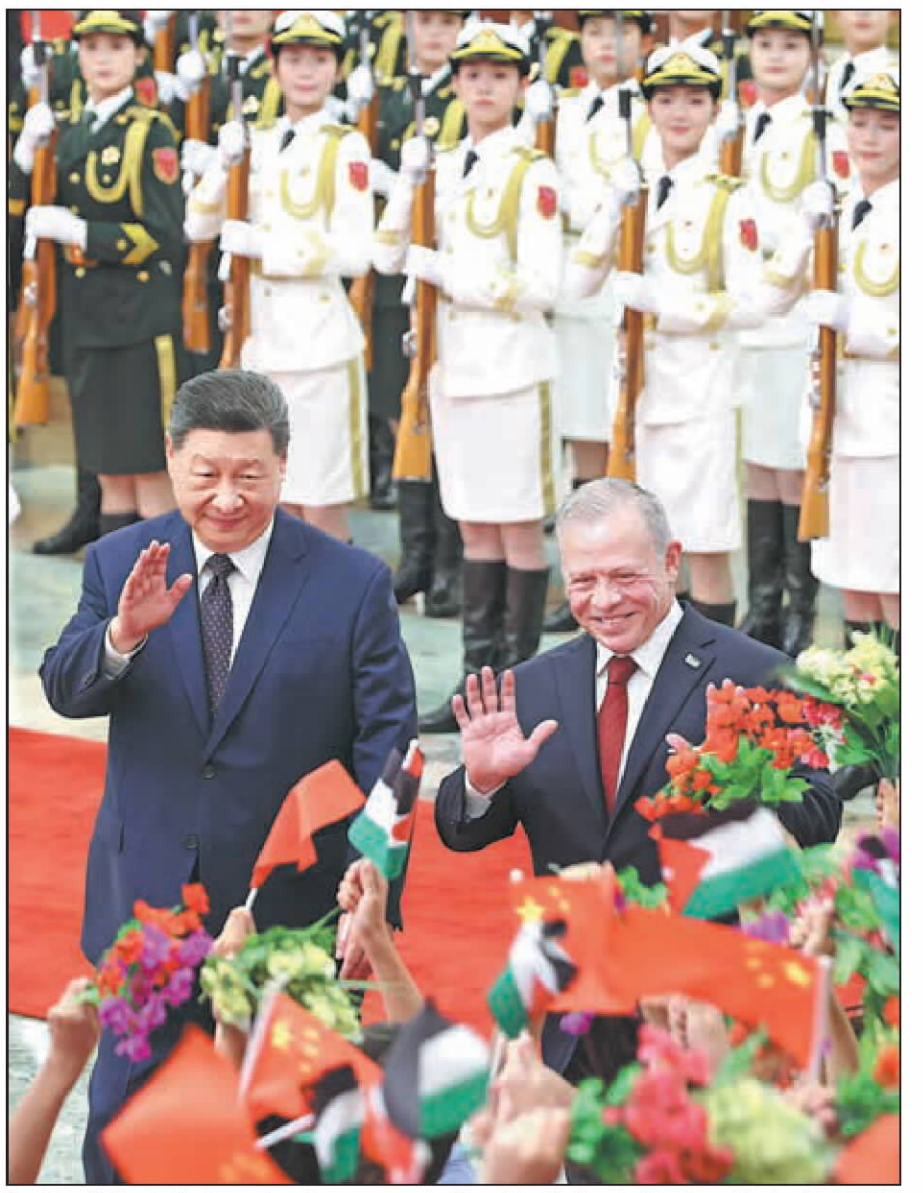
Jordan firmly adheres to the one-China policy, recognizing Taiwan as part of the Chinese territory, he said.

Noting that Jordan highly values its ties with China, he expressed his country's commitment to deepening cooperation and exchanges in areas such as economy and trade, manufacturing, agriculture, science and technology, medicine, culture and education.

He said that Jordan welcomes more investments from Chinese enterprises to achieve common development and prosperity.

Jordan highly appreciates the four global initiatives proposed by President Xi and looks forward to China playing a more significant leadership role on the world stage, he added.

The two leaders jointly witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation documents in fields such as diplomacy, economy and trade, supply chains and the judiciary. The two sides issued a joint statement on deepening the China-Jordan strategic partnership.



President Xi Jinping hosts a welcoming ceremony for King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein before their talks in Beijing on Monday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

WORLD WATCH
By Zhao Bing

Early action can help better tackle climate challenges

In July 2026, forecasts warned of severe flooding in Bangladesh's Bandarban district. Rather than waiting for conditions to worsen, the United Nations World Food Programme activated anticipatory action and shock-responsive social protection, reaching 75,000 people with cash assistance before flood risks intensified.

The support reached families while they still had time to prepare — helping them meet immediate needs, protect livelihoods and avoid falling deeper into crisis. This is the promise of anticipatory action: turning early warning into early response. The forecast could not stop the flooding, but it gave people power over their fear. It gave them time to act instead of just waiting.

The need to act early has never been more urgent. An estimated 645 million people faced hunger worldwide in 2025. Conflict, economic shocks and displacement continue to drive food insecurity in many of the world's most vulnerable countries, while the escalating crisis in the Middle East is adding further pressure through disruptions to trade, energy and food markets.

Against this already fragile backdrop, extreme weather is accelerating food insecurity. In 2025 alone, weather extremes were the primary driver of acute food insecurity in 16 countries and territories, affecting 87.5 million people.

The risks keep rising. A strong El Nino is developing, bringing the prospect of above-normal temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns, with greater drought risks in some regions and heavier flooding in others. For millions of smallholder farmers, these are not distant threats. They show up in stressed water supplies, uncertain planting seasons and growing concern over future harvests, which translate into heightened hunger risk. WFP's early analysis projects that this El Nino could push at least 49 million more people into acute food insecurity by the end of 2027.

But climate hazards differ from many other crises in one important respect: Increasingly, we can see them coming.

Advances in forecasting and early-warning systems give us days, weeks or sometimes months to prepare.

See ***Crises,*** *page 3*

Warm welcome



China's green hero Yin Yuzhen welcomes Ronald Sakolsky, a retired teacher from the United States who supported her cause 27 years ago, to her home in Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, on Monday. SUN RUIBO / XINHUA **See story, page 3**

Chipmaker's turnaround shows resilience

By **MA SI**
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Nexperia China's remarkable turnaround from a Dutch-imposed supply cutoff to successful local production in less than 11 months highlights the resilience of China's semiconductor industrial chain amid mounting challenges, said corporate executives and experts.

Their remarks came as Nexperia China held a global product launch on Sunday afternoon in Shanghai, marking the first collective public appearance of the company's core management team since it was lobbed into a crisis late last year.

"We are back!" said John Chang, CEO of Nexperia China, adding that the company is now approaching 100 percent local semiconductor production.

In October 2025, the Netherlands government intervened in the operations of Nexperia, a chipmaker owned by Chinese company Wingtech Technology, citing "national security" concerns. The intervention resulted in the sidelining of Wingtech. Weeks later, Nexperia's Dutch headquarters halted wafer supplies to the plant in China.

"Wafer supply was cut off. Systems went offline. Data from the overseas headquarters became inaccessible. We had orders, clients and trust — but no wafers to process," Chang recalled.

To overcome the challenge, Nexperia China made three crucial changes, the company said at Sunday's event.

First, it successfully spun off the China unit from the overseas Dutch headquarters to establish a fully independent operating system. Second, it secured local wafer suppliers and rebuilt a controllable supply chain. And third, by leveraging the 12-inch wafer platform of its strategic Chinese partners, it achieved a huge upgrade from 6-inch and 8-inch wafers to 12-inch process technologies.

The Nexperia plants in Europe are still mainly running on 6-inch and 8-inch wafers, but Nexperia China has achieved mass production on the 12-inch platform, Chang noted.

See ***Chips,*** *page 3*

BEAT THE HEAT WITH A COOL ADDITION TO YOUR WARDROBE

High-tech vests are finding new fans among outdoor enthusiasts and workers in the sweltering summer months

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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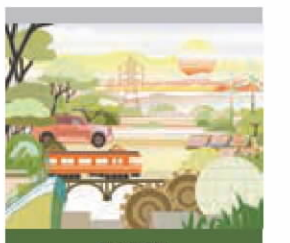
Summer is nearly over, but the heat hasn't loosened its grip. As the last of the season's hot days linger on, the battle against high temperatures has moved beyond sunscreen and iced drinks. For campers trekking mountain trails, cyclists logging long rides and anglers spending hours under the sun, a new piece of wearable technology is drawing attention: the cooling vest.

"It's like wearing a small electric fan inside your clothes," said an outdoor enthusiast surnamed Luo, who shared his experience on Chinese lifestyle platform Xiaohongshu, also known as RedNote, after wearing one while cycling. "As long as it's below 35 C, it works well. It's not an air-conditioner, but when you're moving around in this furnace-like weather, even a constant breeze makes a huge difference."

His experience reflects a growing market for wearable cooling technologies. The trend is emerging alongside the country's booming outdoor economy. Since 2019, participation in hiking, camping, cycling, trail running and fishing has surged.

Chris Sheng, founder of outdoor gear retailer Nomad Union, said: "In Zhejiang province, where our company is based, outdoor activities are almost suspended for nearly two months every summer because of the heat. These cooling vests borrow technology originally developed for industrial workers and adapt it for outdoor recreation, making summer activities much more comfortable."

See ***Tech,*** *page 3*



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INDEPTH







Above left: Tourists watch a courtyard show about the women's rescue association in the 1940s, one of the Red Sisters' story performances in Changshanzhuang village of Yinan county, Shandong province. ZHENG SHUPING / FOR CHINA DAILY **Top right:** Villagers from Beiliangjia in Qingdao, Shandong, take part in a short drama series. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Above right:** Children get immersed in the walk-through experience *Retrace the Frontline Supply Route* in Yinan county, Shandong. ZHENG SHUPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Lights, camera, tractors!

From short-drama videos to immersive performances and field poetry, rural communities are being energized through numerous cultural art forms

By ZHAO RUIXUE
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During the recent summer vacation, visitors followed local villagers along ancient lanes in Yinan county, Shandong province, joining a "supply team" bound for the front line.

The immersive *Retrace the Frontline Supply Route* performance in Changshanzhuang village was not staged in a theater. Instead, it took place in the same locations locals once hauled supplies along to support frontline troops during the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

Since its launch in October 2024, the performance has drawn tens of thousands of visitors.

"This is completely different from anything we've done before," said Sun Fangchao, a tourist from Jiangsu province.

"I think he'll be thrilled about this for a very long time," he said while watching his 11-year-old son who moved along with the performance troupe.

For the show's creators, that emotional response is the point of its unique staging. Yinan county is famous for the Yimeng Spirit forged by ordinary villagers who risked their lives to support the Communist forces through extraordinary sacrifice during the war against Japanese aggression and the War of Liberation (1946-49).

The county has over 20 immersive Yimeng Spirit-themed performances, turning cultural tourism from a sightseeing experience into participatory education, according to the local government. The performers are villagers who know the heroic stories very well.

Ma Junling, 35, became a performer this year. Before then, she had worked as a tour guide in her village, explaining the Yimeng Spirit to visitors.

"Our village often receives groups of students on study tours. They are young and have limited understanding. A simple lecture couldn't hold their attention, but the live performances bring the stories to life and help children better understand the history and culture," Ma said.

Changshanzhuang is far from an isolated case. Across Shandong, grassroots cultural creativity is flourishing through immersive performances, verses composed by farmers, and rural micro-dramas filmed on mobile phones.

Ordinary farmers are picking up pens, smartphones, and scripts, becoming poets, actors and dramatists.

Storytellers

Changshanzhuang is the home of the Red Sisters, a group of local women who took care of the wounded soldiers and in some cases sacrificed their lives to protect them during the wars. They forged a major part of the Yimeng Spirit.

To honor their stories and promote the Yimeng Spirit, a Red Sisters Hometown Tourism Area has been established in the village.

Short folk performances are staged in old courtyards, bringing these stories to life, and the performers are villagers who have lived in the area their entire lives.

Yang Suhua, 63, from a neighboring village, used to spend her days doing housework and tending a small vegetable plot.

Two years ago, she became one of the most popular performers. Now she plays the role of an elderly cotton weaver in a show about the women's rescue association, a grassroots organization that supported the Communist revolution in the 1940s.

"I grew up hearing the heroic stories of the local women. I am so happy to tell their stories to more people through these small-scale plays," Yang said.

Villagers transform oral histories passed down from their ancestors into scripts, using relatable language and gestures that ordinary people can understand.

Li Xipeng, head of the Red Sisters Hometown Tourism Area, said the village's authenticity is key to the performances' appeal. "These houses and these lanes witnessed the actual events. They are the best textbook we could ever have," he said.

More than a dozen small farmyards have been turned into performance spaces. In one courtyard stands a small stone house with two dark narrow rooms. This is where Liu Naixiu, 73, once lived with her family of five.

"We were all squeezed in here. The house has barely changed from what it was back then. Now we've moved to a two-story home just 1 kilometer from this village," she said.

The places that best preserve the original feel of the period have also been used as film sets. Since 2007, over 500 film and television productions have been shot here, including *Six Sisters in the War*, *Red Sorghum* and *This Thriving Land*.

Liu was among the first villagers to join the film productions. "I've lost count of how many shows I've been in. Sometimes a crew member calls me directly and tells me that he needs 20 people for extras. I happily run from house to house, rounding up neighbors," she said.

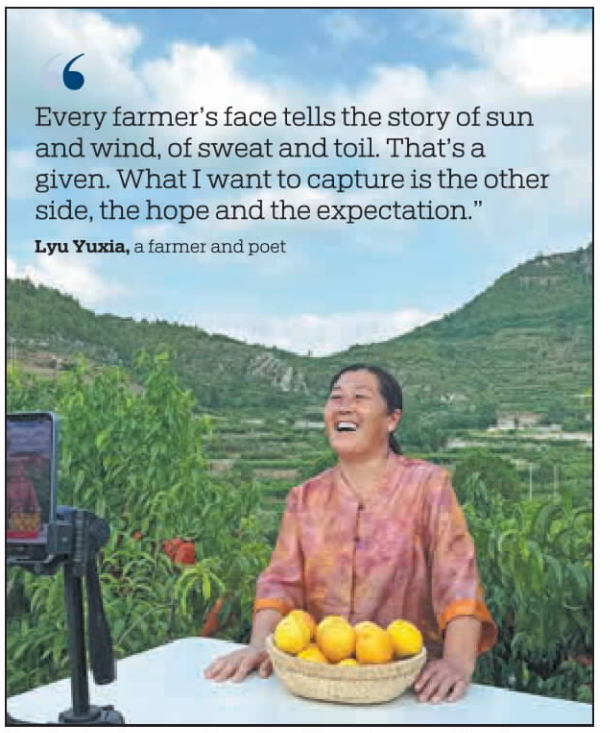
Over the years, more than 30,000 villagers have performed as extras in film and television productions in the area. For many families, this part-time work has become a supplement to their farming income.

The rural cultural boom has brought economic ripple effects. More than 100 businesses have emerged around the scenic area, offering catering, farm stays, produce sales, and handcrafts.

"We used to worry about how to sell our produce," said a local farmer who grows vegetables and fruits on the hillside. "Now tourists come to us. They watch the shows, walk through the village, and buy local farm produce," he said.

The scenic area has partnered with villages around the area, integrating rural vitalization and tourism development. To date, more than 600 people from surrounding villages have worked in the scenic area.

> "Every farmer's face tells the story of sun and wind, of sweat and toil. That's a given. What I want to capture is the other side, the hope and the expectation."
>
> **Lyu Yuxia,** a farmer and poet



Lyu Yuxia, a farmer and poet from Mengyin county, Shandong, livestreams from her peach orchard, selling her own peaches and those of her fellow villagers. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Tourists buy local farm produce while they visit Changshanzhuang village. ZHENG SHUPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

"This is what it looks like when culture grows from the soil, not as something delivered from above, but as something that sprouts from the land itself," Li said.

Leave it to the prose

Not far away, in Mengyin county, another form of rural creativity is taking root in a farmer's notebook.

Lyu Yuxia, 54, is known online as Yimeng Second Sister, a name she uses because she is the second child in her family.

With calloused hands and a sun-weathered face, she has gained unexpected attention online for her poems. "I'm just an ordinary farmer, but words have always been with me," she said.

In the spring of 2023, Lyu walked up a mountain to pick Chinese toon sprouts. She looked out over a sea of blooming peach blossoms across the terraced hillsides.

The sight moved her deeply. She took out her phone, held up a bunch of toon sprouts, and recited a poem she had written in her notebook. That video, posted on Douyin, gained 100,000 followers in one week.

Several of her poems written, recited and recorded in the fields quickly gained widespread popularity online. In one of them, she compared the falling snow to icing sugar and salt sprinkled from the sky.

"I was a 50-something farm woman with wrinkles all over my face, feeling insecure at first," she recalled. "Now I am confident. Poetry gave me the courage to be myself."

Some online commenters have questioned whether her poetic portrayal of rural life is too idyllic and doesn't show the hardship of farming.

"Doesn't the hardship show right here?" she said, pointing at her weathered face.

"Every farmer's face tells the story of sun and wind, of sweat and toil. That's a given. What I want to capture is the other side, the hope and the expectation," she added.

"Every spring, we plow the soil, we plant the seeds. We don't know if the weather will favor us. But the moment we put those seeds in the ground, we are hoping for a good harvest.

"This is the faith in tomorrow. I write to celebrate that achievement," she said.

Her connection to literature began early. When she was very young, her father often told her stories.

At 15, she went to work in a textile factory. To block out the drone of the machinery, she recalled poems she had memorized, including those written by Li Bai, Su Dongpo, and even the elegy from *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

She bought magazines and filled notebooks with excerpts and original verses. "My world was too small. But through sharing online, my world got wider and wider. The beautiful words that netizens leave in my comments are as joyful to me as reading a good book," she said.

Lyu has started livestreaming from her orchard, selling not only her peaches but also helping fellow villagers market their produce. On the busiest days, she livestreams for nine hours straight, sometimes skipping meals.

"When I see the orders pile up and help people sell their goods, there's nothing happier than that," she said.

Playing up sales

In Beiliangjia, a village of just 247 households in the Qingdao West Coast New Area, farmers with no acting experience are using their phones to make short dramas that have racked up over 1 billion views.

Before they changed tack, they struggled to sell their produce.

"The village is not short of good produce. We grow sweet chestnuts, sticky sweet potatoes and big juicy cherries," said Zhang Wei, the village Party secretary. "The problem has always been selling them."

In the summer of 2025, Zhang reached out to Ding Zhaoting, an influencer from a neighboring town. Ding had previously run a building materials business before pivoting to online content creation six years ago. He now manages several accounts with millions of followers.

Zhang said the villagers agreed to use short dramas to sell their produce. Ding became the director and recruited about a dozen villagers.

He taught them the basics of filming, editing, and livestreaming. The villagers threw themselves into the new challenge.

In September 2025, the village's first short drama was released. It told the story of a rural woman who joins a poor family and, through hard work and wisdom, gradually leads them to a happy life. In just over a month, the series had garnered 270 million views.

The momentum built. Subsequent dramas each attracted over 100 million views.

In the dramas, village produce is a feature, with corn hanging on walls, chestnuts piled by stoves, and unpicked cherries glistening with dew. Viewers see these products in attractive settings and want to buy them.

Zhang Zhixing, 75, was among the first to benefit. He had three *mu* (0.2 hectares) of hawthorn trees. But at his age, he could no longer harvest the fruit, and they were rotting on the branches.

A few cast members heard about his situation, went to his orchard, and filmed videos and livestreams. Within days, his hawthorns were sold out.

The online traffic also caught the attention of investors. Local Ding Xinqiang stumbled upon the village's short dramas online. "The people and the stories are so real and trustworthy," he said.

He contacted Zhang Wei and said he wanted to invest in the area. Within a week, a sweet potato starch noodle processing plant was up and running, receiving an initial order of 25 metric tons. More projects followed, including dried sweet potato snacks, pet food, and cultural tourism.

Yu Xiaofeng, an associate professor at Shandong University's journalism and communication school, who has studied the phenomenon, sees it as part of a broader trend.

"In the context of the rise of new mass culture, farmers have become creators. They are telling their own stories," Yu said.

"The entire creative process is intimately connected to their lives, which gives them a tremendous sense of pride. This is the core manifestation of farmer identity, and the best expression of cultural confidence," she said.

Yu visited villages and observed the transformation firsthand.

"When I first saw the villagers, they were nervous and shy in front of the camera. But then, seeing all the likes they received online and the growing number of visitors coming to their village, they became confident and outgoing. They actively participate in village construction, voluntarily shoot short videos to promote their hometown, and take pride in its natural beauty and intangible cultural heritage. Their cultural identity is growing stronger," she said.

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TOP NEWS

Iran threatens to halt exports of oil from gulf

Strait of Hormuz tensions mount as diplomacy stalls and sanctions loom

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

As the United States readied to unveil crippling new sanctions against Iran on Monday, in a bid to sever the country's economic lifelines following months of protracted yet inconclusive warfare, Tehran threatened to halt all oil exports from the Persian Gulf.

For weeks, both sides have refrained from launching military strikes against one another, though negotiations to end the six-month-old conflict remain stalled.

Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, warned in a social media post that "If the economic war continues, not a single drop of oil will be exported, neither through the Strait of Hormuz nor from anywhere in the Gulf."

All eyes are now on US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who is scheduled to elaborate on Washington's intensified pressure campaign during a news conference at 1 pm local time on Monday.

"At dawn begins an economic D-Day — the single greatest financial offensive ever marshaled against an adversary," Bessent wrote in a Sunday opinion piece published in the Financial Times.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei retaliated by stating that Iran will never yield to external coercive conditions. "Washington's insistence on failed tactics proves nothing but its hostility toward the Iranian people," he said.

The conflict has killed thousands of people, mostly in Iran and Lebanon, and inflicted severe economic losses. Despite the killing of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran still retains enough military capability to attack targets in neighboring nations and threaten oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, bringing shipping in the key waterway to a near standstill and placing global fuel prices under pressure.

The exact stage of Iran's nuclear program, which the US and Israel aim to wipe out, remains unknown. Without detailing specific measures, Bessent signaled the US would target "fearful nations" that practice "appeasement" by engaging with Iran's economy and financial system.

"They would do well to consider the consequences of sustaining it," he wrote.

On Monday, Brent crude futures dropped more than 1 percent to $93.45 a barrel, with US oil futures also falling more than 1 percent to $86.14 a barrel, Reuters reported.

Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi on Sunday dismissed the renewed US threats as an "old bullying tactic", saying that Washington has no choice but to speak respectfully to the Iranian nation, state broadcaster Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting reported.

Also on Sunday, the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission approved Article 3 under its Strategic Action Plan to Ensure the Security and Development of the Strait of Hormuz. The provision mandates service fees for all eligible vessels transiting the strategic waterway under Iranian jurisdiction.

Hassan Qashqavi, the commission's spokesman, said the fees would be collected from vessels belonging to countries permitted to pass through the strait and paid in Iranian rials or another currency designated by Tehran, Iran's state-run Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

Iran's newly established Persian Gulf Strait Authority has issued fresh regulatory warnings, saying that 45 vessels found violating transit rules will face penalties including fines, detention and confiscation.

The US and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding on June 18, covering conflicts across the Middle East including Lebanon. The 60-day negotiation window stipulated in the deal expired last week, leaving prospects of a final settlement uncertain.

With formal US-Iran face-to-face talks suspended since the last round held in Switzerland in June, regional mediators including Qatar, Pakistan and Turkiye have continued diplomatic efforts.

Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir arrived in Tehran on Monday. Baghaei confirmed in a Sunday statement that Munir's visit comes as part of Pakistan's sustained efforts to advance regional peace and stability.

Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi will also travel to Tehran on Tuesday for in-depth consultations with Iranian officials over security and maritime rules in the Strait of Hormuz, Iran's Foreign Ministry announced.

In a separate development, Iranian Petroleum Minister Mohsen Paknejad told state television on Sunday that a newly discovered onshore gas field in southern Fars province holds over 200 billion cubic meters of total reserves, and over 160 billion cubic meters could be extracted from the field.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

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Searching for survivors



Residents and rescuers use an excavator to search for victims on Sunday after a landslide occurred at a dumpsite overnight in Conakry, the capital of Guinea. Heavy rains caused a large mound of rubbish to collapse, killing at least 30 people and injuring six others. AFP

Crises: Sharing practical experience holds key

From page 1

The real test is whether that information reaches people who need it and is translated into action before it is too late.

Early warning is most valuable when it leads to action.

Anticipatory action takes the next step by linking forecasts to pre-agreed triggers, financing and practical solutions before disaster strikes. That could mean providing cash assistance before markets become inaccessible, protecting livestock and crops before droughts or floods hit, and strengthening social protection systems so assistance can be scaled up quickly.

For vulnerable families, acting before there is a crisis can mean the difference between protecting their livelihoods and losing assets that may take years to rebuild. Evidence shows that every $1 invested in anticipatory action returns up to $7 in avoided losses and additional benefits.

WFP is increasingly putting this approach into practice at scale. In 2025, more than $35 million was released ahead of disasters, supporting over 1.2 million people with anticipatory assistance, while more than 15 million people received early-warning information.

This is what anticipatory action makes possible: a forecast becomes a decision, a decision unlocks resources, and assistance reaches people before a hazard becomes a disaster.

As countries seek to strengthen these systems, international cooperation and the sharing of practical experience are becoming increasingly important.

China's experience offers a powerful example of what sustained investment in agriculture, technology and disaster readiness can achieve. Its growing strengths in meteorology, satellites and artificial intelligence are creating opportunities to strengthen early warning and preparedness beyond its borders.

One promising example is MAZU, an AI-powered meteorological warning system that combines advanced forecasting technologies with international cooperation to make climate information more accessible and actionable for all. Through South-South and Triangular Cooperation, solutions such as MAZU can help countries across the Global South strengthen their preparedness and build resilience in ways that reflect their own risks, institutions and priorities.

The WFP Centre of Excellence for Rural Transformation in China provides an established platform for this exchange. Since 2016, it has connected China's experience with developing countries through policy dialogue, technical cooperation and practical knowledge sharing on food security, agricultural transformation and climate resilience.

China's domestic experience also offers relevant lessons. In Jilin province, for example, WFP worked with local authorities on an integrated risk-management project for maize farmers. By combining precision agriculture, digital tools and an innovative "Insurance + Futures" solution, the initiative helped farmers better manage both production and market risks while using natural resources more efficiently.

By connecting innovations such as MAZU with practical field experience such as that in Jilin, the WFP center can continue to bridge China's expertise with global demand — adapting solutions to local contexts and turning preparedness into lasting resilience.

Preparedness cannot eliminate climate shocks, but it can change what happens when they arrive. Making it work, however, is a shared responsibility. Governments, international organizations, research institutions, development banks, technology companies and local communities all have a role to play.

It means investing in better forecasting and early-warning systems, but also in the mechanisms that turn warnings into action: pre-arranged financing, responsive social protection, local readiness and the capacity of communities and institutions to act quickly.

Over time, these sustained investments do more than reduce the impact of a single drought or flood. They protect livelihoods, safeguard development gains, reduce repeated losses and setbacks, and build long-term resilience so that communities are able to withstand tomorrow's shocks without losing ground today.

The future of food security will not be determined by climate hazards alone. It will also depend on our collective ability to anticipate risks, act before losses mount and invest in the resilience communities need to thrive, no matter what the weather brings.

The author is representative and director of the United Nations World Food Programme China Office. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Chips: Company improves production capacity, quality

From page 1

"This represents a comprehensive leap in both production capacity and quality," Chang said.

According to the company, the 12-inch wafer platform has helped slash product iteration cycles from 36 months to just nine to 12 months. "Nexperia China achieving independent operations is not about confronting anyone; it is about protecting those we serve. To our customers, choosing Nexperia China means no more supply worries," Chang added.

In February this year, China urged the Netherlands to create favorable conditions to help Nexperia settle its internal disputes as soon as possible and to help maintain the stability of global industrial and supply chains. In July, the two sides agreed to facilitate the resolution of business disputes through consultations.

Hurdles notwithstanding, Nexperia China delivered over 40 billion chips to thousands of global customers with zero quality incidents over the past 11 months.

He Hui, semiconductor research director at the United Kingdom-based tech research company Omdia, said on Monday that China's semiconductor industrial chain has made significant progress in recent years, which can serve as a crucial backup for Chinese companies during emergencies and help them stabilize their supply chains. "More efforts are still needed to achieve breakthroughs in some key technologies," she added.

Wang Wen, dean of Renmin University of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, said the Nexperia incident shows once again that the semiconductor industry, by its very nature, is a globalized sector.

"Camp-based or politicized intervention will only fracture supply chains and send costs soaring," Wang said. "Only by reducing non-market intervention can we truly advance global technological progress and ensure that its benefits are universally shared."

Tech: Cooling vests creating niche market

From page 1

For manufacturers, wearable cooling equipment is becoming a fast-growing niche at the intersection of outdoor gear, consumer electronics and climate adaptation.

One of the latest entrants is Esguard, based in Pinghu, Zhejiang, one of China's largest outdoor apparel manufacturing hubs. The company has developed a cooling vest that combines ventilation with semiconductor cooling tech, lowering the perceived temperature by 8 C to 15 C, the company said.

Unlike conventional fan vests that simply circulate ambient air, Esguard's design integrates two semiconductor cooling modules with dual fans mounted on the back of the garment. Air is drawn into the vest, cooled by the modules and then circulated around the body, delivering what the company calls an "air-conditioning effect".

Powered by a 20,000 mAh battery pack, the vest can operate for up to 12 hours on its lowest setting, making it suitable for a full working day or extended trips.

"We wanted to move beyond simply blowing hot air around," said Fang Xiaodong, general manager of Esguard. "The goal was to create a wearable cooling system that people can genuinely rely on outdoors."

The company began developing the product in March after anticipating rising global demand for heat relief technologies. Working with university researchers, it has already begun exporting the vests to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Japan and South Korea.



Sanitation workers show their cooling vests on July 31 in Nanjing, Jiangsu province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The technology is also finding a growing customer base among frontline workers. In Nanjing, Jiangsu province, where summer temperatures frequently exceed 35 C, sanitation workers were among the first to test the vests. Since mid-July, more than 20 cooling vests have been deployed across the city.

"It's much more comfortable," sanitation worker Zhu Wenxian told Workers' Daily. "I'm sweating much less, and I don't feel as irritable after working outside."

Another sanitation worker, Liu Fali, said the airflow has made long shifts noticeably easier. "My back stays dry now," he said.

Delivery companies are also embracing the tech. In Xuchang, Henan province, local franchisees of ZTO Express have equipped more than 100 couriers with cooling vests to help them cope with the summer of prolonged extreme heat.

Greening of desert hailed by US friend

By **WANG SONGSONG** in Ordos, Inner Mongolia and **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot

Ronald Sakolsky, a retired teacher from the United States, returned to the home of China's afforestation hero Yin Yuzhen on Monday in Uxin Banner, Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, 26 years after his first visit, and found the once-barren dunes transformed into a thriving forest — a living testament to perseverance that he says must be passed on to younger generations.

Sakolsky walked through Yin's desert ecological garden, appreciated fresh vegetables and fruits grown in the sandy soil, and visited her new home, which was a far cry from the tiny shelter she once shared with her family.

"From a one-bedroom sand shanty to this? You deserve every centimeter of this house," Sakolsky told Yin, gesturing at her home.

Yin has spent decades battling desertification on this land. What was once a wasteland is now her life's work — a thriving oasis attracting visitors from around the world.

Over the course of 41 years, she and her family have planted 8 million trees, literally one shovel at a time, turning more than 4,660 hectares of desert into an oasis, Inner Mongolia TV reported.

But Sakolsky was not just any visitor. He was an old friend — and, in a small but meaningful way, a part of this story.

Sakolsky made his first visit to this remote desert area in 2000.

Having been in China for two months at that time as a teacher taking part in a China-US teachers exchange program, Sakolsky was moved by a report on Yin's struggle. "I saw her story on TV and started to cry," said Sakolsky.

Together with another of his Chinese friends — Bai Fan, the former vice-principal of Luoyang Foreign Language School in Henan province, where he worked as an English teacher from 1999 to 2000, Sakolsky went to Uxin Banner for the first time.

He also made a quiet gesture of kindness — a $5,000 donation that helped Yin keep planting trees. "One act of kindness, no matter how small, never waste it," Sakolsky said.

Bai, who is now Party secretary and general principal of Luoyang No 2 Foreign Language School Education Group, again accompanied Sakolsky to the site of their shared memories.

Bai recalled how different things were back then. "It was all sand," he said. "Now it looks like a big garden and orchard. It's stunning."

Sakolsky, now in his late 60s, reflected on the deeper meaning of the transformation. "I still believe, 27 years later, that this story was written in heaven and that I am just an actor in the play. And today is just another chapter. But the story is not over — that's for all of you to tell people."

He urged more people to contribute to environmental and people-to-people ties. "More people need to do more for China and America. Even a small amount can become a forest."

Speaking of US-China relations, Sakolsky struck a personal note. "All Americans need to realize that Chinese and Americans can be family. We can get over the differences if we focus on the similarities."

For Yin, the visit was a moment of quiet pride. She showed her guests the fruits of her labor and smiled as Sakolsky repeated his long-held belief: "If you take care of the Earth, it will reward you."

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Zhao Manfeng in Ordos contributed to this story.

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ASIAFOCUS

Editor's note:
In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.

Elephant in the room

Nepal's safaris caught between animal welfare and livelihoods



Mahouts ride elephants during the Elephant Festival in Sauraha, Chitwan, Nepal, on Dec 27. AMBIR TOLANG VIA GETTY IMAGES





From left: Elephants play with a ball during the Elephant Festival in Sauraha, Chitwan, Nepal, on Dec 27. AMBIR TOLANG VIA GETTY IMAGES
An eye of an elephant is pictured as she gets ready for the elephant beauty contest in Sauraha on Dec 27. SUNIL PRADHAN VIA GETTY IMAGES

Sauraha, a major tourist destination in Chitwan, Nepal, has long been synonymous with elephant safaris. For decades, foreign and domestic tourists visiting Sauraha, adjacent to Chitwan National Park, have mounted elephants to traverse the buffer zone's community forests in search of rare wildlife.

However, the local entrepreneurs who have privately owned and domesticated elephants are worried about a recent Supreme Court verdict. They express their concerns, stating that the future of the iconic practice of elephant safaris is in jeopardy. They argue an abrupt halt to elephant safaris could devastate the local economy, tourism and harm the animals themselves.

Private elephant owners in Sauraha express readiness to shift toward ethical alternatives, such as elephant-friendly sanctuaries and bushwalks, but contend that a sudden ban is impractical. They are urging authorities to phase out elephants gradually so that owners have time to adjust their businesses and protect livelihoods.

The delicate issue dominated discussions on Aug 12 during the 15th World Elephant Day celebration in Sauraha, where stakeholders gathered for an "Elephant Picnic" organized in the neighboring Baghmara buffer zone community forest.

"We are prepared to transition to a sanctuary model as envisioned by the court, but it cannot happen overnight," said Dipendra Khatiwada, the president of the United Elephant Management Cooperative Limited.

"We are not in favor of stopping elephant safaris at once. We should instead pursue a dual-track approach: allow fit, working-age elephants to continue safaris for a few more years, while creating dedicated sanctuaries for elderly, sick, or disabled elephants and integrating them into tourism activities that do not disturb nature and local communities."

The high-profile legal dispute stems from a petition filed in 2021. The petitioners demanded an end to animal cruelty, better recordkeeping to curb illegal trading, a prohibition on chaining, and a complete phaseout of elephant rides in favor of observation-only tourism.

On Dec 17 last year, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of animal welfare reforms. The full text verdict was recently uploaded to the Supreme Court's website, laying out comprehensive guidelines for elephant conservation and directing the government to seek alternatives to riding safaris.

"The anatomical structure of an elephant's spine, legs, and body is not evolved to carry human passengers," the court noted in the verdict. "Subjecting these animals to heavy loads and continuous circular tours causes severe physical stress, foot rot, and joint ailments. Using an elephant merely as a tool for human entertainment contradicts our legal duty to respect its intrinsic worth and welfare as a living biological entity."

The justices also instructed the government to establish clear legal policies transitioning Nepal toward ethical ecotourism, drawing upon international precedents such as "elephant bushwalks" and observation platforms that maintain a safe distance between visitors and animals.

In the verdict, the Supreme Court has directed the government and agencies concerned to make the registration and management of privately owned and domesticated elephants more systematic.

Under the regulation on the control of international trade of endangered wildlife and plants, all such elephants must be registered and properly documented. Authorities must identify unregistered elephants and take action under existing laws. Any transfer of ownership, sale, purchase or movement of elephants must also be subject to legal approval and proper recordkeeping.

The court has also called for stronger measures to control the illegal trade and cross-border smuggling of elephants.

Security agencies, forest authorities and conservation bodies should coordinate effectively, particularly along the Nepal-India border, and maintain special surveillance. Individuals or organizations involved in the illegal sale, transportation or smuggling of elephants should be investigated and prosecuted in accordance with the law.

On elephant welfare, the court has ordered authorities to prevent torture, violence and other forms of inhumane treatment. It has called for scientific and animal-friendly methods of elephant management and urged that tourism involving elephants be made more welfare-friendly.

Handlers and caretakers should receive training in elephant-friendly practices, while proper treatment and protection should be ensured for sick and aging elephants. The court has also called for the establishment of elephant retirement and rehabilitation centers.

The court has directed authorities to move toward a more natural system of keeping privately owned elephants.

According to the court, elephants should be provided with open and natural surroundings, while management plans should take into account possible conflicts between people and elephants, as well as between wild and domesticated elephants.

The court has further called for ethical elephant sanctuaries where tourists can observe elephants only from a safe distance rather than ride or directly interact with them. The practice of keeping elephants unnecessarily chained, whether for training or other purposes, should be ended. Authorities have been asked to develop and implement policies and action plans to make elephant conservation centers and management systems more scientific and welfare-oriented.

The verdict also calls for better coordination among all agencies involved in elephant conservation and management. Regular monitoring of conservation activities should be carried out, and clear standards for the management of privately owned elephants should be developed and enforced.

Job displacement

The local operators argue that forcing an immediate shutdown without a transitional safety net would lead to financial ruin and widespread job displacement.

A single adult elephant commands a market price between Rs10 million (about $65,360) and Rs15 million, while monthly maintenance, feed and healthcare costs range from Rs100,000 to Rs120,000. Each animal requires at least two full-time handlers: one to manage feeding and grooming and another to handle movement and general care.

"If owners are forbidden from offering safaris, who will pay to feed and care for these massive animals?" said Dipendra, who previously owned two elephants but now retains only one.

"Following the COVID-19 pandemic, when tourism collapsed, many owners were forced to sell their animals to buyers in India. In Sauraha, private elephant numbers dropped from 90 to around 45 today. A sudden ban without financial support will lead to complete abandonment."

The looming ban has cast a shadow over the lives of local handlers, or mahouts.

Jayalal Das, 48, a mahout from Rautahat who cares for an elephant, relies entirely on his income to support his six-member family. His grandfather was a mahout, and Das has spent 18 years in Sauraha driving tourist safaris.

"I do not know any other skilled work," said Das. "If safaris close down tomorrow, I will have no way to feed my four children."

Nandalal Sah, who also handles an elephant, shared similar worries, adding, "If there are no elephants left to ride, I will have no choice but to do manual labor."

THE KATHMANDU POST, NEPAL

Seoul's Incheon takes lead as busiest intl airport

SEOUL — Incheon Airport overtook London Heathrow and Singapore Changi to become the world's busiest international passenger hub in the first half of the year, reaching the top just 25 years after opening, latest data showed in August.

Incheon handled 38.39 million international passengers over the six months, according to preliminary data covering 1,234 airports compiled by Airports Council International. The airport has risen steadily from 10th place in 2002 to fifth in 2018 and third in 2024.

Heathrow ranked second with 37.79 million international passengers, followed by Changi with 34.53 million. Dubai Airport, which had long vied with Heathrow for the top spot, is expected to fall outside the top five.

According to Incheon International Airport Corporation, or IIAC, Incheon's new title solidifies its standing as a top-tier global hub airport.

The airport also surpassed 1 billion cumulative passengers just over 25 years after opening, faster than any other major international airport.

The reordering owes as much to shifting geopolitics as to Incheon's own momentum.

The conflict between the US and Iran choked off transfer traffic through Middle Eastern hubs, diverting travelers to Incheon instead. Transfer passengers climbed 18.1 percent from a year earlier to 4.24 million, while European transfer traffic soared 63.2 percent.

Inbound visitors have also poured into South Korea, led largely by tourists from China and Japan. Foreigners made up 44.4 percent of Incheon's overall passenger traffic in the second quarter, a record high and up from 39.5 percent a year earlier.

The broader traffic base rests on the airport's four phases of expansion, completed in November 2024.

The buildout gave Incheon capacity for 106 million annual international passengers, the world's third-largest, trailing only China's Hong Kong and the UAE's Dubai. Incheon now connects 183 cities across 53 countries through 101 carriers.

As South Korea's gateway airport, IIAC said it has long supported major national events and government policy, and is now investing in artificial intelligence and urban air mobility infrastructure, in step with the government's goal of 30 million inbound tourists.

THE KOREA HERALD, SOUTH KOREA

Forum calls for measures to help ASEAN tackle climate change

Climate resilience has stopped being an environmental issue and become an economic one, experts said. When 35 percent of a year's rainfall falls within a single week, as it did in parts of Thailand last year, the failure is not simply meteorological. It is a failure of design, of coordination, and of economics.

That was the argument advanced at a CAsean Forum 2026 panel on "Strengthening ASEAN's Physical Resilience", held in Bangkok in August, where experts said Southeast Asia's climate exposure is no longer a side issue for environment ministries but a direct threat to the region's economic competitiveness.

Witaya Wannasuphoprasit, dean of engineering at Chulalongkorn University, framed Thailand's exposure through three converging failures.

First, rainfall patterns have become faster and more erratic than existing forecasting tools can track, overwhelming the drainage systems designed for a gentler climate.

Second, decades of unplanned urban sprawl have eroded the natural floodplains that once absorbed excess water.

Third, as Witaya termed most structurally damaging, roughly 50 Thai government agencies are responsible for water management, each with their own budget and agenda and little shared data.

Although rain poses a threat to regional development, Witaya said water is not merely a hazard to be managed but a productive resource whose value can be measured and grown.

Citing UN data spanning roughly two decades, he noted that water productivity — the economic value generated per cubic meter used — has stagnated across Southeast Asia even as other regions have steadily improved theirs, representing what he called "a big room of opportunity".

Witaya laid emphasis on empowering the local communities, describing efforts to build local "water schools" so that residents — not only central agencies — understand and manage their own flood and drought risks.



A severe storm accompanied by torrential rain and violent wind gusts caused extensive infrastructure damage in Lat Krabang, Bangkok, Thailand, on June 26. THAI NEWS PIX VIA GETTY IMAGE

Wannaporn Phornprapha, founder and managing director of landscape architecture firm P Landscape Company, argued that much of the region's vulnerability stems from a design philosophy still rooted in "gray" concrete infrastructure rather than natural systems.

Asked to name planners' most common mistakes, she pointed first at fragmentation — designing single projects to withstand, say, a hundred-year flood without accounting for what happens beyond their boundaries, since "water has no boundary".

Second, she said regulation and data routinely lag behind the pace of climate change itself, citing the lack of research into which tree species actually filter fine particulate pollution effectively.

Third, resilient design is still widely perceived as an avoidable added expense when its real returns — public health, livability, and long-term value — are simply harder to put a number on.

Satoshi Iemoto, an expert affiliated with a Japan International Cooperation Agency project, said no single country can adapt alone, because climate risk ignores administrative borders — river basins and coastlines connect neighboring states regardless of policy.

He had three recommendations for the region: strengthen knowledge-sharing between countries facing similar disaster risks; empower local governments and communities, since disasters are ultimately experienced locally; and combine modern technology with traditional wisdom — from Thailand's sufficiency economy philosophy to comparable community-based traditions in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Cambodia.

Stripped of its technical detail, the panel's case was straightforward: ASEAN's physical resilience has been undermined less by a lack of engineering knowledge than by fragmentation — of agencies, of data, of individual construction projects, and of national policies that stop at borders that climate risks do not respect.

Fixing that, the panelists agreed, is less about inventing new technology than integrating what already exists: shared data, nature-based design, community knowledge and cross-border cooperation.

As the moderator summarized in closing, resilience cannot be built by any single country, sector or discipline acting alone — it has to be, in Witaya's phrase, "everybody's responsibility".

THE NATION, THAILAND

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WORLD

Xi congratulates Alamgir on assuming presidency

By JI HAISHENG
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President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message on Monday to Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on assuming office as president of Bangladesh, calling for joint efforts to carry forward the traditional friendship between the two countries, strengthen strategic communication and advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

In the message, Xi called China and Bangladesh traditional friendly neighbors. Over the past 51 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the two countries have always upheld mutual respect and treated each other as equals, he said.

China and Bangladesh have supported each other on issues concerning their respective core interests and major concerns, and have moved forward hand-in-hand on their respective paths toward modernization, he said.

Bilateral relations have withstood the tests of a rapidly changing international situation, he added.

Xi said he attaches great importance to the development of China-Bangladesh relations.

He also expressed hope that the two sides will deepen exchanges and cooperation across various fields to make more solid progress in building a China-Bangladesh community with a shared future in the new era and bring greater benefits to the two peoples.

Alamgir, 78, a senior leader of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party, was sworn in as the country's 23rd president on Friday, according to Xinhua News Agency.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, cabinet members and hundreds of distinguished guests attended the oath-taking ceremony at the presidential palace in Dhaka.

Briefly

DPRK

State media slams Japan's militarism

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea on Monday condemned Japanese politicians for visiting the notorious Yasukuni war shrine on the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, warning the country "will perish in the flames of neo-militarism". In a commentary issued by the Korean Central News Agency, the DPRK lambasted Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi for sending a ritual offering and paying a "surprise tribute" to the war shrine, calling her move "a blatant challenge to the desire of humankind for global peace and security". Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi also visited the shrine, a clear demonstration of the dangerous nature of the Yasukuni visit, the commentary said. "Japan is bound to repeat its past as it never draws a lesson but wantonly denies its past as a war criminal country and a defeated nation," it said.

UNITED STATES

Trump threatens 50% auto tariffs on Canada

US tariffs on all cars and trucks, automotive parts and steel will be increased to 50 percent starting Jan 1, President Donald Trump said in a social media post on Monday after trade talks with Canada collapsed over the weekend. "Build in the US and there are zero tariffs," Trump wrote. "On trade, and in other ways, also, they are among the worst nations in the world to deal with. They feel entitled, and yet, we don't need Canada, they need us!" The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment seeking more details on the threatened tariffs. The two countries failed to reach a trade deal on Friday, with each side blaming the other as Canada readied tariffs on some US goods in retaliation for 50 percent levies ordered by Trump on other Canadian products.

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Bound by tradition



Members of the Karen community take part in a traditional wrist-tying ceremony in Bangkok, Thailand, on Sunday. The generational custom — involving white cotton threads tied around participants' wrists — symbolizes strength, well-being and the preservation of Karen cultural identity. WISSARUT WEERASOPON VIA GETTY IMAGES

Global tensions cloud trade

US tariffs make business decisions difficult, affecting manufacturing supply chains

By RENA LI in Los Angeles
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Tariffs and geopolitical tensions are adding uncertainty to global manufacturing supply chains, complicating sourcing decisions and long-term investment planning, industry and port leaders said.

Lance Hastings, president and CEO of the California Manufacturers & Technology Association, said manufacturers remain broadly positive about business prospects but are cautious about an unsettled global trading environment.

"There's still some anxiety as the year wraps up," Hastings said during a recent virtual media briefing with Port of Los Angeles executive director Gene Seroka.

"Manufacturing decisions aren't 30-day or 60-day decisions; they're actually six-year, 10-year horizons," he said, adding that sudden disruptions make it more difficult for companies to plan with confidence.

Manufacturing in California generates about $382 billion annually, accounting for roughly 10 percent of the state's economic output. China remains one of California's most important trading partners and a major part of its manufacturing and supply-chain network, with two-way goods trade totaling about $137 billion in 2024, much of it involving manufactured products and industrial components.

The relationship is increasingly shaped by a layered US tariff regime. Most covered Chinese imports currently face an additional 10 percent reciprocal tariff, while longstanding Section 301 duties remain as high as 100 percent on electric vehicles and 50 percent on semiconductors and solar cells, adding costs and complexity for companies with China-linked supply chains.

Asked by China Daily whether continuing China-US trade tensions were prompting California manufacturers to move production or sourcing away from China, or instead diversify while maintaining Chinese suppliers, Hastings said the latter better reflects what companies are doing.

"I think it's more of the latter," he said. "It's really assessing the global profile that we face right now."

Some manufacturers began reassessing supply chains following the COVID-19 pandemic and considered bringing certain operations closer to home, Hastings said. Tariffs and geopolitical tensions have since added further pressure.

"There is a lot of uncertainty," he said. "Manufacturers always are looking at the long term, and that's the more important view."

Seroka said those changing sourcing patterns are clearly visible at the Port of Los Angeles, but they should not be interpreted simply as a withdrawal from China.

"China accounted for about 60 percent of the port's overall business portfolio in 2018, compared with roughly 40 percent today," he said, adding that while trade with Vietnam has expanded sharply, China and Southeast Asia's manufacturing supply chains have become increasingly integrated.

Importers large and small have increasingly explored alternative sourcing locations, particularly in Asia, while maintaining complex supplier relationships that often span several countries, according to Seroka.

At the same time, Washington is increasing scrutiny of China-linked global supply chains as it seeks to identify suspected tariff evasion through transshipment, raising questions about how authorities will distinguish illegal practices from legitimate cross-border manufacturing.

A White House report released this month outlines an artificial intelligence-supported initiative called "Detective Border", designed to help US Customs and Border Protection analyze shipment origins, trade routes and product information to flag potentially suspicious cargo.

Seroka said greater use of AI has not yet disrupted cargo moving through Los Angeles.

"We'll see the advent of AI and trying to explore a realm of possibilities and maybe even theories, but nothing yet that is inhibiting the trade that comes through this port," he said.

He cautioned policymakers against confusing illegal tariff evasion with the complexity of legitimate international production networks.

Seroka compared Asian manufacturing networks with the tiered supplier systems around US automobile plants. A vehicle assembled in Michigan, for example, may rely on tires, wiring harnesses and other components from multiple suppliers. Asian manufacturing works in much the same way, he said, except that parts often cross national borders before final assembly.

A garment, for example, may include buttons or other components made in China before being assembled elsewhere in Asia and exported to the United States.

"There are some policymakers that think they're trying to evade these new tariff policies and the prices that are associated with them," Seroka said. "And while there are some bad actors out there, I'm sure, in general, it's a sourcing complexity of parts and components that go into a finished good."

US customs rules similarly recognize that determining a product's origin can depend on where it undergoes a "substantial transformation", rather than simply the country from which the final shipment departed.

Seroka said more sophisticated enforcement should therefore be accompanied by a practical understanding of how deeply integrated global manufacturing has become.

"I'd like to see more awareness," he said. "I'd like to see folks really get some practical understanding of how supply chains work on the international stage."

For California manufacturers, Hastings said the underlying challenge remains making long-term decisions in an environment where trade rules can change far more quickly than factories, supplier relationships or investment plans.

UK missile help for Ukraine 'adds fuel to fire': Kremlin

MOSCOW — The Kremlin said on Monday that the United Kingdom's decision to hand Ukraine information on British-made components used to make SCALP long-range missiles would "add fuel to the fire" and was regarded by Moscow extremely negatively.

UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham arrived in Kyiv on Monday on his first overseas trip since taking office and was due to announce British support to help Kyiv improve its domestic production of long-range missiles.

Asked about the visit and the support, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov accused the UK of doing everything it could to prevent any progress toward an eventual peace deal.

"Britain methodically and regularly adds fuel to the fire and methodically and regularly hatches schemes to prevent even the slightest progress in the peaceful settlement process," Peskov told reporters.

"Our armed forces are carrying out work accordingly, gathering the relevant intelligence to identify the production sites of such missiles and other military equipment, and taking measures to destroy these facilities," he said.

The SCALP missile is a long-range cruise missile capable of hitting targets around 250 kilometers away.

The UK and France have supplied the weapon to Ukraine since its conflict with Russia broke out in 2022, but Kyiv has not yet produced them domestically.

Burnham visited Kyiv on Monday for Ukraine's Independence Day commemorations and vowed to maintain Britain's military backing for the government.

"Despite Russia's outrageous threats to my country, we will continue our support for Ukraine's defense," Burnham said in a speech in Kyiv.

Ukraine was scheduled to host a meeting of its key European backers on Monday to press for critical air defense supplies.

The so-called Coalition of the Willing meeting will be jointly chaired by Burnham and the leaders of France and Germany, who will participate remotely.

The leaders of Luxembourg, Moldova, Estonia and European Council President Antonio Costa are also in Kyiv for the talks hosted on Ukraine's Independence Day.

The European Commission said on Monday that it had released another 6.1 billion euros ($7.1 billion) in new defense procurement for Ukraine, covering air defense systems, missiles, ammunition and radars.

The commission said the latest approval added to 16 billion euros in previously approved procurement plans, of which 8.35 billion euros have been disbursed.

Most of the equipment will be sourced from European Union defense companies, the commission said.

It said Russia's increased use of ballistic missiles and jet-engined drones had heightened the need to accelerate deliveries to Ukraine by reprioritizing orders and ramping up production.

The funding comes from the EU's 90 billion euro Ukraine Support Loan for 2026 and 2027. The European Parliament and the Council of the EU adopted legislation establishing the loan in February.

Under the disbursement procedure, Ukraine can request payments after signing procurement contracts with defense companies. The European Commission will review the contracts before releasing funds to ensure the purchases align with procurement plans agreed upon by EU member states.

On the battlefield, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Monday that air defense systems have intercepted and destroyed 351 fixed-wing Ukrainian drones over its territory overnight.

Russian forces continued overnight strikes with precision air-launched weapons and attack drones against Ukrainian ports and vessels allegedly involved in transporting cargo for the military, the ministry said.



Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha (second from left) greets United Kingdom Prime Minister Andy Burnham upon his arrival by train in Kyiv on Monday. HENRY NICHOLLS VIA REUTERS

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COMMENT

Editorials

Some US politicians' China obsession a confession of their own misdemeanors

In his address at the TechNet Augusta conference last week, US National Security Agency Deputy Director Tim Kosiba tried to falsely portray China as a global "spoiler" and "disruptor" actively seeking to undermine the interests of the United States and its allies in almost every sphere across domains and environments — from the South China Sea to Greenland, from the Middle East to Latin America. "We must push back collectively by using all the levers of power smartly and strategically," he said.

His remarks, a manifestation of a Cold War mentality, reveal the deterioration in US strategic thinking. To claim China's presence is "adversarial" to the US and its allies in "nearly every engagement" and wherever the US seeks to defend itself and its allies is not an analytical assessment of reality. Rather, it is a reflection of the US' increasing unease about its capabilities to exercise hegemony in a multipolar world.

Baselessly labeling China as a "spoiler" confuses diplomatic engagement with hostility. China's extensive economic partnerships across the world are normal and beneficial to the international community. The country's footprint is characterized by trade, infrastructure development and dialogue, rather than the US style of military expansion or regime-change operations. Yet Kosiba interprets these as "adversarial", treating the entire world as the US' own exclusive domain.

Kosiba attempted to cast China's presence in Greenland and Antarctica as a "military threat". This groundless claim inadvertently exposes Washington's own intent to militarize these regions, where China's activities are transparent, scientific and cooperative. It is the US government that has defied international norms by repeatedly trying to assert control over Greenland, which is a sovereign territory of Denmark.

China has been a consistent defender of the international order and contributor to global peace and development. In its bilateral cooperation with other countries, China does not target third parties.

Kosiba's claim that Chinese companies are "passing intelligence to Iran" and "undermining" US operations is unfounded and intended to create a pretext for the US to use long-arm jurisdiction and impose unilateral and unlawful sanctions on Chinese entities.

The historical record shows that the US has frequently played the role of spoiler and disruptor in various regions — invading sovereign nations, meddling in domestic politics, and cultivating proxies to foment bloc confrontation, all while invoking the self-serving justifications of "human rights", "freedom" and "democracy" to lend "moral cover" to strategic overreach.

As a major country pursuing peaceful development, China's rise confounds some in the US. In response, they have repeatedly sought to provoke tensions or project the US' own behaviors onto China, levying unfounded accusations. Yet the more aggressively these US politicians make such absurd claims, the more they reveal their palpable anxiety in the face of a changing world.

Kosiba's call for "collective pushback" is actually a demand for allies to sacrifice their own interests and pick sides to alleviate Washington's anxiety. By falsely framing China as a "foe", these China-bashing politicians in the US are seeking to steer the world toward a new Cold War.

The US should follow the trend of the times, abandon its outdated zero-sum mindset and view China's development with a rational and pragmatic attitude. Resolving differences through equal dialogue serves the interests of both sides. The US is only shooting itself in the foot by continuing to perpetuate confrontation and spreading falsehoods that erode the international order.

Japan's remilitarization a fiscal dead end

The latest public opinion poll in Japan is a caution to the Sanae Takaichi government that it shouldn't allow the military buildup to consume the country's economic vigor. The Takaichi Cabinet's approval rating has fallen to 50.2 percent, its lowest level since she took office, while 71.7 percent of respondents say they are worried about Japan's fiscal health.

The immediate trigger may be a proposed cut in the consumption tax on food. The majority of respondents were worried the tax reduction could make it difficult for the government to sustain its social security system as Takaichi has failed to offer any alternative source of revenue to fill the fiscal gap to be left by the tax cut.

In fact, Takaichi appears to be promising everything at once: lower taxes, higher military spending, massive industrial investment, stronger security ties and faster growth. Japan's balance sheet, however, will not play ball.

She wants to protect households from inflation while maintaining an expansive fiscal and investment agenda. But the most conventional way to fight persistent inflation and support a weak yen is to allow the central bank to tighten monetary policy. The problem is that Japan cannot raise interest rates without confronting its debt mountain. This is the bind at the heart of Takaichi-nomics.

Takaichi's answer has increasingly been to promise investment and military spending as engines of "national renewal". But Japan has an aging population, a shrinking workforce, weak domestic demand and a shortage of resources. The proposed 370 trillion yen ($2.32 trillion) investment program over 14 years may help strategic industries, but no amount of government subsidy can substitute indefinitely for productivity growth, labor reform and a sustainable social security system.

The proposed domestic investment is to be accompanied by the cut in the food consumption tax from 8 percent to 1 percent. A complete elimination would represent roughly 5 trillion yen a year in lost revenue, so even the proposed reduction would leave a substantial hole. Meanwhile, the fiscal year 2027 military budget request stands at a record 8.9 trillion yen, and the final tally is on track to exceed 10 trillion yen as additional appropriations pile on.

This is where the rhetoric of "national strength" collides with the realities of the country's national debt. Japan already carries one of the heaviest public-debt burdens in the developed world. The 10-year Japanese government bond yield recently climbed to 2.95 percent, its highest level in about three decades. The Japanese Finance Ministry is preparing 36.6 trillion yen for government-bond principal and interest payments in fiscal year 2027, a 17 percent increase from the previous year.

The danger is a feedback loop: more spending requires more borrowing; more borrowing can raise investors' concerns; higher yields increase interest costs; higher interest costs consume fiscal space; and shrinking fiscal space makes every subsequent policy choice harder.

The Takaichi government has invested a considerable stake in promoting Japan's military, economic security and national identity. It has pressed ahead with controversial legislation on imperial succession and a backup capital, while its security policy is a de facto neo-militarist to-do list.

Yet unlike the right-wing forces, voters appear less interested in recovering yesterday's military "glory" than paying tomorrow's grocery bills.

In other words, Takaichi's main interest is remilitarization, while issues such as people's livelihoods and alleviating the burden on households take a back seat. The poll numbers on historical issues indicate that Japanese society is not unanimously behind her neo-militarist agenda. That is a big political gap.

The strongest mandate in the world cannot repeal arithmetic. Takaichi's ruling coalition may have won a Lower House majority, but it still faces resistance in the Upper House, and her popularity is already losing some of its protective cushion.

Takaichi vows to make Japan stronger. But strength is not measured by the number of missiles, submarines and warplanes a government can finance, but whether a country can pay its bills, maintain policy credibility and improve its people's well-being.

No country can become stronger in the long run by confusing military expenditure with economic vitality. Takaichi has a choice between political theater and economic discipline.

But even as the Japanese public grapples with the rising cost of living, Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi visited Australia and India last week, advocating Japan's "counterstrike capabilities" and promoting weapons exports. These moves reflect Takaichi is recklessly pursuing the wrong choice of expanding military and related industries while trying to cut taxes.

The more rational choice would be to embrace the trade-offs required for "national renewal": a credible tax base, structural reform, monetary-policy independence and spending that prioritizes the economy's long-term capacity. The neo-militarist drive should be discarded.

Japan's strained fiscal reality should serve as a stark warning to Takaichi: sacrificing public welfare for military expansion is a path to ruin. The problem, however, is that you can never wake someone who is pretending to be asleep.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Middle East crisis cannot be sanctioned away by coercion

When Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Miao Deyu met his Iranian counterpart Kazem Gharibabadi in Beijing on Aug 17, he reaffirmed China's commitment to dialogue and peace in the Middle East, saying that Beijing will continue helping restore peace and tranquility to the region.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a news release about the meeting on Sunday, after US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent publicly urged China, on Thursday, to join Washington's economic pressure campaign against Tehran. China's message was simple: It will not be pressured into being the US' accomplice in a conflict Washington created — along with Israel — and which it cannot resolve.

The conflict is entering its sixth month. The US' "Epic Fury" strikes in February and following campaigns failed to break Tehran's will. A full-scale invasion, according to Pentagon estimates, would cost trillions of dollars and require years of input — a political death sentence.

So Washington has increasingly pivoted to "economic warfare", with US President Donald Trump calling it "economic D-Day", a phrase that evokes the Normandy landings but increasingly sounds like a retreat.

This is a familiar Washington reflex: When military pressure fails, double down on sanctions. But three realities complicate that strategy.

First, Venezuela. Tehran has watched what happened under the US sanctions regime and drawn its own conclusion. Second, the Strait of Hormuz. Iran does not need to defeat the US Navy to control the choke point. Washington can squeeze Iranian oil exports, but it cannot open the strait. Third, the US' own fiscal predicament. Trump's suggestion that military force could be used if the national debt becomes unmanageable exposes an uncomfortable truth: domestic economic anxieties are increasingly bleeding into strategic calculations. A foreign confrontation can become a convenient distraction from problems at home.

So where does China fit in? China is Iran's trading partner. Bessent urged Beijing to sever those ties, but Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Lin Jian was explicit: China opposes unilateral sanctions that lack a UN Security Council mandate.

Washington should discard the wishful thinking that it can compel China to cut economic ties with Iran. If the rest of the world is forced to do the US' bidding, international commerce stops being commerce and becomes permission-based globalization, in which Washington decides who may trade with whom.

There is also a larger geopolitical question. Washington's pressure campaign could produce the opposite effect. There have been reports that Iran has been invited to join the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement. Tehran has denied this, but it highlights that although the US seeks to isolate Iran economically, regional countries may be exploring ways to integrate it into a new security architecture.

Talk about the irony: the US threatens secondary sanctions against countries that trade with Iran at a time when some of its own allies and partners may be contemplating deeper security ties with Tehran.

Unilateral sanctions can concentrate pressure on one country, but they cannot prevent the costs from spreading. War cannot solve the problem; sanctions often create new ones.

Washington has been trying to turn economic interdependence into strategic leverage. But leverage works only when others are willing to accept the rules. Even US allies and partners reject US rules in many fields.

And the golden rule of being in a hole still applies: When you are in one, stop digging. Washington is scrabbling with both hands — military conflict and economic coercion.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

AI can speed up development of Global South

Editor's note: *Artificial intelligence can speed up the growth of developing countries. But these countries should take proactive steps to fully capitalize on the opportunities. People's Daily Overseas Edition spoke to Xu Xiujun, deputy head of the National Academy of Chinese Modernization at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Jiang Tianjiao, associate professor at the Development Institute of Fudan University, about the challenges the Global South faces in leveraging AI and how international cooperation can help overcome these hurdles. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

AI technologies can diffuse through open source frameworks, pretrained models and cloud-based application programming interface calls. This allows developing countries to avoid costly hardware and gain direct access to advanced algorithmic capabilities.

Developing countries don't have to develop state-of-the-art AI models from scratch. Instead, they can adopt existing tools and tailor them to local conditions. AI applications in agriculture, healthcare, education, public governance, disaster response and other fields can enhance public services. This way, AI can ease the shortage of professionals and public services in some developing countries.

The competition over AI involves a comprehensive ecosystem that integrates data, algorithms and computing power. Currently, a few countries and enterprises dominate advanced computing resources, which raises barriers for developing countries. At the same time, many Global South countries face challenges such as insufficient power and network infrastructure, limited access to computing power, lack of localized data and talent, as well as underdeveloped industrial ecosystems for research and development and the application of AI. This threatens to turn the "access divide" of the internet era into an "intelligence divide".

AI has also given rise to a new "representational divide". Large-model training relies heavily on data, yet languages, cultures and knowledge of many developing countries are under-represented in the training datasets of mainstream models. This could lower the suitability of models and lead to algorithmic bias, undermining the performance of such AI models in local contexts.

The AI era requires not only basic digital literacy but also skills in human-machine collaboration, placing greater demands on education, vocational training and talent development. A country's ability to build a talent base compatible with intelligent transformation will determine whether it can fully unlock the dividends of AI.

Without an adequate understanding of AI application and regulation, and without policies and rules for AI development, governments risk long-term dependence on foreign technology suppliers and large platform enterprises. This dependence could hinder the development and growth of domestic industrial ecosystems and innovation capacity.

Future international cooperation should focus on systematically enhancing the capabilities of Global South countries. Priority should be given to developing inclusive digital infrastructure, including the power supply, networks and computing capacity, to support Global South countries in building more local, green and resilient intelligent computing centers. Efforts should also be made to establish an open-source and inclusive technology ecosystem. This includes encouraging the development and application of open-source AI models, frameworks and tools, and supporting Global South countries in cultivating local talent, native language models and AI applications tailored to their local needs.

Furthermore, countries should cooperate to establish a fair and reasonable global AI governance system. Platforms such as the newly established World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization should be leveraged to ensure Global South countries participate on an equal footing in formulating international AI rules, technical standards and ethical norms. Priority should be given to cooperation in areas related to people's well-being, including agriculture, healthcare, education, and disaster early-warning, to ensure that AI dividends can truly benefit broader populations.

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VIEWS

Asit K. Biswas, Qu Yanping, and Yang Xiaojing

Tackling drought from parched to prepared

Throughout history, climatic fluctuations have been a constant companion of human civilization.

Early human civilizations developed along the fertile banks of rivers such as the Nile in Egypt, the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia, the Indus in the Indian subcontinent, and China's Yellow and Yangtze rivers.

There was abundant water for drinking and irrigation, and the rivers were also main arteries for transportation.

However, living close to the rivers also made these civilizations vulnerable to the threat of floods, while regions away from water sources faced the risk of droughts. The Indus civilization declined due to a prolonged drought, while in China, several dynasties lost power because the rulers were unable to protect the population from serious floods and droughts. Flood and drought management therefore became key issues for all dynasties.

As nations grew wealthier and technology advanced, policymakers across the world gained more alternatives to tackle extreme weather events. But floods have received more attention from scientists and policymakers than droughts because their impact is more visible and dramatic.

This is paradoxical, because floods can last for days, while droughts can extend for several months, years and even decades.

Moreover, prolonged droughts often inflict significantly greater human suffering than do heavy floods.

Droughts are now seen as multi-sector crises because they not only affect agriculture and food security but also reduce energy production, disrupt transportation systems, increase wildfire risks, and cause widespread economic losses that persist long after the drought itself has ended.

The severe drought in the Yangtze River Basin in 2022 exemplifies how droughts can evolve into a widespread socio-economic crisis when water shortage affects multiple sectors simultaneously. Prolonged high temperatures and extremely low precipitation led to reduced river inflows, declining reservoir levels and widespread deficits in soil moisture.

The impact extended beyond agriculture, disrupting urban and rural water supplies, hydropower generation, inland navigation and ecosystem health.

Unlike floods, which have clear beginnings and ends, droughts develop through an intricate interplay among precipitation, temperature, soil moisture, and human activities.

Global Lens

Advances in data analytics, artificial intelligence, remote sensing, and numerical modeling are improving drought prediction capabilities, but it is not yet possible to forecast when a drought may start, how severe it may become and how long it may persist.

Recognizing these challenges, institutions such as the China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research are spearheading efforts to improve drought monitoring, forecasting and early-warning systems. Although significant knowledge gaps remain, advances in forecasting science are expected to provide policymakers and water managers more time to prepare for droughts and reduce their impact.

The good news is that China is better equipped to handle droughts than ever before. Substantial investments in water infrastructure, improved water management practices, expanded grain storage capacity, and more effective drought preparedness measures have bolstered the country's resilience.

As a result, although droughts will continue to occur and pose serious multisectoral challenges, their social, economic, and environmental consequences can be mitigated more effectively than in the past.

In addition, China's transport connectivity is now among the best in the world. Grain reserves can be moved quickly from one part of the country to drought-hit regions. This was not so easy just two decades ago.

However, future drought management must shift from reactive crisis response to proactive risk management. Historically, governments across the world have focused on emergency measures only after the impact of drought becomes visible.

A more effective approach involves drought preparedness, continuous monitoring, early-warning systems, risk assessment and institutional coordination to mitigate severe impact before it occurs. Such approaches can reduce vulnerability and increase societal resilience to droughts.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) proposes new strategies for managing natural disasters, including droughts, and emphasizes proactive resilience. This will require a deeper understanding of droughts, extensive monitoring and a thorough analysis of their impact.

As climate change increases the frequency, intensity and duration of extreme weather events, research by institutions such as the IWHR will be crucial. These efforts aim to enhance our understanding of drought processes, strengthen forecasting capabilities, and develop more effective early-warning systems.

While droughts will remain an inevitable aspect of climatic variability, advances in science and risk management should enable societies to anticipate them earlier and respond more effectively. Such progress would benefit not only China but also drought-prone regions across the world.

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

Chen Guiqing

Washington urged to honor one-China principle for stable ties

When the presidents of China and the United States met in May, they agreed to explore building a constructive and strategically stable relationship between the two countries. The Taiwan question, the most sensitive topic in China-US relations, was discussed in depth. The US made several commitments, including US President Donald Trump's remark that "I'm not looking to have somebody go independent", as well as signals that Washington would exercise restraint on arms sales to Taiwan and would not back the calls for "Taiwan independence".

Yet, months later, the reality is mixed. While Washington has shown some signs of restraint, it has simultaneously created new risks in the Taiwan Strait.

Stability in the Taiwan Strait is essential for maintaining steady China-US relations. Whether the US honors its commitments to China will directly affect the prospects for a stable relationship between the two countries.

Since the presidential meeting, Washington seems to understand the risks of conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

Following the meeting, the US temporarily paused major arms sales to Taiwan, stressed the importance of peace across the Strait, and resumed diplomatic communication with China at multiple levels.

Washington also publicly reiterated its adherence to the one-China principle, showing no fundamental shift in its Taiwan policy.

This period of relative restraint enabled the resumption of dialogue in areas such as trade, temporarily easing tensions across the Strait. Strategically, Washington recognizes that a conflict over Taiwan would incur enormous costs the US could ill afford. This reflects a calculation based on US interests, and aligns with the understandings reached by the two presidents.

Yet, high-level verbal commitments do not always translate into action on the ground. Provocative moves reveal a persistent problem in US policy: a divergence between Washington's words and its actions.

Raymond Greene, director of the "American Institute in Taiwan", often oversteps his role and intervenes in the island's political affairs.

In the current political environment, this distorts the status quo across the Strait and promotes the so-called "dialogue without preconditions", which emboldens separatist activities.

At the same time, the US continues to deepen military ties with Taiwan authorities, promoting defense concepts, pressing for increased defense spending, and accelerating efforts to build up "asymmetric capabilities".

It is also deeply involved in tactical defense planning, encouraging preparations for urban combat. Such moves embolden separatist forces seeking "Taiwan independence".

The US policy is marked by contradictions. While senior White House officials pledge to manage risks, anti-China lawmakers in the US push Taiwan-related legislation and military exchanges continue between the US and Taiwan authorities.

This double-faced approach seriously undermines the understandings reached by President Xi Jinping and President Trump, eroding peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

This contradiction stems from the US desire to contain the Chinese mainland, using Taiwan as leverage. Washington seeks to constrain China's development without being dragged into war by "Taiwan independence" forces.

This opportunism has made US policy unstable. Washington seems to believe that it can test China's limits while arming Taiwan and slow down China's reunification process without triggering a conflict.

But this dangerous ambiguity risks uncontrollable escalation. Separatist forces will not be satisfied with limited US "support" and will push Washington toward direct confrontation.

Those who play with fire risk getting burned. Provocations will only shrink the space for peace across the Strait and could lead to a dangerous strategic collision.

The Taiwan question is pivotal for a stable China-US relationship. Such a relationship should be defined by cooperation, healthy competition, manageable differences, and the promise of peace. Yet, Taiwan is a destabilizing factor in this path.

China and the US have differences over trade, technology, global governance and many other issues, but these allow room for negotiation. The Taiwan question is different and concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, leaving no room for compromise.

The one-China principle is the political foundation of China-US diplomatic relations. If Washington continues to play the "Taiwan card", all the high-level understandings and plans for cooperation will rest on shaky ground.

A conflict could wipe out years of progress in China-US dialogue, dismantling the framework for a stable relationship and severely disrupting peace and stability across the Asia-Pacific.

Handling the Taiwan question is therefore a critical test for avoiding the trap of major-power confrontation. For a constructive and strategically stable relationship, Washington must abandon opportunism, honor its commitments and translate the understandings reached by the two presidents into concrete action. The following measures can take the relationship in that direction.

First, Washington should ensure consistency in its Taiwan policy, restrain provocative behavior by officials and stop further escalation of military ties between the US and the Taiwan authorities. Its words and actions on Taiwan should be consistent.

Second, the US should uphold its one-China principle, halt official exchanges and military ties with Taiwan, stop pushing Taiwan to expand its military capabilities, and abandon the idea of using the Taiwan question to contain the Chinese mainland.

Third, Washington should recognize the incompatibility of "Taiwan independence" and peace in the Taiwan Strait. It should stop encouraging separatist activities on the island.

The historical trend toward reunification across the Taiwan Strait cannot be stopped. China's central government consistently pursues peaceful reunification, but it has not renounced the use of force against separatism and interference by external forces.

Only by properly managing the Taiwan question and upholding the one-China principle can China and the US remove the biggest obstacle in their relationship and create broader space for a constructive and strategically stable relationship.

By preserving stability in the Taiwan Strait and abandoning the "Taiwan card", Washington can stabilize China-US relations and contribute to global peace.

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



Kang Bing

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Key to realizing life expectancy goals lies in rural areas

Six decades ago, when I was just six years old, for several months it was my uncle who came to fetch me from my boarding kindergarten to spend weekends with my grandparents.

My parents, I was told, were in the hospital, with my father suffering from tuberculosis and my mother from hepatitis. At that time, both diseases were infectious and, sometimes, fatal.

As a six-year-old, I could only cry and pray that they recover and live till the age of 60 — a target I also set for myself. As a child, I had no idea about life expectancy and set the goal just because I had heard people talk about someone having lived till "the ripe old age of 70".

Thanks to China's better living conditions, improved medical care, and probably my prayers, both my parents lived longer than I had prayed for, with my father passing away at the age of 91 and my mother at 86, even though they had to spend their last few years in the hospital.

The National Health Plan for the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), released by the State Council, China's Cabinet, has set the country's life expectancy at 80 years, an increase of three months over last year. If China successfully meets the target, it will surpass many developed countries, and the world average of 73.5 years in 2024.

Checking China's historical records, I have little doubt that the target will be met — over the past few decades, the country has never failed to meet its Five-Year Plan goals. In fact, China has achieved the feat of raising the country's life expectancy from 67.9 years in 1981 to 79.25 years in 2025.

Health literacy indicates a citizen's ability to obtain and understand health information and their capability to make the right healthcare choices.

Every time I go through the details of the health plan, I feel I can sit back and relax. Going by the dozens of indices and practical measures in place, it seems that realizing the life expectancy goal is not going to be a problem. In fact, I feel, they have been extra cautious in setting the target.

The rates of infant mortality, maternal mortality and premature deaths, and of major chronic diseases, are likely to fall in tandem with the rise in life expectancy.

According to the plan, better-equipped hospitals will be established and measures will be taken to ensure citizens can find treatment options within 15 minutes' walking distance from their homes. The number of doctors and nurses will be increased to provide patients with better care.

To deal with the shortage of medical staff in rural areas, medical schools will open their doors wider to students and trainees from these regions on the condition that they return to their hometowns and villages after graduation and training to provide health services there.

More doctor exchange programs will be arranged so that rural doctors have more opportunities for training. Remote medical care will be encouraged to provide timely healthcare to the rural population. Of the approximately one million licensed doctors working in village clinics, many are nearing retirement age, leading to the closing down of many village clinics.

Providing rural societies with better medical care remains a big challenge for health authorities in their quest to raise the country's life expectancy. The challenge becomes tough when we realize that rural areas are fast turning into aging societies, as millions of young people from rural areas migrate to the cities in search of jobs.

While the required tweak (increase or decrease) in the rate of other indexes to meet the plan's goal is less than one percent, the biggest hurdle to cross is in residents' health literacy levels, from 33.69 percent last year to 40 percent five years later.

Health literacy indicates a citizen's ability to obtain and understand health information and their capability to make the right healthcare choices.

Publicity drives should be undertaken to encourage residents to adopt healthy living habits, such as not smoking, controlled drinking, and reduced sugar and salt intake. Awareness should be raised among citizens about chronic diseases such as hypertension and hyperglycemia, and they should undergo routine physical check-ups.

They should also engage in regular physical exercise — at least three times a week and no less than 30 minutes each time.

Surveys find disparities in urban and rural areas regarding sports, with around 38.5 percent of urban residents regularly engaging in sports activities compared with about 31 percent of their counterparts in rural areas.

It seems the rural areas hold the key to realizing, or not realizing, the country's improved life expectancy goal.

Health authorities will find that a lot needs to be done in this regard in the rural areas.

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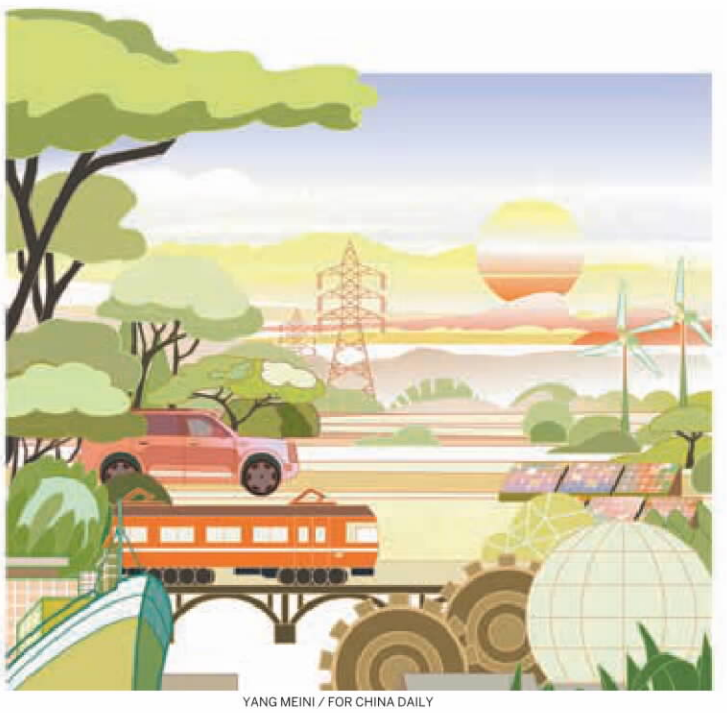

YANG MEINI / FOR CHINA DAILY

BERNARDO MENDIA

Enabling, not squeezing

China's development enlarges the global industrial pie for shared prosperity across the Global South

A persistent narrative has gained traction among certain Western policy circles and think tanks: China's manufacturing capacity is "squeezing" the industrial space of other developing nations. Under this framing, global manufacturing is portrayed as a fixed, zero-sum pie in which one nation's export expansion inherently denies others the chance to industrialize.



This view relies on an outdated model of international trade. It fundamentally misinterprets the dynamic realities of modern global value chains and ignores how industrial upgrading actually occurs. Far from pulling up the development ladder behind it, China is constructing critical structural steps, through intermediate capital exports, greenfield foreign direct investment and joint production ecosystems, that lower the threshold of industrialization across the Global South.

Expanding market access and sharing development dividends are key measures through which China supports the shared prosperity of the Global South. A landmark development is China's zero-tariff policy, effective May 1, covering 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic ties. China is the first major economy to grant unilateral, comprehensive duty-free access to these African nations.

China is taking concrete actions to help African nations better integrate into the global market and unlock their development potential. According to China's General Administration of Customs, in May and June, China's imports from Africa totaled 193.8 billion yuan ($28.8 billion), marking a 23.5 percent year-on-year increase. The import volumes of African specialty agricultural products and semi-processed mineral goods have steadily risen. The structure of China-Africa trade continues to improve: Chinese imports can match Africa's distinctive products and resource endowments; Chinese exports can deliver its high-quality equipment, mature technologies and full industrial chain capabilities. The partnership — characterized by complementary supply and demand, integrated industries and interconnected markets — is growing ever more robust.

The zero-sum argument also overlooks a profound structural shift in global trade statistics. China's export architecture has evolved from final consumer goods toward intermediate components, advanced machinery and green technology. According to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, China's equipment manufacturing sector became a major driver of the country's export growth in the first half of 2026, with exports of mechanical and electrical products increasing by 20.1 percent. Based on data released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, exports of wind turbine generators, lithium batteries and automobiles have registered growth in the first half of this year.

This development provides other developing economies with competitively priced capital inputs. Critics often worry that relying on imported intermediate goods leads to premature deindustrialization or locks some developing nations into low-value assembly. Yet history demonstrates that almost every modern industrial power, including China during its early reform era, began by mastering processing and assembly before moving up the technological ladder. Importing cost-effective components, energy systems and industrial machinery lowers operational baselines for local manufacturers.

Furthermore, this mechanism generates a vital macroeconomic benefit: input-cost disinflation. Instead of forcing emerging markets into capital-intensive, high-risk import substitution from scratch, cost-effective goods act as a structural anti-inflationary buffer. Local industries gain immediate price competitiveness, enabling domestic capital to focus on downstream processing, customized manufacturing and regional market distribution. The emerging pattern is a highly collaborative division of labor where China supplies intermediate goods, partner countries process and assemble and both benefit from joint global exports.

Trade flows alone, however, tell only half of the story. The transition from simple commerce to long-term economic integration is powered by direct capital deployment. Data highlights a pivot in cross-border investment: China's non-financial direct investment in Belt and Road partner nations surpassed $39.67 billion in 2025, accompanied by over $257.98 billion in signed construction contracts.

This capital is no longer limited to basic infrastructure or sovereign loans. It is increasingly directed into physical greenfield production. From manufacturing complexes in Egypt's Suez Canal Economic Zone to multi-billion-dollar green ammonia and renewable energy programs in Ethiopia, capital is being anchored directly inside host countries. Dedicated industrial parks act as ecosystem anchors, generating local employment, transferring operational skills and converting raw materials into processed, value-added exports on-site. Greenfield investment ensures that host nations do not remain passive consumers, but steadily construct durable domestic industrial capacity.

In this sense, China and other Global South countries are complementary and mutually reinforcing partners working hand-in-hand, rather than competitors in homogeneous rivalry. China serves as an important enabler of industrialization and the green transition across the Global South.

The assertion that China's industrial power "squeezes" other Global South countries fails to withstand empirical scrutiny. Industrial growth in the 21st century is not achieved through isolation or protectionist barriers, but through deep integration into global value chains. By supplying cost-effective intermediate goods, mitigating domestic inflationary pressures, and committing direct capital to greenfield industrial ecosystems, China is expanding the global industrial pie. When integrated with various dynamic multilateral platforms, this model demonstrates that South-South cooperation is fundamentally transformational, building the steps for shared, long-term economic prosperity.

China's development is an opportunity, not a challenge, for the world. Committed to an open strategy of mutual benefits and win-win cooperation, China can empower global economic recovery through its own high-quality development.

Today, aligning with China's development opportunities, deepening practical cooperation with China, and participating in the Belt and Road Initiative have become significant choices for many countries around the world. Multilateral platforms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum and the China-CELAC Forum have delivered tangible results.

Strategic cross-regional frameworks, such as the historical ties connecting Portugal and the broader Portuguese-speaking world (representing more than 270 million consumers), offer an additional blueprint for trilateral economic cooperation. As an EU member state with deep corporate networks across Latin America and Africa, Portugal can combine Chinese capital equipment and advanced technologies with local engineering, logistics, and management expertise. Coupled with the institutional clearing mechanisms of Forum Macao, this trilateral model can ensure that South-South trade is supported by balanced, multi-party supply chains to help deepen cooperation in global production capacity, technological innovation, infrastructure connectivity and green development.

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LI XING

Out of double trap

The US faces difficult task of managing both external competition and internal pressures

For more than a decade, strategic debate in the United States has been echoing an influential proposition: the Thucydides Trap. Popularized by Harvard professor Graham Allison and inspired by the Peloponnesian War, the concept warns that the rise of an emerging power can generate dangerous structural tensions with an established one.



Despite scholarly criticism and even dismiss across continents, the proposition has often been cited in the US to interpret the contemporary strategic competition with China.

Recently, Ian Bremmer, founder of the Eurasia Group, drew on lessons from the collapse of the Roman Republic to revive the concept of the Gracchi Trap. Unlike the Thucydides Trap, which attributes the risk of conflict primarily to the structural dynamics of external power competition, the Gracchi Trap directs attention to the internal sources of a great power's decline. It argues that major powers ultimately lose their preeminence because they fail to reform themselves in the face of mounting domestic dysfunction. Political paralysis, institutional decay, widening polarization and growing inequality progressively erode state capacity and national cohesion, leaving a great power increasingly vulnerable to external competition and strategic pressure.

Taken separately, both traps offer peculiar viewpoints for understanding the internality and externality of crises. Taken together, however, they present a far more challenging picture of strategic predicament for the United States, which is simultaneously confronting both external struggles for global leadership and the internal polarization of governance and legitimacy.

The Thucydides Trap is most commonly applied by people from the US to the context of relations with China, although many Asia-Pacific researchers have pinpointed its inherent logical faults, disregard of Chinese philosophical tradition and structural mismatch with current circumstances. As China's economic, technological and military capabilities expand, Washington increasingly views Beijing not merely as a competitor but as the only country capable of fundamentally reshaping the global balance of power. Successive US administrations — Republican and Democratic alike — have increasingly viewed the bilateral relationship through the lens of the Thucydides Trap, making strategic competition with China the organizing principle of US foreign policy.

This contest now extends far beyond the traditional domains of military and security competition. It encompasses advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and semiconductors, global supply chains, investment screening, export controls, critical minerals, maritime security and competing visions of global governance. Relations between the world's two largest economies have had resounding impact on the rest of the world as well as global development.

Such structural competition undoubtedly generates significant risks. History demonstrates that power transitions have frequently been accompanied by miscalculation, arms races and, in some cases, major conflicts. Escalating tensions and even conflict cannot be dismissed by many US personalities. Yet, hopes have been refreshed by the new vision of a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability agreed upon by both sides during the landmark visit to China by US President Donald Trump in May this year.

The Gracchi Trap, however, shifts analytical attention away from China and back to the US itself. The concept derives from the Gracchi brothers of the Roman Republic, whose attempts to reform an increasingly unequal political system ended not in compromise but in political violence. Their failure marked the beginning of decades of instability that ultimately contributed to the decline and eventual collapse of the Roman Republic. The central implication of the Gracchi Trap is straightforward: great powers often weaken from internal dysfunction long before they are overcome by external adversaries.

In the US, the warning signs have become increasingly difficult to ignore. Political polarization has reached levels unseen for generations. Congress increasingly struggles to pass major legislation. Electoral outcomes are routinely contested. Public trust in government institutions continues to decline. Social divisions over race, immigration, inequality, identity politics and economic opportunity have become deeply entrenched. Meanwhile, mounting fiscal pressures, rising public debt and deteriorating infrastructure further complicate the prospects for effective long-term governance.

These domestic contradictions inevitably shape US foreign policy. When governments face difficult internal challenges, they often seek external sources of political cohesion and strategic purpose. Adopting a more hawkish stance toward China can serve to generate domestic political unity and reinforce an "America First" identity. Economic difficulties are increasingly attributed to competition from China, while even long-standing allies are portrayed as having taken advantage of the US. At the same time, perceived external security threats often receive greater political attention than the pursuit of necessary structural reforms at home.

This interaction between domestic politics and international strategies demonstrates why the Thucydides Trap and the Gracchi Trap should not be understood in isolation. Rather, they are mutually reinforcing dynamics. External competition intensifies domestic political pressures, while domestic political dysfunction, in turn, encourages more confrontational foreign-policy choices. The result is a self-reinforcing cycle in which external competition and internal instability become mutually amplifying forces, potentially accelerating both strategic overextension abroad and institutional erosion at home.

This has important implications beyond the US. Much of Europe has historically aligned itself with the US' strategic assessment of China, while US allies across Asia and Latin America have also adjusted their security policies in response to intensifying US-China competition. As a result, the trajectory of US domestic politics is no longer merely a national concern; it increasingly shapes the stability, direction and strategic dynamics of the broader international system.

While some observers may interpret US political dysfunction as evidence of inevitable decline, the realities of economic globalization suggest a more complex and double-edged dynamic. The relative weakening of the US should not be regarded as an unqualified strategic advantage for China, given the extensive economic interdependence, cultural exchanges and people-to-people ties that have developed between the two countries. In other words, a weaker US does not necessarily benefit China. Rather, instability in the world's largest and most influential economy could generate profound uncertainties for the global system, with significant repercussions for China itself.

Historical analogies should be applied with caution. Neither the Thucydides Trap nor the Gracchi Trap should be taken as deterministic predictions. History does not mechanically repeat itself. Rather, these concepts highlight structural pressures that policymakers should seek to resolve rather than allow to unfold.

Avoiding the Thucydides Trap requires strategic trust-building, crisis-management mechanisms and sustained dialogue between the US and China. Avoiding the Gracchi Trap requires something even more difficult for the US: restoring public trust in the political system, strengthening domestic institutions, addressing widening inequalities and rebuilding national consensus.

Throughout history, great powers rarely collapse because they lose a single external confrontation. More often, they decline gradually because internal weaknesses prevent them from adapting to changing circumstances.

The future global order will therefore depend not only on how the US manages competition with China but also on whether it can overcome its own domestic fragmentation.

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BUSINESS

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Alibaba seeks HK$80 billion placement

Raising equity gives firm longer-term funding; sends vote of confidence

By **CHENG YU**
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View of Alibaba's booth at the recent World AI Conference held in Shanghai. AP

Alibaba Group is seeking to raise about HK$80 billion ($10.2 billion) through a new share placement in Hong Kong, which, if completed, would become the world's third-largest primary follow-on offering this year, behind only those placed by Alphabet and Intel.

The placement, announced on Sunday, would mark Alibaba's first new share sale since its Hong Kong listing in 2019. More striking is where every dollar raised is headed — the company plans to use 100 percent of its net proceeds to strengthen its artificial intelligence capabilities, including expanding and upgrading AI infrastructure.

Several sources close to the matter told China Daily that the offering was oversubscribed within an hour of its launch. One source close to the company disclosed that sovereign wealth funds and some long-term institutional investors showed keen interest.

Right after the move, Alibaba's Chairman Cai Chongxin and CEO Wu Yongming bought a combined about HK$120 million of Alibaba shares.

Guo Tao, deputy director of China Electronic Commerce Expert Service Center, said: "Alibaba's placement also has benchmark significance for China's AI industry. Alibaba's continued expansion in AI capital spending could accelerate development across China's domestic AI supply chain, from AI chip adaptation and intelligent computing centers to liquid-cooling systems."

As the AI race shifts from a technology contest into a "capital endurance race", raising equity gives Alibaba longer-term funding while sending a vote of confidence through the broader sector, Guo said.

The aggressive spending comes as AI emerges as an increasingly important growth engine for Alibaba.

The company reported revenue of 268.95 billion yuan ($37.5 billion) for its fiscal first quarter ended June 30, with net profit attributable to shareholders of 10.54 billion yuan.

Alibaba CEO Wu Yongming told analysts after the earnings release that annualized recurring revenue from AI-related products was expected to approach $10 billion in the next quarter. AI-related product ARR had already surpassed 49.5 billion yuan in the first quarter, Wu said.

Jiang Han, a senior researcher at market consultancy Pangoal, said: "Alibaba's organizational restructuring was effectively designed to build a vertically integrated, full-stack AI operation, lowering transaction costs and speeding the deployment of new technologies. The improvement in commercialization returns mentioned by Wu is a direct monetization of that full-stack capability." Jiang added that Alibaba's AI investment was beginning to move from simply "burning cash" toward generating its own financial returns.

Alibaba's fundraising also comes as the AI sector's capital requirements are ballooning globally, pushing companies to seek ever larger pools of financing.

Anthropic confidentially filed for a United States' initial public offering in June and could list as early as October, with a targeted valuation of as much as $2 trillion. OpenAI is also targeting a potential fourth-quarter listing, while its valuation in private markets stands at around $850 billion.

Alibaba's HK$80 billion placement puts China's largest tech firms squarely into that global capital race. But raising more money does not remove the biggest uncertainty hanging over the AI boom — whether commercial returns can keep pace with the extraordinary amount of investment.

Investors are already showing some caution. Alibaba's US-listed shares closed at $119.34 on Monday, down 8.57 percent, while its Hong Kong-listed shares ended at HK$112, down 8.54 percent.

"The biggest risk investors need to watch is not that AI fails, but that the pace of AI commercialization fails to keep up with capital spending. In the end, this competition will not be about who spends the most. It will be about who can make returns on AI investment exceed the cost of capital first," Jiang added.

Smart agriculture


Staffers from State Grid Yangzhou check power facilities at Jiangdu District Modern Agricultural Industrial Park in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, aiming to optimize power supply for electricity-intensive projects such as smart greenhouses, water and fertilizer irrigation infrastructure, and cold chain storage facilities. The power supplier aims to inject strong momentum into developing local smart agriculture. REN FEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Railway cargo transport volume up

The China-Laos Railway has handled over 90 million metric tons of cargo since the railway began operation in 2021, with cross-border cargo surpassing 21 million tons, said China Railway Kunming Group Co Ltd. The number of cross-border freight trains operated daily has risen to a peak of 23, while the maximum hauling capacity per train has increased from 2,000 tons to 2,800 tons.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 24 pips to 6.7841 against the US dollar on Monday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Digital yuan use gathering pace

By **ZHOU LANXU**
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China's digital yuan is gaining traction in cross-border use as a growing number of transactions point to broader and more regular commercial applications, potentially bolstering the renminbi's role in international settlement and payments, experts said.

The development comes as recent volatility in the United States Treasury market has renewed discussion about diversification of the international monetary system. Central bank digital currencies — including e-CNY or the digital yuan — have been viewed as one possible avenue for supporting a more diversified system, given their potential to make cross-border payments faster, less costly and more secure.

Against this backdrop, Ping An Bank recently said that its Hangzhou branch in Zhejiang province had made the first e-CNY transaction in the lender's cross-border business. Using the Multilateral Central Bank Digital Currency Bridge (mBridge), the branch had processed a goods trade settlement for a high-end manufacturer in Jiaxing, Zhejiang.

Ping An Bank said the transaction shortened the intermediate clearing chain and significantly improved transaction security and settlement efficiency compared with conventional cross-border remittances.

The mBridge project is a new type of multicurrency international cross-border infrastructure leveraging blockchain technology, allowing direct transactions in local digital currencies.

The platform's cumulative transaction value had reached almost 500 billion yuan ($74.4 billion) by end-2025, with more than 95 percent of the transactions made using e-CNY as of end-November 2025, according to the People's Bank of China.

This month, the Beijing Municipal Branch of the PBOC said that Postal Savings Bank of China's Beijing branch had completed the city's first mBridge cross-border transaction involving the Macao Special Administrative Region, making a payment to a Macao company related to public transport card settlement.

Last month, Industrial Bank also announced that it had launched in Guangzhou, Guangdong province mBridge payment services to the Macao SAR, while having lately used the platform to process a 500 million yuan cross-border transfer for an equity acquisition involving an industrial park.

"Together, the cases show that cross-border e-CNY payments have moved beyond proof-of-concept testing into real-value transactions, and are accelerating toward regular, large-scale use," said Lou Feipeng, a researcher at Postal Savings Bank of China.

"The next breakthroughs are likely to come from deeper expansion of application scenarios," Lou said, as the digital yuan is extending usage from goods trade into services trade, cross-border investment and financing, commodity transactions, shipping insurance and other financial activities.

Further progress will also require broader infrastructure connectivity and a stronger institutional ecosystem, including cross-border anti-money laundering cooperation, he added.

Policy and institutional support have been strengthened. At its work conference held this month, the PBOC called for improving cross-border digital yuan infrastructure. The central bank subsequently expanded the number of e-CNY operating institutions to 30, broadening the banking network that could develop related applications.

Miao Yanliang, chief economist at China International Capital Corp, said, "The digital yuan has the potential to expand the RMB's role in international settlement and payments, with its programmability enabling fast and secure large-value cross-border transactions."

However, Miao said that the key challenge is interoperability — connecting different payment infrastructures across jurisdictions while bridging differences in technical standards and compliance regimes, thereby broadening the range of markets and users the digital yuan can serve.

Unlocking growth via county-level markets

By **LI JING**
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China's vast county-level markets are rapidly evolving beyond a cheaper extension of urban markets into an increasingly important source of domestic consumer growth, industry experts and data show.

According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, retail sales of consumer goods in rural areas climbed 2.4 percent year-on-year in the first seven months of this year, more than double the 1.1 percent growth in urban areas. Today, county and township economies generate approximately 40 percent of China's total GDP.

Rural retail growth has outpaced or roughly matched urban growth for 55 consecutive months, a span of more than four years, highlighting the durability of a shift in consumption toward smaller markets, said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

"Covering more than 90 percent of the nation's land area, county-level markets form complete, independent economic units with diverse consumption scenarios," Zhou said. "With rising living standards and incomes, pent-up demand for high-quality lifestyles is surging. This is being met by an influx of major retailers expanding downward, creating an efficient supply-and-demand alignment."

Crucially, experts note that county-level consumers enjoy a distinct structural advantage. "Compared with cities, consumers in county-level areas generally face significantly lower burdens for housing, mortgages and daily transportation," said Chen Liping, a professor specializing in retail at the Capital University of Economics and Business. "This lower cost structure frees up substantial disposable income, fostering stronger willingness to spend and higher resilience against economic headwinds."

However, stronger demand does not automatically translate into stronger brand sales. According to a recent report by market research firm NielsenIQ, also known as NIQ, county-level fast-moving consumer goods sales expanded 2.5 percent year-on-year, five times the 0.5 percent growth recorded in tier-one and tier-two cities. Yet, among the 20 leading FMCG manufacturers tracked by NIQ, only four posted sales gains in county markets, while 16 saw declines.

"County markets are no longer just a 'delayed version' of top-tier cities," said Ding Na, retail insights manager at NielsenIQ China. "Simply relying on downward channel expansion and price wars is no longer enough. Brands need to tailor their strategies to distinct local lifestyles and generational demands."

NIQ data show 53 percent of county consumers remain price-sensitive, while quality, practicality and experience are becoming more important. Consumers under 30 have relatively strong purchasing power and are increasingly interested in technology, design and new experiences, while older consumers tend to place greater weight on practicality and reliability.

"The diversity of county-level markets means businesses have broad room to develop new service models and create new momentum for consumption," said Shen Bing, a researcher at an institute under the National Development and Reform Commission.

Policy tailwinds are set to accelerate this transition. The Ministry of Commerce and eight other government departments released a guideline recently, setting out 18 measures covering upgrades to retail infrastructure, business format innovation, the supply of goods and services, distribution networks and financial support.

"County and township markets now hold the key to further consumption growth," said Yuan Xiaoming, assistant minister of commerce.

China's pet industry evolving at unprecedented rate

By **HE QI** in Shanghai
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China's pet industry is evolving at a pace unmatched worldwide, with consumer and industrial upgrades that take five to seven years in mature markets compressed into just one to two years locally, Ganesh Ramani, general manager of Mars Pet Nutrition China, said in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

"The changes we see across the globe happen at a certain pace, but in China they happen much faster. The timelines are compressed," Ramani said on the sidelines of the 28th Pet Fair Asia held at the Shanghai New International Expo Center from Wednesday to Sunday, which gathered over 2,600 exhibitors from across the full pet industry chain.

Ramani attributed the speed to a comprehensive supply chain, a highly digital retail environment and strong social media influence. Additionally, the influx of first-time pet owners has further energized the market.

China is home to over 100 million pets, and most new pet-owning families have no multi-generational tradition of keeping animals. Consumers actively search for pet care knowledge online and are highly receptive to new information, fueling the growth of more than 3,000 pet food brands in constant innovation, said Ramani.

"Chinese consumers are probably among the most demanding in the world. They pay very close attention to what is on the back of the pack — they research ingredients, formulas, recipes and production processes, and look for validation of what companies are claiming," Ramani said, adding that such rational consumption will push the industry to raise standards and drive out speculative players.

This view echoes observations from Royal Canin, another Mars brand. Xu Juan, general manager of Royal Canin China, said the country's pet market has completed a transition from "quantity" to "quality" over three decades — evolving from functional home guarding to basic sustenance, then premium feeding, and now the pursuit of health and longevity. China has become the world's second-largest market by pet population, Xu said.

Strategic focus on China has translated into tangible investment. Mars Pet Nutrition entered the country in 1989 and started local manufacturing as early as 1995, making it one of the first foreign pet food companies to build production capacity here. Today, 90 percent of Mars' products sold in China are locally made.

"One of the key shifts we have made in recent years is building a portfolio designed around Chinese consumers and local insights," Ramani said, noting that more than 40 localized products have been launched since 2025. While Chinese factories currently prioritize domestic demand, innovations validated here may be exported to other markets in the future.

Royal Canin is also ramping up local manufacturing. With its Tianjin factory's wet pet food line now operational, the company has formed a Tianjin-Shanghai dual-factory footprint with both dry and wet pet food lines. The 88-gram single-serve can and Corgi-specific formula, Xu said, show how local consumer insights drive product innovation.

Pet aging is one of the most definitive niche trends. Xu said that around 20 million pets in China have reached senior age — pets over 7 and large breed dogs over 5 are considered early seniors — and it is estimated that half of the country's pets will be seniors by 2040. However, public awareness lags behind.

Mars Pet Nutrition is approaching the aging trend from a preventive nutrition angle. Ramani said the core logic behind the Nutro brand refresh is proactive health, as the gut serves as the first line of immune defense.

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BUSINESS

HK, Macao key gateways to the world

Cities are ideal testing grounds for products on way to overseas markets

By LI JIAYING
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For an autonomous driving company, moving a vehicle from a left-hand-drive market to a right-hand-drive city is not just a matter of shifting the steering wheel.

The work involves developing the system from the ground up, with everything from product definition and the vehicle platform to the autonomous-driving system and human-machine interface redesigned around the traffic rules, road conditions and user habits of right-hand-drive markets, according to Guangzhou, Guangdong province-based autonomous driving technology company WeRide.

That is why WeRide's new right-hand-drive Robotaxi project began in Hong Kong.

"Few cities offer a tougher real-world test for autonomous vehicles than Hong Kong, where dense roads, mixed traffic and a mature public transport system converge in one of the world's busiest right-hand-drive markets," said Tony Han, founder and CEO of WeRide.

The autonomous driving developer recently announced that it is working with vehicle maker Geely Farizon and local transport operator Kwoon Chung Bus Holdings on a mass-produced model designed around Hong Kong regulations, road conditions and operating requirements.

Han added that if the vehicle works in the city's dense traffic, the experience can support its expansion into other key right-hand-drive markets including Singapore, the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia.

WeRide is not alone in assigning Hong Kong a specific role in a wider innovation chain. For a growing group of Chinese mainland technology companies, Hong Kong and Macao are where products encounter new operating conditions, local partners and international capital before entering overseas markets.

China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) calls for faster progress toward high-level technological self-reliance and again supports Hong Kong as an international innovation and technology center. Hong Kong is also preparing its first five-year plan, where technological development is expected to play a pivotal role.

Technological self-reliance, however, does not mean geographic self-sufficiency. An algorithm developed in a Beijing laboratory may need to be engineered, financed, tested against different rules and sold into markets with different languages and business practices, just as the emerging Beijing-Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao network connects those stages.

"Hong Kong and Macao boast diversified international business environments, leading innovation resources and mature global trade and financial systems," said Huang Heping, general manager of international business development at Beijing-based space company GalaxySpace.

"They are important gateways for mainland companies to connect with the global technology frontier, participate in international scientific cooperation and share China's innovation achievements," Huang said.

GalaxySpace develops communications payloads, satellite platforms and related systems and has built capacity for lower-cost, large-scale satellite production. In early 2025, it established a low-Earth orbit broadband demonstration station in Hong Kong, followed by a connected-car trial project, placing a mainland-developed satellite system in a local transport setting with Hong Kong researchers.

"Just as travelers need a power adapter when they go abroad, mainland space products need a 'converter' to enter international markets," Huang said. "Hong Kong is that crucial platform."

For GalaxySpace, the next steps include further tests, research cooperation and applications that can be assessed by local partners. "We believe Hong Kong and Macao will connect the mainland aerospace industry chain with the global market and create considerable value for the global space industry," Huang said.

Beijing Zhongke WengeAI Science and Technology Co is using Hong Kong in a different part of the same process. Founded in 2017 by artificial intelligence scientists from the Institute of Automation of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the company specializing in AI-assisted decision-making went public on the Hong Kong bourse in June under the exchange's specialist technology company regime.

In a bid to provide further support for high-potential specialist technology companies in their pre-commercial or commercial stages, Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited, also known as HKEX, launched a listing framework under Chapter 18C of the Main Board Listing Rules in March 2023 to allow such companies in frontier sectors to list without meeting traditional profit or heavy revenue requirements.





Above: Visitors take a look at a model of the Lingxi-03 stackable flat-panel satellite, developed by GalaxySpace, at the 2026 Beijing International Commercial Space Exhibition on Jan 23.
JU HUANZONG / XINHUA
Left: Reporters check WeRide's autonomous vehicles in Beijing on July 8 during visits to private-sector tech companies in the capital city.
MENG JIA / XINHUA

> "Just as travelers need a power adapter when they go abroad, mainland space products need a 'converter' to enter international markets. Hong Kong is that crucial platform."
>
> **Huang Heping,** general manager of international business development at Beijing-based GalaxySpace

As of June 30, 21 specialist technology companies had been listed under the framework, raising a combined HK$38.74 billion ($4.94 billion) through their initial public offerings, according to data compiled by RyanBen Capital. Thirteen of them listed in the first half, raising HK$29.82 billion.

"What attracts us most to Hong Kong is its international business environment and its unique role as a bridge between the mainland and international financing markets," said Wang Lei, chairman of Wenge AI.

Wang said the company hopes its Hong Kong listing will broaden access to international capital, providing sustained support for core technology development, AI product upgrades and expansion into new application scenarios.

Its Hong Kong operation has also put it in contact with about a dozen overseas customers so far and allowed its products to be demonstrated in local financial settings, which can provide valuable feedback on compliance language, data formats and professional workflows, he said.

Macao offers a multilingual route into another group of markets. Pachira, an AI speech recognition, analysis and synthesis company, has placed core research and talent in Beijing, its Chinese mainland headquarters, and operating functions in Hengqin, an island district of Zhuhai in Guangdong, adjacent to Macao, and its international operations center in Macao.

"With Hengqin serving as the main base for commercialization, technologies refined in Beijing can be adapted to a wider range of applications and replicated at scale," said Ho Kuok Tou, founder and CEO of the company.

21
number of specialist technology companies that had been listed in Hong Kong under a new listing framework as of June 30

"Macao, meanwhile, provides a natural testing ground for our international expansion — its concentration of hotels, tourism and leisure businesses, and cross-border financial services allows AI products to sharpen their multilingual capabilities and readiness for global markets," Ho added.

To navigate Macao's multilingual environment and distinctive customer-service habits, Pachira has carried out localized iterations of its proprietary speech large language model. The resulting AI voice system, developed for local electricity supplier CEM, now handles high-volume billing inquiries, marking Macao's first use of an LLM in a customer-service system.

The company said it plans to use its Macao operation to pursue opportunities in Portuguese-speaking markets, initially targeting smart-energy and cross-border financial applications in Brazil, as well as factory-installed automotive systems and overseas banking operations in Portugal.

Hong Kong banking on AI, robotics acumen

By LI JIAYING

With Hong Kong's abundant internationally connected services sector enterprises, research and development capabilities, and financial advantages, the special administrative region is becoming a testing ground for robotics companies seeking to take embodied artificial intelligence into overseas markets.

"Hong Kong was chosen as our first overseas stop because reference cases tested here travel well to Southeast Asia, Japan and the Middle East, where some service patterns and consumer habits mirror those in Hong Kong," said Xie Yunpeng, chief development officer of Yunji Technology.

Founded in 2014, the Beijing-based service robot manufacturer established its international business headquarters in Hong Kong in October 2024 and was listed on the main board there a year later.

Now used in Hong Kong hotels, senior living facilities, hospitals and factories, the company's Hong Kong presence combines R&D, market development and support for overseas operations, including a joint innovation lab built by the company and Hong Kong Polytechnic University to push forward intelligent practices for hotel services.

"A robot making reliable deliveries along a hotel corridor may draw on a Beijing company's engineering capabilities, Hong Kong academics' strengths in hotel management research, and the city's international services-sector environment," Xie said.

The city's financial sector can also support continued research and wider deployment, Xie said, adding that the company hopes to build ties with regional conglomerates and family-run offices.

Government support is reinforcing that role. The Hong Kong SAR government's 2026-27 Budget published in February includes embodied AI for the first time, and outlines measures to guide market capital into AI, robotics and other strategic cutting-edge technological fields.

At the first Hong Kong Embodied AI Industry Summit in May, Hong Kong SAR Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu said Hong Kong will establish a committee on AI+ and industry development strategy to formulate policies for driving industrial transformation through AI, with an initial focus on life and health technology and embodied intelligence.

Embodied AI companies on the Chinese mainland are backing that interest with concrete plans. Shanghai-based AGIBOT said in May it would establish an international R&D headquarters in Hong Kong and, over five years, work with the HKSAR government to set up several joint industry-research laboratories, nurture dozens of start-ups and develop hundreds of industry partners. Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based Pudu Robotics is establishing R&D, operations and production centers in the city, while Beijing-based Galbot has also pledged to build a local team, co-found an international embodied-AI talent exchange center with Hong Kong universities, and test its robots in commercial, tourism and other service sector environments.

That strategy is beginning to show up in the companies' accounts. Yunji's latest interim results put first-half overseas revenue at 5.4 million yuan ($803,220), surging 638.1 percent year-on-year, although it still accounted for only 2.8 percent of group revenue.

Yunji attributed the increase to deliveries to new customers and wider channel coverage. As projects reached more customers and service environments, its business abroad has moved from early validation toward more consistent product delivery, the company said.

What robots are asked to do also changes from one market to another, Xie said. Dense delivery networks on the Chinese mainland generate a large number of food orders, while higher costs and thinner logistics networks overseas shift hotel robots toward guests' needs during their stays, such as bringing slippers or toiletries, he said.

"For overseas resorts offering children's souvenirs, specialty foods, medicines and translation-device rentals, robots can handle final deliveries 24/7," Xie said, adding that Yunji has linked its robots with retail outlets, allowing them to receive an order, collect the item and deliver it without human staff intervention.



A robot developed by Yunji Technology cooks noodles on July 7 while reporters visit the Beijing-based service robot manufacturer.
MENG JIA / XINHUA

"Imagine if one wants an iced coffee in the middle of the night, the front desk may no longer be staffed, but a robot can get it ready with one click and bring it straight to the room," Xie said. "That's where hotels eye the robots for higher non-room revenue."

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CHINA

Cultural heritage in the clouds



A performance of Huayin Laoqiang opera, a national intangible cultural heritage, attracts many visitors on the towering Huashan Mountain in Huayin, Shaanxi province, on Monday. Utilizing its natural beauty and cultural heritage, the scenic area has hosted a series of events like cultural heritage showcases and martial arts challenges to promote the integration of tourism, traditions and sports, boosting cultural and tourism consumption during the summer. CUI ZHENGBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

More HK, Macao buyers obtain homes in mainland GBA cities

Better transport links and favorable living conditions are driving purchases

By ZHOU MO in Shenzhen
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Hong Kong and Macao residents bought a growing share of homes across mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area during the first half of this year, driven largely by better transport links and favorable living conditions.

According to the Zhongshan housing and urban-rural development bureau, the city recorded 9,308 commercial housing transactions between January and June, of which 23.2 percent were made by buyers from Hong Kong and Macao.

Earlier official figures also showed a growing presence of Hong Kong and Macao buyers in Zhongshan. The group accounted for more than 18 percent of the city's housing purchases in the first two months of 2025. By the first 10 months of that year, its share had exceeded 20 percent.

In Huizhou, Hong Kong and Macao residents bought an average of 4,865 homes a year over the past three years, accounting for 5 to 6 percent of the city's total residential transactions, according to data cited by Huizhou Daily.

The composition of those purchases is changing. Local media reported that second-hand home purchases by Hong Kong and Macao residents overtook new home purchases for the first time in 2024. The pattern continued through 2025 and the first half of 2026, with the gap widening.

Data from Jiangmen's housing authority showed that Hong Kong residents bought 760 homes in the city in the first half of this year, while more than 2,200 Hong Kong residents had purchased homes in the city since 2025.

Li Yujia, chief researcher at the residential policy research center of Guangdong planning institute, attributed the trend to improved transport connectivity, deeper regional integration and a favorable living environment.

"Links between Hong Kong and other mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area have become more convenient, while infrastructure, community facilities and the coordination of social services across the region have also improved," he said.

"Also, mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area offer a familiar linguistic, cultural and climatic environment while providing more living space at a comparatively lower cost for Hong Kong residents, particularly middle-aged and elderly residents."

Li noted that housing preferences among Hong Kong buyers have become more diverse. While some favor homes close to boundary crossings, properties delivered with interior decoration and communities with convenient transport links, others view mature community facilities, property management and easy access to cross-boundary transport as important considerations.

A Zhuhai-based property developer said Hong Kong and Macao residents accounted for more than 30 percent of total buyers in its Zhuhai projects in the first half of this year, up from 18 percent in 2025.

Lin Genghao, sales director of the Zhonghai Huanyu Tianxia residential project in Zhuhai, said more frequent cross-boundary travel and changing consumption patterns have contributed to the increase in Hong Kong and Macao buyers in Zhuhai.

"Most of their demand is for homes used for part-time residence or retirement," he said.

For Hong Kong buyers, who range from people in their 30s to around 65, Lin said three-bedroom homes of around 100 square meters and smaller two-bedroom units of around 60 to 70 sq m are the most common choices.

"Buyers with stronger purchasing power tend to place greater emphasis on views," he added.

Budgets also vary considerably among different groups of buyers. While ordinary Hong Kong buyers looking for retirement homes tend to seek properties priced between 1 million yuan and 1.5 million yuan ($149,000 to $223,000), wealthier ones prefer luxury residential projects priced from around 3 million yuan to 15 million yuan.

A Hong Kong resident who bought a home in Huizhou wrote on Chinese social media platform RedNote, or Xiaohongshu, that a pleasant environment and relatively low living costs were among the reasons for considering the city as a place to spend retirement.

Meanwhile, regional financial data provide another indication of cross-boundary property activity. The Guangdong branch of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said it had handled 3,341 home-purchase transactions on the mainland for Hong Kong and Macao residents as of the end of June 2025, with cross-boundary inflows hitting 3.08 billion yuan.

Yao Xi contributed to this story.

Elephants test peaceful coexistence in Yunnan

By YAN YUJIE and **LIU BOQIAN**

Forty-two wild Asian elephants have gathered in a rural area of southwestern China's Yunnan province, moving between forests and farmland and occasionally venturing near villages.

The elephants, belonging to three herds, have been feeding in maize fields and passing close to villages in Mengxian township in Ning'er Hani and Yi autonomous county, prompting authorities to step up efforts to keep both people and elephants safe.

Their return is a sign of a recovering ecosystem. But for people sharing the landscape with the elephants, it also brings the challenge of living alongside them.

In Mengxian, the elephants have become a familiar sight since April this year, with their numbers reaching an annual peak in August.

For Fu Chun, a 50-year-old resident of Zhushan village, the animals are hardly strangers. He has worked as an elephant monitor for more than a decade.

Since the herds arrived, Fu has spent his days tracking the elephants and warning villagers to keep away from their activity areas, particularly when farmers are working in the fields.

At times, the elephants have come within about 500 meters of him. When one charges, monitors run uphill.

"It doesn't happen often. Most of the time, we can keep a safe distance," Fu said.

The first elephant of the year arrived in Zhushan in April. The number detected in the area has risen sharply, from nine on Aug 14 to 42 on Sunday.

The elephants move between Ning'er and neighboring Jiangcheng Hani and Yi autonomous county.

"They come and go," said Wang Siqi, a worker with the agriculture and rural development service center in Mengxian township. "In some years, they come almost every month."

The elephants typically enter Mengxian from Dashujiao village in Jiangcheng, moving through forests and farmland in search of food. Based on past patterns, Wang said they are unlikely to continue north and will probably remain around Zhushan village and nearby areas.

Greater forest coverage and stronger biodiversity protection have made the area increasingly suitable for Asian elephants, Wang said. But forests, farmland and villages now overlap with the animals' routes, making encounters difficult to avoid.

"Elephants do not only live inside protected areas, they also live outside, where they interact with people," said Ahimsa Campos-Arceiz, a Spanish ecologist and professor at the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

"They need to move from one place to another, instead of staying in the same place forever," he said. "We don't expect human-elephant conflict to finish. What we want is to make the conflict not too intense."

A revised wildlife protection regulation in Yunnan, which took effect on Aug 15, further strengthened measures covering habitat protection, monitoring and early warning, wildlife corridors and compensation for damage caused by wild animals.

In Zhushan village, that means drones in the sky and monitors on the ground.

Six monitors are deployed each day to track the elephants. When the animals are far from villages, drones typically survey the area every 30 minutes. At night, thermal-imaging drones are used to track their movements.

Once the elephants' location is confirmed, the information is shared in villagers' WeChat groups, warning residents to stay away and avoid working in affected fields.

The cost of coexistence is also partly offset through insurance.

Forestry authorities in Pu'er city have purchased insurance covering wildlife-related damage, including compensation for injuries, crop losses and some property damage caused by Asian elephants.

For example, compensation for rubber trees more than five years old is set at 52 yuan ($7.74) per tree. Damage to brick-and-timber structures is compensated at 300 yuan per square meter.

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An aerial view on Aug 19 shows a herd of wild Asian elephants grazing in a cornfield in Zhushan village, Mengxian township, Ning'er Hani and Yi autonomous county, Yunnan province. YANG TINGRONG / XINHUA

Ecological action protects Xizang salmon industry

By YANG ZEKUN in Shigatse, Xizang
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Clear water has resumed running through a section of the Yadong River in Dromo county, Xizang autonomous region, while new grass sprouts on land once covered by construction debris — tangible signs of ecological restoration that prosecutors say helped avert risks to a local salmon industry.

The changes followed a public-interest litigation investigation into pollution upstream from salmon farms in local Xiayadong township.

Penpa Norbu, deputy chief procurator of the Dromo County People's Procuratorate, said prosecutors discovered large amounts of food packaging, construction waste and other rubbish scattered and piled along the riverbank while conducting follow-up supervision in connection with Xizang's second round of ecological and environmental protection inspections.

Waste was stacked nearly 1 meter high in some places without protective measures. Temporary toilets at a construction site lacked septic tanks or wastewater collection facilities, allowing domestic sewage to flow directly into the river.

Downstream, sections of the river had turned yellow and turbid and carried a noticeable sewage odor.

The river is the main water source for nearby salmon farms, leaving operators vulnerable to pollution originating upstream.

"The farms could only passively bear the consequences because the pollution sources were beyond their control," Penpa Norbu said.

Farm operators reported that some salmon had died or shown abnormal behavior. They feared greater economic losses if sewage and waste continued entering the river.

Yadong salmon, recognized as a geographical indication product, is one of the border county's best-known specialties and relies heavily on clean, cold plateau water. Wild Yadong salmon, classified as second-class protected aquatic wildlife in Xizang, are found only in a nearly 20-kilometer stretch of mountain streams running from Shangyadong township to Xiayadong township. The local commercial industry, meanwhile, uses legally bred sterile triploid fish.

The farm involved in the case has 20 breeding pools and produces about 200,000 salmon fry annually.

Since its establishment in 2019 through 2025, the local cooperative generated more than 8 million yuan ($1.2 million) in revenue from salmon sales and distributed more than 5 million yuan in dividends to residents.

Across the county, the salmon industry has helped 857 households and more than 2,300 border residents increase their income through employment and related economic activities.

Given the potential threat to both the environment and local livelihoods, prosecutors moved their consultation meeting from an office to the riverbank.

They conducted field inspections, used drones to collect evidence and visited salmon farms before bringing relevant government departments and the construction company together at the site.

Prosecutors presented evidence, clarified the regulatory responsibilities of different parties and coordinated discussions on an immediate remediation plan.

The construction company, responsible for an infrastructure project in the upper reaches of the river and whose proximity to the river caused pollution, was initially reluctant to make changes, Penpa Norbu said. It regarded the waste and sewage as temporary by-products of construction and underestimated the potential impact on salmon farms downstream.

"The main obstacle was not funding or the construction schedule, but weak environmental awareness on the part of the company," he said.

After prosecutors explained the relevant legal responsibilities and potential damage to the public interest, the company agreed to remove the rubbish, improve sewage disposal facilities and strengthen daily management.

However, the remediation process was not entirely smooth.

Because the construction area lacked a regular waste collection system, rubbish would begin accumulating again whenever removal was delayed by a day or two.

Prosecutors therefore carried out unannounced inspections and follow-up visits, urging the company to install garbage bins, build standardized sewage treatment facilities, establish enclosed temporary waste storage areas and introduce a daily collection system, with designated personnel responsible for implementation.

Grass seed was also planted on damaged bare land.

"When we returned, the river was clear again, and what touched us most was seeing new shoots emerging from land that had been damaged by old temporary structures," Penpa Norbu said.

"Vegetation grows extremely slowly on the plateau, so seeing those new shoots was the most direct evidence that the restoration was taking effect."

The case later prompted prosecutors to look beyond the area around the salmon farms.

Dromo county, also known as Yadong county, is an important border area with a frontier stretching about 290 km. As infrastructure projects have advanced, prosecutors have also identified problems including waste dumping, damage to native grassland and unauthorized excavation at some construction sites.

Prosecutors have since worked with multiple government departments to push for corrective measures and urge construction companies to standardize operations, seeking to protect the fragile plateau environment while allowing border infrastructure projects to proceed.

For Penpa Norbu, the salmon case showcased how environmental protection and economic development can reinforce each other.

"Protecting the river also means protecting an important source of income for local people," he said. "In the end, we safeguarded both the environment and their livelihoods."

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CHINA





Left: Yellow sorting robots ferry parcels during a shopping festival at a logistics center in Deqing, Zhejiang province, on June 18. NI LIFANG / XINHUA
Right: A robotic arm sorts parcels on a production line at China Post's Jianggao mail processing center in Guangdong province in May. DENG HUA / XINHUA

Robot on the line

China's massive parcel logistics industry embraces tech in race for efficiency

By LUO WANGSHU in Guangzhou
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At a busy parcel sorting center in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, a humanoid robot works alongside human colleagues on a sorting line, repeatedly picking up packages and feeding them into the system. On a large screen overlooking the floor, its output is displayed directly against performance figures for human workers.

It does not tire, but for now, it remains slower and far more expensive than an experienced human operator.

Eight of these humanoid units have undergone trial runs at the center since March, capable of feeding as many as 1,200 parcels an hour into the sorting system, said He Yong, deputy director of China Post's Jianggao mail processing center.

Yet while eye-catching, the machines represent a technology still in its rough experimental phase — a high-tech snapshot of the transformation unfolding across China's logistics landscape.

By 2030, annual express delivery volume is expected to reach 270 billion items, according to the country's postal industry development plan for the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period.

After decades of explosive, volume-driven growth powered by the expansion of e-commerce, China's express delivery sector has reached a structural turning point. Volume is no longer the metric that matters most.

Handling over 100 billion parcels in the first half of the year alone, logistics giants can no longer survive simply by adding handling capacity, and so have shifted their focus to operational efficiency and unit-cost reduction.

Companies are increasingly turning to artificial intelligence, robotics, autonomous vehicles and digital management systems to improve the efficiency and resilience of one of the world's largest logistics networks.



Clockwise from left: A robot sorts parcels during the 2026 World Robot Conference in Beijing on Aug 19. REN CHAO / XINHUA
A robot transports boxes during the FAIR plus 2026 robot industry exhibition in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in April. QIN ZIHANG / FOR CHINA DAILY
Autonomous forklifts navigate around one another at China Post's Jianggao center in May. DENG HUA / XINHUA

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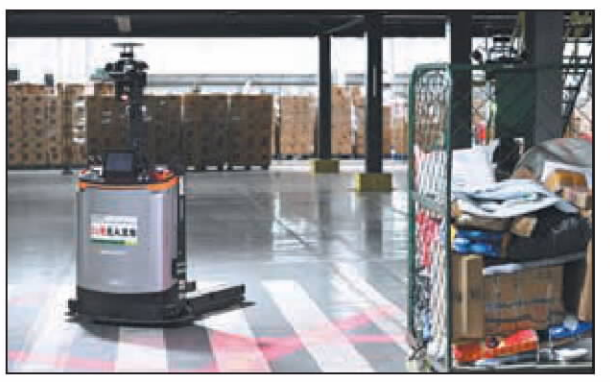

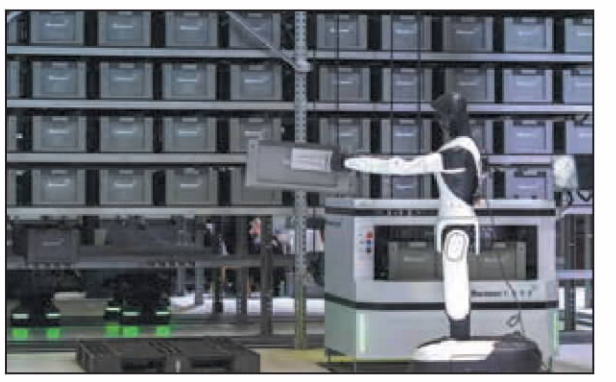

Test bed at scale

According to the postal sector's current Five-Year Plan, China aims for an 88 percent full-automation rate across large-scale processing centers.

In Guangdong, which processes approximately 22 percent of the national parcel volume, automation is expanding rapidly. Automated guided vehicles traverse warehouse floors, while 820 autonomous delivery vehicles and 247 drones operate across urban routes.

At large processing centers in Guangzhou, automation has moved well beyond conventional conveyor belts.

Robotic arms feed parcels into sorting systems, automated guided vehicles move cages and pallets across processing floors, while software increasingly monitors parcel flows and adjusts equipment in real time.

One digital system, for example, monitors congestion across sorting lines and automatically adjusts their operating speeds when traffic begins to build. At one processing center, sorting-line jams during the night shift fell from more than 20 a month to just one after the system was introduced, according to He.

Another trial system uses three-dimensional sensing to measure how much space remains inside trucks, check whether parcels are loaded properly and alert workers as vehicles approach loading bays. The center said it has cut waiting time between successive vehicles by about 20 percent.

Such changes point to an important evolution in logistics technology. Earlier automation largely focused on replacing a particular manual task with a machine. Increasingly, digital systems are being used to detect problems, adjust operations and coordinate equipment across an entire processing center.

Real-world problems

The same shift is taking place among logistics technology suppliers.

At Guangzhou-based Genye Technology, engineers have developed a three-dimensional sorting system aimed at two persistent problems in warehousing — long picking routes and limited floor space.

"Warehouse pickers used to spend much of their time walking back and forth between shelves. When orders surged, they were constantly on their feet, while labor and space costs kept rising," said Zuo Wen, general manager of the company's innovation business center.

"We developed the 3D sorting wall precisely to address those practical problems on the front line."

Instead of spreading sorting destinations across a large horizontal area, the system uses AI vision to identify items and scheduling software to direct them to vertically arranged compartments, allowing more sorting positions to be packed into a smaller footprint.

Genye said its larger systems can process up to 20,000 items an hour while taking up roughly half the space of conventional layouts.

The example illustrates how logistics technology is increasingly being designed around specific operational bottlenecks rather than automation for its own sake.

That technology is also moving out of warehouses and processing centers.

In Foshan, also in Guangdong, autonomous delivery vehicles are being tested on routes connecting express outlets, parcel stations and other logistics nodes. The city currently has 124 postal and express delivery autonomous vehicles involved in road testing across 219 routes, according to the Foshan Postal Administration.

Some companies are also experimenting with shared autonomous transport, allowing retailers and other small businesses to summon unmanned vehicles when they need to move goods rather than purchasing vehicles themselves.

The model points to a wider possibility of autonomous vehicles eventually becoming flexible urban logistics capacity rather than equipment dedicated to a single company.

National push

The postal industry's 15th Five-Year Plan calls for China to "actively develop smart postal services" and significantly increase digitalization across the delivery process. It also calls for wider use of artificial intelligence in customer service, operations, transport, collection and delivery, safety, management and warehousing, as well as upgrades to sorting, loading, transport and other equipment.

Hu Kai, spokesman for the State Post Bureau of China and director-general of its department of policies and regulations, said the sector would promote the "broad and deep integration" of AI with postal and express delivery services, accelerating applications ranging from intelligent transport and warehousing to operations and last-mile delivery.

Chen Kai, deputy head of the State Post Bureau, also said the sector will seek to extract greater value from industry data, strengthen the use of AI and develop low-altitude delivery logistics.

The push comes as the industry itself enters a different stage of development.

During the previous five-year period, China's express delivery volume rose from more than 80 billion parcels a year to nearly 200 billion, while postal industry revenue increased from 1.1 trillion yuan to 1.8 trillion yuan, according to the bureau.

The new planning period places greater emphasis on quality and efficiency rather than expansion alone.

That makes technologies such as AI, robotics and autonomous transport important not simply because they are novel, but because relatively small efficiency gains can be multiplied across an enormous network.

Human cost

For an industry that is estimated to employ as many as 8 million people, this tech-forward efficiency drive carries potentially profound consequences.

Despite this, automation does not necessarily mean removing people completely.

Parcel handling remains difficult to fully automate. Packages come in different shapes, materials and weights, while soft bags and irregular parcels can still pose problems for machines. When equipment encounters an exception, human workers often step in.

At some processing centers, the result is a gradual change in job roles rather than straightforward replacement. Workers who once spent much of their shifts repeatedly feeding parcels or moving heavy loads are increasingly taking on equipment inspection, system monitoring and exception handling.

"We don't blindly pursue full automation in one step," said He from the Jianggao center. "What matters is human-machine collaboration that actually fits the operation."

The humanoid robots in Guangzhou are themselves still being tested rather than deployed as a finished substitute for human workers.

Their potential advantage may ultimately lie less in performing one repetitive task faster than a specialized robotic arm, and more in whether they can learn different tasks and operate in workspaces originally designed for people.

That remains to be proven commercially.

Costs, reliability, safety, data interoperability and the ability to operate through demand peaks will determine whether many of today's trials become standard equipment. For autonomous delivery vehicles, regulation and road access will be equally important as deployment expands.

The next stage of China's parcel industry's technological transition will therefore be less about putting more futuristic machines on display and more about whether robots, vehicles, software and workers can operate effectively as one system.

The humanoid robot stands out on the Guangzhou sorting floor, but the bigger story is taking place around it — in the algorithms directing parcels, the machines moving them and a logistics network learning how to make better use of its enormous scale.

Autonomous vehicles find fixed route delivery role

By LUO WANGSHU
in Foshan, Guangdong

At a YTO Express outlet in Foshan, Guangdong province, courier Wang Kangkang finishes loading bags of parcels into a driverless van about the size of a golf cart, closes the cargo door and taps "depart" on his phone.

The vehicle, supplied by autonomous-driving company Neolix, pulls away on its own, joining regular traffic on a 3-kilometer run to a neighborhood parcel station. The route takes about 20 minutes, passing traffic lights, a speed bump and a narrow lane.

"This route is fixed. Once it's set, I don't have to watch it all the way," Wang said. "It's much easier than making the trip myself on a three-wheeler."

Such short, repetitive runs are emerging as one of the more practical uses for autonomous vehicles in China's vast parcel network.

Before the van was introduced, couriers at the outlet ferried parcels between the two sites on electric three-wheelers. Moving about 1,000 parcels could require at least two trips, according to outlet manager Ouyang Chaoyang.

The outlet estimates that its short-distance transfer costs have fallen by about 30 percent since it began using the vehicle last year, while the time couriers spend shuttling back and forth has been cut by about 40 percent.

"The time saved can be used for collecting parcels and making door-to-door deliveries," Ouyang said. "Those are the parts of the job where couriers can create more value."

The Foshan operation is part of a wider rollout. By the end of 2024, more than 6,000 autonomous delivery vehicles had been put into large-scale use across more than 100 types of applications nationwide, according to the State Post Bureau of China.

At one parcel station in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, more than 20 driverless vehicles handle over 30 percent of deliveries, with each carrying at least 1,500 parcels a day. Elsewhere, autonomous vehicles are being used in relay delivery models in cities such as Beijing, while some are serving villages in remote areas where conventional delivery is more costly and time-consuming.

In Foshan, their use is also extending beyond conventional parcel delivery. Small retailers can book shared driverless vans through mobile platforms to move goods between stores or replenish stock, rather than operating a vehicle of their own.

"For parcel companies, the routes are usually fixed and scheduled, more like a bus service," said Liang Haohua, head of marketing for South China at Neolix. "For smaller businesses, demand is more ad hoc — closer to ride-hailing."

The approach is still developing, but it suggests that the economics of autonomous delivery may depend as much on keeping vehicles busy as on the technology that allows them to drive themselves.

Scaling up also involves more than navigating traffic.

Foshan currently has 124 autonomous vehicles in the postal and express sector undergoing road tests on 219 routes, according to the Foshan Postal Administration. The city has been developing rules covering road access, testing, insurance, safety supervision and accident handling.

Similar questions remain elsewhere, as rules on routes, road access and stopping can vary among cities. That can make it harder for operators to replicate the same model across regions even as the technology matures, according to Jiang Haoran, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference who has studied the sector.



A worker from SF Express loads a cargo box into an autonomous vehicle in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in January last year. MAO SIQIAN / XINHUA

For now, the clearest role for driverless vans may be less futuristic than delivering a parcel directly to someone's door. They are taking over predictable journeys between depots, parcel stations, shops and villages, leaving couriers to handle the more complicated human end of the delivery chain.

About 20 minutes after leaving the YTO outlet in Foshan, Wang's van reaches the parcel station. It slows, signals and pulls over. Staff scan the vehicle, open it and begin unloading the parcels. Moments later, the doors close again and the van quietly sets off for its next stop.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE

A romance with stone

Over 15 years, researchers have turned repeated tests and failures into a systematic approach to saving fragile relics, reports **Bai Shuhao** in Chengde, Hebei.



The decorative patterns on a pedestal at Puyou Temple in Chengde, Hebei province, damaged by a lightning fire in the 1960s, have been largely restored. BAI SHUHAO / CHINA DAILY

Whether in science or art, people tend to favor stories of sudden inspiration: an element discovered by chance or a flash of insight that gives birth to a masterpiece. But most of the time, things do not happen that way.

At least, that is not how it happened in Chengde, Hebei province, where a team of stone restorers has spent the past 15 years rescuing hundreds of cultural relics. Their work has rarely offered a definitive solution. Instead, it has been a long struggle against time, marked by experiments, failures and more experiments, as they search for ways for relics to coexist with the forces that are slowly destroying them.

What they have built in the process is not a single breakthrough, but a body of experience: an approach that can be tested, repeated, and passed on.

An unsolved problem

In 2011, when Li Li arrived in Chengde, about a three-hour drive from Beijing, she stood beneath an exquisite glazed pagoda and looked at its cracked stone base. Her mind went blank.

Chengde was once home to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) imperial court's summer retreat. The city is known for the Mountain Resort, built as an imperial summer residence, and a group of surrounding temples. The site was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1994.

Li, then a researcher who had just joined the China Academy of Cultural Heritage, was not responsible for preserving the grand buildings themselves. Her task was to protect the less conspicuous stonework that supported and surrounded them: pedestals, statues, steles, and other stone elements.

Stone, by conventional wisdom, should be among the easier materials to preserve. It is hard and heavy, built to withstand wind and rain. Its apparent permanence is precisely why people have relied on it for centuries.

But the craftsmen who worked here 300 years ago could not have known what their locally sourced stone would eventually endure.

The rock is a fragile volcanic material known as tuff. It contains salt-bearing minerals, is highly porous, and readily absorbs water.

Temperatures in Chengde can reach 40 C in summer and fall to around -20 C near the ground in winter. The repeated cycle of freezing and thawing causes the stone to split into thin layers.

"Tuff is much less dense than marble or white marble," says Chen Dong, chief engineer at the Chengde Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau.

He compares the stone to a millefeuille, with layers constantly peeling away. Sometimes, he says, "You barely touch it, and it crumbles."

That was only one problem. The stones had also been battered by wind and rain, suffering from missing sections, sanding, hollowing, and other forms of damage.

Before the China Academy of Cultural Heritage took on the project, Chengde had invited experts from around the world to examine the problem, including specialists from the Getty Conservation Institute in the United States. "They all shook their heads and said it was too difficult, that there was no solution," Chen recalls.



Left, top and above: A stone lion at Xumifushou Temple and a *bixi*, a mythical dragon-like creature, at Yongyou Temple, before and after restoration, in Chengde. **Top right:** Restoration samples at the Chengde laboratory. **Above right:** Li Li, deputy director of the China Academy of Cultural Heritage. **Middle:** Routine maintenance at Pule Temple in Chengde. PHOTOS PROVIDED AND BY BAI SHUHAO / CHINA DAILY

The difficulty was partly rooted in the unusual properties of the stone. Tuff of this kind is rarely found outside northern China. Li and her colleagues traveled across the country looking for comparable examples, but found no other site with the same pattern of cracking. "We were starting from zero," Li says. "We had no idea where the road would lead. As the person in charge of the project, I didn't know where to begin."

In the early years, the team rented a small one-story house halfway up a mountain near a temple where they were working. It served as a laboratory, meeting room, dormitory, and kitchen. They painted the house blue.

"Blue represents hope," Li says.

Repairing by trial and error

It was during those difficult years, from 2011 to 2015, that Li's team began making progress in developing conservation materials.

The process was painstaking. Researchers first tested materials under simulated environmental conditions in the laboratory, making sure they would not damage the relics. Only then did they conduct small-scale experiments on the actual stone.

A single test sample might need to be observed for two years. A material could pass laboratory tests and appear ready for use, only to expand after its first winter. Meltwater from snow would seep into the stone as temperatures rose, exposing weaknesses that laboratory tests had missed.

"What's even more frustrating is that a material might survive the first winter, and crack in the second," Li says. When that happened, the researchers went back to the beginning. The cycle repeated so many times that Li could no longer count the failed experiments.

In 2012, drawing on techniques passed down by earlier generations of craftsmen, the team settled on a traditional lime-based material whose main component is calcium carbonate. Similar materials have been found at archaeological sites dating back more than 5,000 years.

But identifying the core material was only the beginning. The researchers still had to repeatedly test firing temperatures and experiment with additional ingredients to determine how the material would interact with different relics.

"No material can be called a once-and-for-all solution," says Xu Dong, who joined the Chengde team after graduating from university in 2012.

Even on the same relic, conditions could vary. A surface exposed to direct sunlight could experience greater temperature swings and deteriorate differently from a shaded side.

Repairing a carved stone dragon about 50 centimeters long can require five different color samples, says Wang Ziyi, who joined the team in 2014.

Xu and Wang were not simply researchers selecting materials. They also worked directly on the relics, carving patterns and carrying out repairs themselves. In their daily work, scientific research and hands-on conservation occupied roughly equal portions of their time.

To this day, the team continues to conduct thousands of experiments to find suitable materials and conservation methods. It has developed a systematic approach that includes cleaning and dust removal, desalination, preliminary consolidation, anchoring, grouting, pattern repair, and color matching.

In 2015, the former director of the Getty Conservation Institute visited Chengde. After seeing the damage, he expressed surprise. For Li, however, the significance of the comment was not simply the authority behind it. "It represented a voice," she says.

The team now has more than 50 members, with specialists drawn from fields ranging from science to art. Since 2011, it has worked on 15 stone conservation projects in Chengde, rescuing hundreds of valuable relics and developing more than 10 patented technologies and materials.

The team calls its approach the "Chengde experience". It rests on three principles: putting preliminary research first and carrying scientific research through the entire conservation process; integrating research, design, field conservation, and monitoring; and using technology and interdisciplinary collaboration to strengthen heritage conservation. The team has also moved beyond stone, applying what it learned to murals and other forms of heritage across China.

Finding a rhythm

As one of the younger members of the team, Xu remembers that her first assignment was a 63.9-square-meter stone staircase panel at Puren Temple, tucked away in the mountains. The panel, known as a *danbi* stone, was carved with two dragons playing with a pearl. Years of deterioration had left the dragons almost unrecognizable.

Three months later, when Xu and her colleagues had brought the two dragons back into view, she experienced her first real sense of accomplishment as a restorer.

The temple was not open to tourists. Only a handful of restorers and other workers were stationed there. In summer, mosquitoes swarmed through the mountains. Sometimes one would crawl near Xu's ear and she would barely notice. She was too absorbed in the work.

A worker once passed by and asked her: As a young woman spending every day alone at a temple, didn't she find it boring? "Everyone thinks differently," Xu says. "I can get close to the relics. I can turn something damaged into something whole. I think that's satisfying."

To Xu, conservation is a race against nature. Sometimes a restoration can look successful, only to begin powdering away after weeks of rain. To a visitor, the relic may appear barely repaired. But for the experts, it may have already undergone an intense rescue effort.

Yet, rain is not always the enemy.

After completing the stone conservation projects in Chengde, the team turned to paper murals inside a stupa in the Mountain Resort. Xu moved her work into the tower.

When rain fell and the wind picked up, she could hear the bells hanging from the eaves. The sound of rain mingled with the soft chime of the bells, and she felt calm.

Xu says that, in the end, the work is made up of ordinary, even mundane tasks. What matters is finding a little enjoyment in them, along with a sense of accomplishment.

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Mangguan rock art offers clues to ancient migration

By **WANG QIAN**
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Left: Archaeologists measure the size of a rock painting at the Mangguan site in Gengma Dai and Va autonomous county, Lincang, Yunnan province. **Right:** Rock paintings of Mangguan represent one of the well-preserved prehistoric rock art sites in Yunnan.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

If a picture is worth a thousand words, the figurative rock paintings at the Mangguan site in Southwest China's Yunnan province carry a great many more.

Published in the Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports earlier this month, a study by researchers from the Yunnan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, Nanjing Normal University, and other institutions found that the rock paintings were created at least 4,220 years ago, based on uranium-thorium dating technology.

This makes them the oldest confirmed rock art created by a settled prehistoric community in the region. The paintings predate the rock art previously documented by researchers at the nearby Cangyuan site by more than 400 years. The Cangyuan paintings date to between about 2,700 and 3,800 years ago.

Around the same time, an abrupt climate event occurred about 4,200 years ago, causing temperatures to drop in northern China.

"The coincidence suggests that drastic climate change may have driven humans to migrate from the north to the south," Wu Yun, an associate researcher at the Yunnan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology and first author of the paper, told China Daily.

Located in Gengma Dai and Va autonomous county, Lincang, the Mangguan site features red and black pigment rock paintings depicting human figures, animals, handprints and abstract signs.

Besides its well-preserved condition, Wu was particularly impressed by the use of black pigment, which is rarely seen in the rock art remains discovered in this region.

By integrating data from the three major rock art complexes of the Jinsha River Valley in Lijiang, Yunnan, Mangguan-Cangyuan in Yunnan, and the Zuojiang River in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, the research team has established a chronological framework for the three stylistic phases of rock art in southwestern China.

"The first is the late Paleolithic, about 13,600 to 8,400 years ago, represented by rock art in the Jinsha River Valley featuring realistic animal motifs. The second is the late Neolithic, from about 4,200 to 2,700 years ago, represented by Mangguan-Cangyuan rock art, which shifted its focus toward human activities. The third is the early historical period, from about 1,900 to 1,700 years ago, represented by Zuojiang rock art, whose hallmark motifs are semi-squatting human figures with bent and raised arms," Wu says.

"This helps anchor the chronology of regional Cangyuan-type rock art, filling the artistic gap in the pre-Cangyuan period," she adds.

In addition to the human figure sample, the researchers also dated 11 samples taken from different motifs clustered at the Mangguan site. Their analysis showed that the paintings were created between about 3,907 and 3,056 years ago.

Because of preservation conditions and technical challenges, dating painted rock art in southwestern China has long been difficult.

The development of high-precision uranium-series dating technology in recent years has enabled Wu and her team to sample carbonate crusts covering the rock art surfaces, determine when the crusts formed and, in turn, constrain the age range of the paintings.

"Sampling only the carbonate crusts does not disturb the pigment body of the rock art, effectively protecting its integrity. Each test requires only 10 milligrams of material, making it a nearly non-destructive sampling method," Wu explains.

Wu and her team will continue to investigate the emerging chronology of rock art in the region and explore possible connections and exchanges between communities across southwestern China and neighboring areas in Southeast Asia.

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LIFE





Left: Teen actor Omar Sherif plays an orphan who has a talent for cooking Chinese dishes in the summer blockbuster *Once Upon a Time in the Middle East*. **Middle:** Shen Teng (left) and Jiang Qiming respectively play a chef and front-desk manager at a local Chinese-cuisine restaurant in an unnamed country in the Middle East. **Right:** The restaurant takes in a group of orphans who had nowhere else to go amid the flames of war.

A recipe for peace

Blockbuster film puts war as a side dish, as food becomes a symbol for connection and harmony, **Xu Fan** reports.

French filmmaker and critic Francois Truffaut once said, "Every film about war ends up being pro-war" — a famous line that has been cited repeatedly, often by those who argue that war films inevitably glorify combat and turn violence into spectacle.

This paradox has inspired creators to seek new narrative approaches for anti-war storytelling. This summer, a Chinese blockbuster is offering just such a response: a fresh perspective on war, seen through the eyes of a Chinese chef.

Once Upon a Time in the Middle East, starring A-list actor Shen Teng as the chef, has become one of this year's most popular blockbusters. Since its debut on Aug 11, the film has grossed more than 1.6 billion yuan ($237.9 million), topping China's single-day box office charts for 14 consecutive days.

It currently holds a rating of 8.6 out of 10 on the popular review aggregator Douban, with many Chinese moviegoers praising its nuanced portrayal of human complexity amid war and its thought-provoking reflection on the longing for peace.

The third feature directed by Wen Muye, best known for his 2018 hit *Dying to Survive*, the film has an unusual premise in China's huge domestic market. Although the country has produced many war-themed films and television series over the past decades, few have combined overseas warfare with Chinese cuisine.

For thousands of years, food in China has been far more than a way to satisfy hunger. It carries memories of family and home, reflects the diversity of regional cultures, and preserves traditions passed down through generations.

These themes run throughout the film, which unfolds through the memories of its protagonist, Xu Fu, taking audiences back to 2002.

Xu, a chef with 30 years of experience, leaves his elderly mother and teenage daughter behind in northeastern China to work at a restaurant in a Middle Eastern country, hoping to pay off his debts. At the farewell dinner, he and his mother eat dumplings, a traditional Chinese culinary gesture in some parts of the country. Families customarily serve dumplings when seeing someone off and noodles when welcoming them home, symbolizing blessings and hopes for those traveling far from home.



Director Wen Muye (right) and actor Shen Teng (left) on the film's shooting site. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Upon landing on foreign soil, Xu quickly showcases his exceptional culinary skills at the Loong (Dragon) Restaurant, owned by a local official with the country's water and electricity authority. Among the dishes he prepares is "loong tide top" (dragon raises its head), a mandarin fish scored along the back and deep-fried so that it curves upward, which symbolizes rising fortunes and a bright future.

At first, everything indeed looks up. Xu's cooking quickly attracts local diners, and he becomes friends with Ma Junsheng, the restaurant's Chinese front-desk manager. But a sudden outbreak of war plunges the Middle Eastern country into turmoil, trapping the two men amid ruins and gunfire.

From there, one tense twist follows another. Xu decides not to return home after his boss makes him an irresistible offer to stay. Then, following an unexpected bombing meant to kill both American soldiers and locals, Xu and Ma are arrested and treated as suspects. Their fortunes take a sharp turn for the worse, and they soon become entangled with a group of orphans' fate — teenagers and children who are being brainwashed by extremist militants that are themselves rejected by the local population.

Yet even as the story moves deeper into the chaos of war, the film repeatedly returns to food as a symbol of connection and harmony. For Wen, that symbolism is rooted in his own cultural background.

As a native of Changchun in Northeast China's Jilin province, Wen tells China Daily that he believes Chinese cuisine conveys a deeper message: a yearning for wholeness and harmony.

"When Chinese families dine together, they traditionally gather around a round table, and chopsticks are used in pairs," Wen says, referring to the symbolism of pairs as a representation of reunion.

"So, in China, the act of eating together carries the symbolic meaning of 'ceasing conflict'," Wen adds, revealing that he hopes the movie will help audiences discover that even amid struggles and sorrow, ordinary people hold on to the humble wish of sharing a good meal.

The idea for the film dates back to 2017, when Wen was working on post-production for *Dying to Survive*, a film about an unlikely hero who smuggles medicine. "I read a news story about several Chinese people who ran restaurants in the Middle East and encountered war. It impressed me and gave me the impetus to create this story," Wen recalls.

Several years later, the director began preparing for the movie, traveling to Jordan and visiting refugee camps, where he spoke with people who had lived through war. But due to complicated international tensions at the time, he chose to cast Egyptian actors, including then 13-year-old Omar Sherif and veteran Sherif Sobhy, who play an orphan and the owner of the Loong Restaurant, respectively.

Sherif, whose great-grandfather was from Shandong province, learned Mandarin and about Chinese cuisine in Egypt for three months to prepare for the role.

Additionally, Faruk Muhammad, a young Egyptian actor who also plays an orphan, impressed Wen during his audition. For his character — a boy exploited by an extremist armed group to become a suicide bomber — Muhammad made a backpack filled with handmade "explosive" props himself, as featured in the script he was given.

"In the Arabic-speaking world, Egypt has a developed film and TV industry, as evidenced by its long-running Cairo International Film Festival, so we held casting calls there, and many actors showed up to audition," Wen says.

But the majority of the production was completed in China. Some exotic landscapes and creatures, however, could only be captured abroad. "For instance, we shot a scene of dromedaries (one-humped camels) running across the desert. In China, Bactrian camels — the two-humped variety — are a more common sight," Wen says.

To make the food scenes convincing, the production also brought in veteran chefs to coach the actors in cooking techniques and help design the dishes featured in the film. One of the most mouth-watering sequences shows Xu and Ma, assisted by more than 20 local orphans, preparing a wedding feast. The centerpiece is a large iron wok measuring more than 2 meters in diameter, turning the preparation of a celebratory meal into a striking visual spectacle.

Speaking of the wok used to prepare a fusion dish that combines iron-pot stew, a typical cooking method in northeastern China, with Arabic-style grilled fish, Wen says the scene was intended to reflect the exchange and fusion of Chinese and foreign cultures through vibrant, everyday imagery. More importantly, it highlights the shared aspiration of people from different countries for a better life.

"I'm not really a foodie, and I'm not much of a cook either. But what I want this film to say is, 'Eat well'. In China, those two words can carry much more meaning than they seem to. They hint at 'Take care of yourself'," says Wen. "In times of chaos, it can be a quiet expression of love — a wish that you stay safe, keep going, and above all, make it home," he adds.

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Dear You fills SE Asian audiences with love and nostalgia

The acclaimed film *Dear You* made its Thailand preview screening in July, bringing an exploration of heartwarming diaspora narratives to Southeast Asian audiences following its theatrical success in China.

Thai Minister of Culture Sabeeda Thaised praises the film as a vital cultural medium for conveying filial piety and celebrating the enduring ties with China.

She highlights that Thailand-China relations extend far beyond diplomacy into daily traditions, family devotion, and shared values, built on over 50 years of formal bilateral relations.

The movie, known in Chinese as *Love Letters to Grandma*, centers on remittance letters that overseas Chinese used to stay connected with their families in China. Through these letters, the characters uncover memories, love and interconnected family bonds in a simple yet deeply genuine narrative.

While the story of long-lost letters originates in China, its themes of nostalgia and generational sacrifice hold personal resonance for Thailand's vast Tio Chew-heritage (from Chaozhou, Guangdong province) population, she notes.




Left: A woman poses for a photo in front of a poster for the Chinese film *Dear You* in Ho Chi Minh City on Aug 4. **Right:** Vietnamese audience members watch the film on Aug 4. PHOTOS BY HU JIALI / XINHUA

The minister also emphasizes the importance of cinema as a vehicle for international goodwill, reaffirming the Thai government's commitment to film as a cultural asset capable of driving social and economic value while deepening artistic collaboration between both countries.

"This film is an authentic mirror of our ancestors' struggles and a testament to the longstanding bond between Thailand and China," says San Chuapanyavit, vice-president of the Tio Chew Association of Thailand, who makes a brief appearance in *Dear You*.

As a third-generation Thai-Chinese, he says this story brought back vivid memories of his father sending "*qiao pi*" (remittance letters) in Bangkok's Chinatown.

"I was glued to the screen without blinking. Despite considering myself a tough person, tears came to my eyes because the story touches the very soul of the overseas Chinese diaspora," he says.

Stressing the significance of the film's linguistic heritage, he notes that watching it in the original Tio Chew soundtrack carries a depth of emotion and cultural nuance that subtitles alone cannot convey.

"It honors the legacy of generations who crossed oceans under severe hardship to establish deep roots in Thailand, contributing immensely to Thai society while keeping their familial ties alive across generations," he adds.

The film was set for a Thai nationwide release on Aug 6, offering screenings in the original Tio Chew dialect with Thai, Chinese and English subtitles, and a Thai-dubbed one.

The film also premiered in Vietnam's southern hub, Ho Chi Minh City, in earlier this month, ahead of its nationwide theatrical release in Vietnam.

The premiere was jointly organized by Vietnamese distributors Mockingbird Pictures and Galaxy Studio, with support from the China Cultural Centre in Hanoi.

Doan Thi Trang Anh, deputy CEO of Mockingbird Pictures, says securing the distribution rights for *Dear You* in Vietnam was a special opportunity for the company and expresses hope that it could bring more Chinese films to Vietnamese audiences.

Vietnamese actress of Chinese descent Tu Ho says she felt a personal connection to the film, recalling that her grandmother often told her stories about *qiao pi* her great-grandmother sent home from Vietnam.

"I've already prepared tissues (for the screening) because I believe the film will bring back many memories through the stories my grandmother told me," she says.

Nearly 1,000 guests, including representatives of Vietnam's film industry, cultural scholars, members of the overseas Chinese community, representatives of Chinese enterprises in Vietnam, and media organizations, attended the premiere.

"I was impressed by the actors' performances and the film's balance of humor and emotion," Vietnamese director Le Thien Vien says, adding that despite its long running time, the film kept audiences fully engaged throughout.

The director notes that *Dear You* inspired him and would provide creative motivation for his next project.

XINHUA

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LIFE



Hong Kong's 'unofficial history'

Author Ma Ka-fai's latest novel, which concludes his trilogy, captures the essence of the city's past through the lens of secrets, martial arts and personal reflection, **Yang Yang** reports.

In July 2021, Hong Kong writer Ma Ka-fai had to stay in a suite of a resort hotel in Macao for a full 14 days without being able to go outside due to COVID-19 quarantine rules, so he took the chance to conceive his new novel, the last of a trilogy.

After seven days, and still struggling to come up with an idea for the book, Ma was feeling anxious. One night, he finally managed to fall asleep. In a dream, he heard a man asking him, "When will you start writing? I've been waiting for so long."

In a daze, Ma saw a thin man standing by the bed, dressed in a short martial arts outfit and looking like a kung fu master. Ma asked, "Who are you?"

The man cupped his hands and smiled: "I'm a ghost! I love *Longtou Fengwei* (*Once Upon a Time in Hong Kong I*) and *Yuanyang Liu Qi Si* (*Once Upon a Time in Hong Kong II*)," the first and second books of Ma's trilogy.

Ma paused for a moment, and then let out a joyful "Ha!" As his laughter echoed, the ghost vanished without a trace, and Ma woke up.

That ghost became the protagonist, Hon Tin-yan, in the third novel *Shuangtian Zhizun* (*Once Upon a Time in Hong Kong III*), published in May by New Star Press. In the introduction of the book, he recounts the ghost story.

A decade has passed since he published his debut novel *Longtou Fengwei* in 2016.

The book earned more than 20 literary awards, including being named on the top 10 novels list of Yazhou Zhoukan magazine and topping the fiction category in Southern Weekly's annual best original books list.

At the launch party for *Shuangtian Zhizun* in Beijing at the end of May, Ma, now 63 years old, said *Longtou Fengwei* was conceived when he was between 50 and 53 years old, when he "wrote in a free and uninhibited style, with words and plotlines that flowed effortlessly, full of vibrant energy".

The second book, *Yuanyang Liu Qi Si*, was written when he was between 54 and 57 years old. It moves away from the exuberance of youth and focuses on a deeper exploration, centering on the theme of "keeping secrets".

The final book in the trilogy was written between the ages of 57 and 62. His mindset and life experiences had undergone significant changes, prompting him to reflect on profound issues such as life and death and the true meaning of gains and losses, he says.

The first book follows the life of the protagonist Luk Nam-choi. Luk, a nobody from the countryside of Guangdong province, arrives in Hong Kong in 1936 and rises to be a gang leader in the city.

Against the backdrop of instability due to the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the capture of Hong Kong by Japanese forces in 1941, Luk has a forbidden love affair with a British officer.

Film director Johnnie To praises Ma's perspective in examining and portraying this tumultuous period in Hong Kong's history, as "very special and quite spectacular".

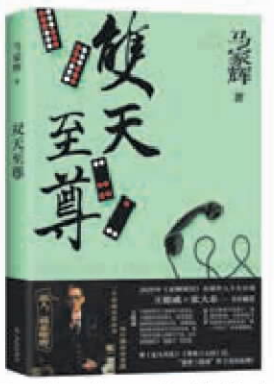
The story of *Yuanyang Liu Qi Si* takes place from the late 1930s to 1967, and focuses on a subordinate of Luk from the first novel, named Shaoyabing. After Luk dies, Shaoyabing reluctantly takes his place as boss and must adapt to his new role and overcome the challenges it presents. By the end of the novel, though, he disappears in mysterious circumstances after a string of bad luck.

Commenting on the novel, a winner of China's top literary award, the 2015 Mao Dun Literary Prize, Jin Yucheng says, "This is a novel I truly love. Its Cantonese undertone is strange yet brilliant, and the tragic emotions of the martial world swell like a vast ocean."

The trilogy's final book, *Shuangtian Zhizun,* begins in 1956 and ends in 1986 after the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. During the 30 years of the novel, Hong Kong's economy soars and the old-style underworld is transformed. But the protagonist Hon Tin-yan still clings to tradition and former values and dreams of training in martial arts.

Ma says the common theme throughout the three novels is secrets.

"The first novel is about keeping one's own secret, the second about keeping another's secret, and as for the third, it turns out that there are many secrets in life that even we ourselves may not be aware of — and if we don't know them, they might as well not exist," Ma explains.









Top: Hong Kong writer Ma Ka-fai creates a complete picture of Hong Kong during that era in *Shuangtian Zhizun*, the final book of his trilogy. **Above from left:** The cover of *Shuangtian Zhizun*. Ma says he used Cantonese dialect to achieve linguistic precision in the book. The residential building Cherry House where the book unfolds. The author practices martial arts. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "I aimed to create a complete picture of the era, allowing readers to truly immerse themselves in the time and place where the characters live."
>
> **Ma Ka-fai,** Hong Kong writer

Ma's obsession with secrets began at the age of 10 after being caught stealing money. Scolded by his mother, he felt extremely ashamed. From then on, he often experienced a kind of "secret anxiety", constantly worrying that his various secrets would be exposed. This made him particularly sensitive to other people's secrets, he told the media. He says that he often observes and imagines how secrets are kept and shared, and the consequences of their revelation.

"The secret Ma Ka-fai explores is the unpredictable nature of life and human nature," David Der-wei Wang, professor of Chinese literature at Harvard University, writes in the foreword of *Shuangtian Zhizun*.

While the novels are about individuals' secrets, they are also the secrets of Hong Kong, a city that itself is a legend, Wang writes.

Liu Yang, a popular stand-up comedian and writer, says reading Ma's novels is like watching an old Hong Kong movie, full of vivid details. Between the lines, one can sense the bygone underworld and the rich essence of Hong Kong's unique charm, he adds.

For one thing, the three books' titles are very "Hong Kong-esque" and are named after three traditional hands in the gambling game *pai gow*, which is often shown in Hong Kong films.

Moreover, the trilogy, especially the third novel, contains a lot of Cantonese dialogue, dialect and even entire paragraphs of Cantonese, which can be challenging for non-Cantonese readers.

Ma says he used Cantonese dialects to achieve linguistic precision in writing. "Dialects aren't obstacles to reading; they enrich regional culture and bring characters to life," he says.

"Language is fundamental in literary creation. To bring characters to life, it's crucial to capture their tone, identity and environment accurately. Many characters in the book are from Hong Kong's underworld, and they naturally speak Cantonese. Translating everything into Mandarin would diminish their authenticity," he adds.

In the third novel, Ma included much more information about Hong Kong's cultural geography than in the previous two books. This includes elements such as the scriptures recited by Taoists during the "hell breaking" funeral ritual, lyrics from popular songs, rain-praying chants, the design and movement of the Southern Lion Dance, slogans from funeral homes, and the origins of famous Hong Kong place names like Yau Ma Tei and So Uk Estate.

Ma says that Hon, the protagonist of the novel, was born in 1957 and that Ma himself was born in 1963.

"I am familiar with and have a personal connection to that period, so it naturally led me to write more about it," he says.

His main goal in including a wealth of information about the city is to recreate the characters' authentic lives.

Dialogue and inner emotions alone can't sustain a complete story; it's crucial to build a tangible world: the characters' clothes, what food they eat, what the gambling dens look like, the popular hairstyles, and the significant events in society, including the severe drought in Hong Kong during the 1960s and the rain-praying ceremonies held by different religions, he explains.

"I aimed to create a complete picture of the era, allowing readers to truly immerse themselves in the time and place where the characters live."

In the third book, martial arts also take a central role.

Like the character Hon, Ma was deeply influenced by the Bruce Lee kung fu craze of the early 1970s. At that time, nearly every teenager in Hong Kong wanted to learn martial arts, making it a collective memory for an entire generation.

In the novel, practicing martial arts shapes the lifelong ambition of the protagonist — to become a martial arts master. Yet, he knows deep down that the traditional martial arts world has long disappeared. By the late 1970s, street fights in Hong Kong no longer relied on fists but on knives and even guns. His ideal was at odds with reality from the start, Ma says.

Another important aspect of martial arts is morality. Martial artists have principles and integrity, and these ideals influence the story's conclusion, which sees Hon refusing to follow the gang leader's orders in a bid to uphold the ethics of martial arts, ultimately leading to tragedy.

Ma notes that even today, in Hong Kong's older districts like Wan Chai, Mong Kok, Yau Ma Tei, and Prince Edward, you can still see remnants of martial arts school signs, such as those for Wing Chun and Hung Kuen. In the past, martial arts schools often doubled as clinics, reflecting how deeply kung fu is embedded in Hong Kong's culture.

"The characters in the book live between the 1960s and 1980s, and their lives are naturally intertwined with martial arts schools and kung fu," he says.

In his foreword to *Shuangtian Zhizun*, Wang describes the trilogy as "Hong Kong's unofficial history", but Ma says that "writing an unofficial history" was never the driving force of his creation.

"I didn't deliberately use characters to reflect or metaphorically represent that era of Hong Kong," he says; rather, the characters were rooted in that time, each carrying a fragment of Hong Kong's history.

The underground gambling depicted in the books is inspired by Ma's mother's frequent visits to gambling dens and her stories of them. Hon's obsession with martial arts reflects a common experience among men of that era. The Taoist and folk rituals are drawn from Hong Kong's diverse and inclusive cultural beliefs, he says.

In the three novels, many characters die unexpectedly. For Ma, although life is often expected to be a grand drama, it frequently comes to an abrupt halt.

He says this narrative choice has two underlying reasons.

The deeper reason is rooted in Ma's childhood, as several of his uncles were addicted to drugs, constantly causing trouble, and would show up at his family's door in the middle of the night asking for money. Growing up, he lived in constant, inexplicable fear, with a subconscious belief that good things do not last and that disaster inevitably follows contentment.

This sense of unease and pessimism about life's unpredictability stems from the long-standing threats he felt in his youth, forming the underlying tone of how he views the world, and leaving him always expecting sudden changes, he says.

Another more surface-level reason is John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow*, which Ma studied for his master's thesis at the University of Chicago. In the film, a conversation between Chow Yun-fat and Ti Lung is abruptly ended by a sudden gunshot that takes a life, a scene that left a lasting impact on Ma. From a narrative perspective, such sudden death scenes carry significant dramatic power, he says.

These internal and external influences led him to arrange for characters to have sudden exits. As the character Luk often says, "That's just how it is."

Beyond the pessimism about life's unpredictability, Ma intersperses a great deal of Hong Kong-style humor through his writing. He says that humor is a tried-and-true buffer, much like how people from Guangdong drink herbal tea when they feel unwell — it's something that, once found effective, becomes a lasting habit.

"Throughout my life, I've faced many setbacks in my career, finances, and relationships. I've tried approaching these challenges with a lighthearted, teasing mindset, applying the same attitude toward myself, and it truly helps alleviate heavy emotions," he says.

"Over time, this approach became a habit. If you face life in the same way for 10 consecutive days, it becomes ingrained in your daily routine. For me, humor is no longer a deliberate writing technique but an instinctive attitude toward life," he says.

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SPORTS

SOCCER

Maresca's 'perfect day', as City rallies to win

While Liverpool grabs an equalizer in more late drama



Dominik Szoboszlai (center) celebrates scoring Liverpool's second goal of its 2-2 draw with Newcastle at St. James' Park in Newcastle, England, on Sunday. REUTERS

A big welcome from the fans at the start. A stoppage-time winner at the end.

For Enzo Maresca, it was the "perfect day" as he earned his first victory as Manchester City manager.

City produced a stirring late rally in Maresca's first Premier League game in charge, scoring twice in the final 10 minutes to grab a 2-1 win at home to Bournemouth on Sunday.

Josko Gvardiol placed a finish into the bottom corner in the first minute of added time for the winner, which was initially given offside before being awarded following a video review. Marc Guehi had equalized with an 84th-minute header from a corner to start the comeback.

Maresca, the successor to Pep Guardiola, punched the air when Gvardiol's goal was awarded and went onto the field after the final whistle to hug his players.

A huge banner, reading "Welcome back Enzo," had been held aloft by City fans as the Italian — Guardiola's assistant in City's treble-winning 2022-23 season — emerged from the tunnel before kickoff.

Wearing a sharp black suit, Maresca certainly looked the part on the touchline, but the slickness synonymous with City's play under Guardiola down the years wasn't quite there until the late comeback, sparked by substitute Rayan Cherki, who set up both goals.

"It is the perfect day, to be honest," Maresca said.

"I was very pleased when the game started to see the banner on the other side. And I was pleased because we give the fans the joy of the three points at the end.

"It was quite emotional."

Maresca began his time as Guardiola's replacement with a 3-0 loss to Arsenal in the Community Shield the previous weekend and has had to deal with the departure of star midfielder Rodri to Barcelona.

City might have found a long-term replacement for Rodri in 18-year-old Morocco international Ayyoub Bouaddi, who is set to join from Lille for 100 million euros ($117 million) according to French media, but Maresca opted against Bournemouth to deploy Guehi — a center-back — as a holding midfielder instead.

It was a contentious decision given there were other midfield options on the bench, and it might prove to be a one-off, but Guehi grew into the role.

City striker Erling Haaland wasn't on the scoresheet in the first league game of the season for the first time since joining the club in 2022. He sported a new hairstyle — a buzz cut that went viral on social media ahead of kickoff — and wasted a couple of great chances to score with it.

Szoboszlai hits back

Dominik Szoboszlai converted a penalty in the ninth minute of stoppage time to salvage a 2-2 draw for Liverpool at Newcastle in a match overseen by two new managers.

Before kickoff, the teams united to pay tribute to Kevin Keegan — a star player for both clubs — following his death last month at age 75. Players from Newcastle and Liverpool wore shirts with "Keegan" and his No 7 on the back during their warm-up at St. James' Park, while there was a mosaic in the center circle, a tribute video and a huge tifo in the stands dedicated to the former England star.

Szoboszlai smashed an unstoppable spotkick into the top corner after debutant Victor Munoz was fouled in the area in a dramatic finish to the match. There was a three-and-a-half-minute wait for a video review of the decision.



Manchester City's Josko Gvardiol (24) is mobbed by teammates after scoring his side's second goal in a 2-1 Premier League victory over Bournemouth on Sunday. AP

"I really hit it good," the Hungary captain said. "I love the pressure."

Joe Willock looked to have scored a 57th-minute winner for Newcastle, one minute after coming in as a substitute and two minutes after Cody Gakpo had equalized for Liverpool. Anthony Elanga put Newcastle ahead in the fifth minute.

Liverpool striker Alexander Isak was jeered as he came off the team coach and then every time he touched the ball by Newcastle fans still bitter about his switch of allegiance last season.

Matthias Jaissle was taking charge of Newcastle for first time, while Andoni Iraola was in the Liverpool dugout after replacing Arne Slot.

"It's not the result you wanted before the game, but obviously finishing, scoring in the last minute, it gives you a better taste ... I don't think we deserved to lose the game today," Iraola said.

"I value the effort from the players, they never gave up, and, at the end, we could recover at least a point."

There was frustration for Newcastle at conceding such a late goal, but also pride, given that former coach Eddie Howe stepped down late last month and influential players like Bruno Guimaraes and Sandro Tonali left the club for league rivals Arsenal and Tottenham, respectively, over the summer.

"It's rough, especially 30 seconds before the end of the game, but that's a huge step for us. That's the mentality we need to have through the season," Newcastle forward Yoane Wissa said.

"The manager arrived three weeks ago and gave us a lot of information. Now, we showed on the pitch that we are ready for the season. We needed a win to make a statement, but in the end we got a draw. We have so much to work on."

Brighton destroys Villa

Brighton scored four goals in the opening 31 minutes and also missed a slew of great chances in a 4-0 hammering of Aston Villa in Sunday's other early game.

To make matters worse for Villa, Joao Gomes was sent off for kicking out at Brighton's Georginio Rutter in the 40th minute, but the visitor, somehow, didn't concede again.

It has been a tough offseason for Villa, with key players Morgan Rogers, Youri Tielemans and Ezri Konsa leaving and speculation surrounding the future of Ollie Watkins and goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez.

Brighton looked sharper, having been in European qualifying action in midweek.

Fan dies

A Brighton fan died after falling ill as he was leaving the Amex stadium following the win over Villa.

The 72-year-old man became unwell as he was leaving to board a supporters' club bus.

Brighton said that, despite the best efforts of emergency services and club staff, the medical team could not save him.

Brighton chief executive Paul Barber said: "We are all shocked and saddened by the loss of one of our supporters."

AP

'Unbelievable' Cherki proves his point



Enzo Maresca revealed Rayan Cherki was frustrated to be left on the bench, before the "unbelievable" Manchester City playmaker inspired a dramatic 2-1 win against Bournemouth on Sunday.

For his first Premier League game as City boss, Maresca opted for Phil Foden and Antoine Semenyo instead of Cherki.

But, with City trailing to Marcus Tavernier's first-half goal at the Etihad Stadium, the Italian was forced into a change of plan in the 62nd minute.

Maresca sent on Cherki, who is short of full fitness after the World Cup, and the French star responded by showing why he should have started in the first place.

Cherki's corner was headed in by Marc Guehi for City's 84th minute equalizer. He then played a deft pass to Josko Gvardiol, who slotted the winning goal two minutes into stoppage time.

"The impact was unbelievable, he is that kind of player," Maresca said.

"I like Rayan, I told him also after the game, but sometimes when you plan a game, and you already have (picked) four out of 11 players who arrived late (from holidays), if you go with one more, maybe the difference is too big."

Cherki sometimes frustrated Maresca's predecessor Pep Guardiola with his volatile personality and habit of unfurling flamboyant tricks instead of simple passes last season.

But Maresca insisted he had no problem with Cherki's character or ability.

"Rayan is quite a nice and clear boy. If he is not happy, he wants to show it and I know that he was not happy today, but, in the end, I had to make a decision," Maresca said.

After the previous week's thrashing by Arsenal in the Community Shield, former Chelsea boss Maresca was able to celebrate his first win since replacing Guardiola.

"It is the perfect day. I was very pleased when the game started to see the banner and we gave the fans the joy of the three points at the end. It was quite emotional," he said.

"The spirit was fantastic. It's a game we deserved to win early with the amount of chances we had."

Guehi was deployed in an unfamiliar midfield role by Maresca, alongside new signing Elliot Anderson, who failed to impress on his debut.

With City closing in on a deal for Morocco midfielder Ayyoub Bouaddi from Lille, it was likely just a short-term option.

But Maresca had no regrets about using Guehi out of position, despite his team's tepid performance.

"I know Marc from (Crystal) Palace, and always thought he could be a good midfielder. It was a good performance from him," he said.

"The good thing is, he now gives us an option for the future."

AFP

Spain's World Cup hero Torres saves PSG's blushes at Rennes

PARIS — Spain's World Cup winner Ferran Torres scored twice to claim a draw for Paris Saint-Germain, as it started the defense of its French Ligue 1 title with a 2-2 draw at Rennes.

Torres came off the bench for his Ligue 1 debut and opened his account for his new club just weeks after scoring the winning goal for La Roja in the World Cup final.

Rennes led at the break after Sebastian Szymanski and Esteban Lepaul scored at Roazhon Park, before Torres' clinical interventions off the back of two assists from fellow World Cup winner Fabian Ruiz.

"The game was difficult, we knew it would be," Torres said.

"I just put my hand up, then, with Fabian's quality, you just have to run and he puts the ball in the right place," he added.

Luis Enrique named two of his big summer signings in 26-year-old Torres and France winger Maghnes Akliouche on the bench for a game moved from the French capital, due to the poor state of the Parc des Princes pitch.

Ex-Rennes attackers Ousmane Dembele and Desire Doue were joined in the Champions League winner's forward line by Khvicha Kvaratskhelia a week on from losing 1-0 in the French Champions' Trophy to Lens.

Rennes boss Franck Haise gave a league debut to Adrien Thomasson, who joined the Bretons from the coach's former club Lens over the summer.

Well-traveled Thomasson set up the opener by feeding Szymanski, who fired home with a low effort from outside the box after 21 minutes following a pinpoint header from Lepaul in the build-up.

Rennes doubled its lead seven minutes before the break, despite PSG showing plenty of intent and even having a Doue effort chalked off for offside.

Haise's side's second came on the counterattack, with a break from winger Mousa Al-Tamari and a delicate back-heel from the Jordanian wide man helping to set up Lepaul.



Paris Saint-Germain's Ferran Torres celebrates scoring his side's second goal in a 2-2 Ligue 1 draw at Rennes on Sunday. REUTERS

PSG was wasteful in attack, failing to hit the target with efforts from Dembele and Kvaratskhelia, forcing their Spanish boss to bring Torres on for the second half.

With half an hour left, Akliouche and Ruiz were also brought into the fray, and, 10 minutes later, PSG cut the deficit when Torres made the most of a pass from his compatriot to nutmeg Rennes goalkeeper Brice Samba.

Torres and Ruiz combined again with eight minutes to go, as the midfielder crossed for the forward to head past Samba.

PSG was on top after Torres' contributions, but it was unable to find a third.

Giroud rolls back the years

Earlier, Olivier Giroud scored the opening goal as Lille gave Davide Ancelotti a winning start as coach with a 2-0 victory at Angers.

Former France striker Giroud, who turns 40 next month, broke the deadlock in the 11th minute with an excellent low drive from long range after collecting a pass from Nabil Bentaleb.

Tiago Santos volleyed in a loose ball to double the advantage just after the half-hour mark at the end of an excellent Lille move.

Davide Ancelotti, son of coaching great Carlo Ancelotti, took over at Lille in June following the departure of Bruno Genesio who is now at Marseille.

Lille finished third in the French top flight last season to qualify for the Champions League.

"It wasn't perfect, but we wanted to start strongly today," Giroud told Ligue 1+.

"We could have killed the game off earlier," he added.

Lille midfielder Ayyoub Bouaddi has been strongly linked with a move to Manchester City and, despite not being involved in the match day squad, the 18-year-old Moroccan said his potential goodbyes to traveling fans after the game.

"We don't know what will happen," Giroud said.

"If it happens, then we will want to celebrate the win for him," the former Arsenal striker added.

Former England defender Eric Dier scored the winner as Monaco edged out Le Havre 1-0 in Normandy.

AFP

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Cultural tourism drawing foreigners to Zhangjiajie
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Promising future
Men's basketball team celebrates silver lining at FIBA U18 Asia Cup
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CHINA DAILY

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China steps up cross-border corruption fight

Draft legislation aims to deepen intl cooperation against graft, regulate transnational businesses

By **CAO YIN**
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Chinese lawmakers started reviewing on Tuesday a draft law aimed at combating cross-border corruption as part of a broader initiative to strengthen legal tools for repatriating fugitives, recovering assets and addressing corruption cases with international cooperation.

The draft was submitted for its first reading to the ongoing session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature.

With six chapters and 47 articles, the draft outlines the principles, scope and key positions underpinning China's efforts to tackle cross-border corruption. It defines the operational mechanisms and responsibilities of relevant departments, calling for stronger case handling and international cooperation.

The draft also clarifies the obligations of enterprises regarding integrity and compliance, and specifies legal liabilities for violations. Specific provisions included in the draft are currently under review and have not been made public.

Liu Jinguo, head of the National Commission of Supervision, who introduced the draft to lawmakers on Tuesday, said the legislation involves strategic implementation of the central leadership's plans to fight cross-border corruption.

It serves as a vital step toward establishing a comprehensive legal framework for addressing foreign-related corruption issues, he said.

Liu emphasized that making such a law is of great importance in filling the legislative gap in China's cross-border anti-corruption framework, improving the foreign-related anti-corruption legal system, and advancing legislative efforts against cross-border corruption through the rule of law.

The legislation also highlights China's firm stance against corruption, and is crucial for safeguarding national security and development interests, he added.

Liu noted that the draft law is a practical measure to regulate the healthy development of enterprises operating internationally and to foster a world-class business environment that is market-oriented, law-based and internationalized.

China is a major trading partner for more than 160 countries and regions, and it has signed Belt and Road cooperation documents with more than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations.

With more than 50,000 Chinese enterprises operating overseas, the scale of overseas assets is rapidly expanding, according to a statement released on Tuesday by the National Commission of Supervision. In this context, building a clean, integrity-based business environment is critical for expanding China's trade footprint, supporting Chinese companies amid global competition and advancing the Belt and Road Initiative, the statement said.

Liu said that by clarifying the compliance obligations of cross-border enterprises and enhancing regulatory oversight, the legislation helps guide overseas Chinese businesses to operate legally, compliantly, and with integrity.

He acknowledged the complexity and challenges of the anti-corruption battle, noting that corrupt actors are employing increasingly sophisticated and concealed methods, and that the cross-border nature of corruption is intensifying, with domestic and offshore corruption becoming more interconnected.

Liu said it is necessary to codify experiences and practices developed in the cross-border corruption battle since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, considering that the current rules in this regard are dispersed across various laws, with no systematic procedures for critical issues such as sharing case leads, reporting corruption, collaborating with foreign authorities on investigations and prosecutions, or tracking fugitives and recovering assets.

Zhang Lei, a professor of law at Beijing Normal University, underscored the importance of this legislative effort. "It clearly shows that China's commitment to combating corruption is steadfast and unwavering, which sends a strong message to the world about the progress and development of China's legal framework in this area," he said.

Humanity under attack



A man gestures as Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli attack near a refugee camp in Gaza City on Monday. Israeli airstrikes and tank fire across Gaza on Monday killed at least four people, including two children, hospital officials said. DAWOUD ABU ALKAS / REUTERS

New US sanctions on Iran threaten global economy

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

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The United States imposed a new wave of sanctions on Iran on Monday, which it said would cut off the economic lifeline that sustains the country. Experts said the move appears unlikely to force Tehran to bow down, but will further strain the global economy.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a news release on Monday that the new sectoral sanctions target five critical sectors: digital assets, technology, gold, aviation and shipping.

According to the department, starting on Monday, "the actions of Treasury and other agencies will tighten the noose and block every potential source of revenue that funds the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Iranian regime".

The department added that countries and entities continuing to do business with Iran will face heightened secondary sanctions risks.

"Every country has a defined timeline to shut down activities we have identified. If they do not take action, we will do so unilaterally through Treasury authorities," it said. "Any entity that facilitates money laundering on behalf of Iran will be removed from the US dollar system."

China firmly opposed on Tuesday these illegal unilateral sanctions, which it said lack any basis in international law and the authorization of the United Nations Security Council.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said at a regular news conference that China's cooperation with Iran has always been conducted within the framework of international law and should not be disrupted.

The country will take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard its own rights and interests, he added.

The spokesman stressed that economic warfare and maximum pressure will not help resolve the issue, but only further escalate tensions, create spillover risks, disrupt the global economic and financial order, and harm the legitimate rights and interests of other countries.

The top priority now is to ease the tensions and return to dialogue and negotiation as soon as possible, Lin said.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said, in his meeting on Monday in Tehran with Pakistan's Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, that the US must change its tone and approach in dealing with Iran, Mehr News agency reported.

In a separate meeting with Munir on Monday, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that Tehran remains determined to pursue implementation of the provisions of the US-Iran peace memorandum of understanding signed in June, Tasnim News Agency reported.

Washington and Tehran have been at odds since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the hostage crisis, in which Iranian students seized the US embassy in Tehran and took US diplomats hostage. Washington has imposed a slew of sanctions on Tehran and steadily expanded them over the past four decades.

Experts said that the latest move is likely to add fresh layers of disruption and complexity to the global economy and diplomatic efforts, particularly as Tehran maintains close communication with regional neighbors and mediators such as Oman and Pakistan.

Jawaid Iqbal, vice-chancellor of Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University in India, told China Daily that the US has been blowing hot and cold over the past several weeks with regard to Iran.

"This in itself is proof that the US is not in a position to dictate its peace terms with Iran," Iqbal said. "The latest threat of sanctions shows that Washington is trying to somehow extricate itself from a messy situation of its own making."

"Iran, on the other hand, will not bow down to Washington's terms and conditions so easily. It knows that by retaliating against America's regional allies, it can submerge the entire Gulf into chaos, which will in turn create turmoil in the world economy," he added.

Deniz Istikbal, an assistant professor and economics researcher at Istanbul Medipol University in Turkiye, noted that the economic dimension of the Iran-US conflict is intensifying, posing challenges for the global economy.

Conducting business with Iran is becoming increasingly challenging, as Washington seeks to isolate Tehran and push the government to the negotiating table by exerting financial pressure, he said.

"These developments are making the conflict increasingly costly for the global economy, while interest rates are rising and inflation is once again becoming a major concern.

"Ultimately, the cost of the conflict is creating additional burdens for the entire world, particularly for energy-importing countries, leading to higher taxation and increased borrowing needs," Istikbal noted.

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KNEADING A GOOD MEAL: LANZHOU SPECIALTY WINS FANS ABROAD

Noodle dish offers a glimpse into nation's culinary traditions

By **MA JINGNA** and **HU YUMENG** in Lanzhou



A chef prepares beef noodles for customers at an eatery in Lanzhou, Gansu province, in May. CHEN KUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

The dough stretches and folds between Ma Wenbin's hands with each flick of his wrists.

China Vibes — FOOD —

Press, knead, pull, fold — the movements follow in quick succession. In seconds, a heavy lump of dough is transformed into strands as fine as threads before being dropped into boiling water.

But for Ma, a good bowl of Lanzhou beef noodles is about much more than the noodles themselves.

"It's the broth that gives the bowl its soul," said the fourth-generation Lanzhou beef noodle maker, who has spent nearly five decades perfecting the craft behind the counter.

For people in Lanzhou, Gansu province, that bowl is woven into the very fabric of everyday life.

Some noodle shops open as early as 5 am, before the streets have fully awakened. For many locals, having the first bowl of the day — known as *touguo mian*, or first-pot noodles — is a morning ritual.

See ***Noodles,*** *page 3*

AI can restore confidence, unlock growth

WORLD WATCH
By Alessandro Golombiewski Teixeira

The International Monetary Fund in July projected 4.6 percent growth for the Chinese economy in 2026, one of the strongest results among major economies.

China's economy has also demonstrated considerable resilience in the first half of the year, with GDP expanding 4.7 percent year-on-year despite a challenging global environment.

Yet some Western economists remain skeptical of China's growth path, citing structural concerns including an overreliance on trade rather than domestic demand and adjustments in sectors such as steel, electric vehicles and solar panels.

But what both official and independent readings agree on is that households, enterprises and local governments have all become more measured about spending, investing and borrowing. One possible key lever to spur growth is boosting the willingness of households, businesses and local governments to spend, invest and borrow again. And a new cluster of technologies — smart manufacturing, space technology, the low-altitude economy, robotics, big data and, above all, artificial intelligence — is helping to build that confidence and create new opportunities for growth.

A global comparison helps explain why these technologies, AI especially, carry this weight. Global capital is increasingly recognizing the transformative potential of AI and related technologies. The point is not which company is "better", but what the gap reveals: Global capital now assigns trillion-dollar valuations almost overnight to companies considered to be at the frontier of AI, in a way it never did for the previous tech cycle's retail and software platforms.

China's growth model has long rested on three engines: exports (about 20 percent of GDP in 2024), household consumption (around 39.9 percent), and gross capital formation — the broad measure covering investment and infrastructure — at roughly 40.6 percent.

See ***Technology,*** *page 3*

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INSIDE
Chinese miracle
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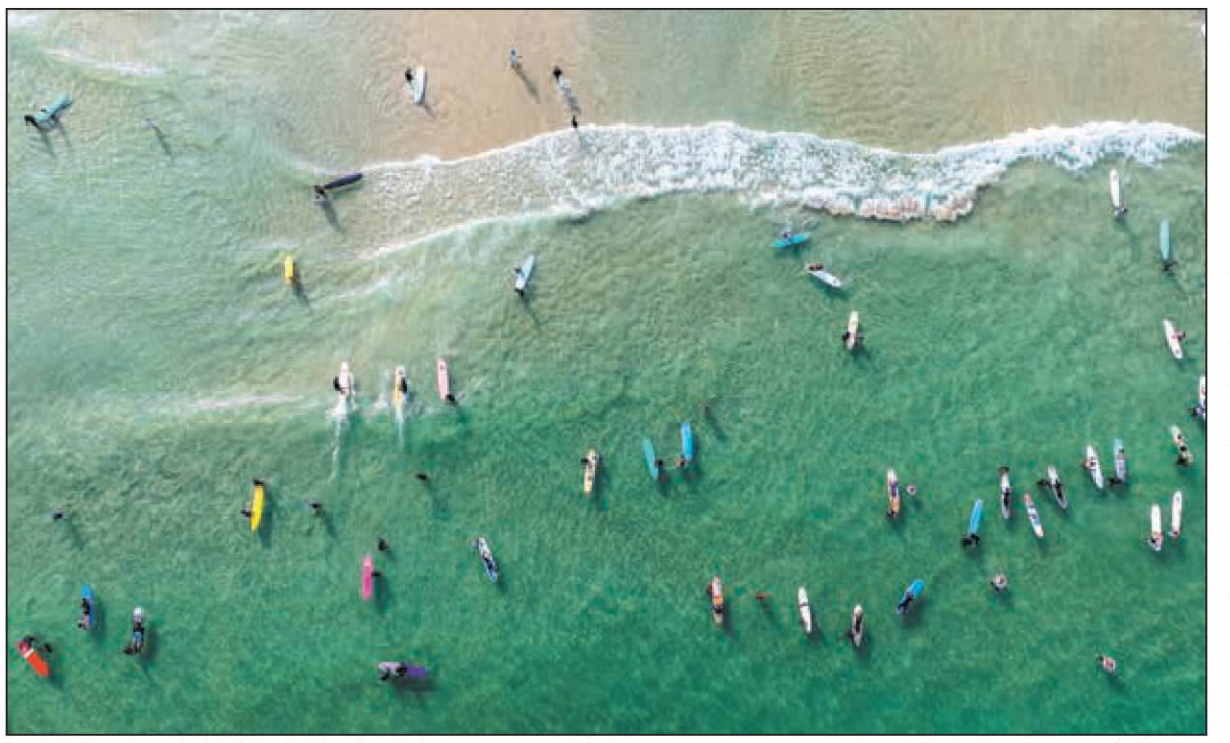
INDEPTH







Top left: Tourists enjoy jet skiing in Wanning, Hainan province, on July 11. MENG ZHONGDE / FOR CHINA DAILY **Top right:** Surfing classes are held at Riyue Bay in Wanning on Aug 13. DAN SANDOVAL / AP **Above:** People learn how to surf at the bay on July 25. MENG ZHONGDE / FOR CHINA DAILY

'Sportcation' enthusiasts find place in the sun

Younger generation flocks to Hainan coastal area for health, fun, activities and personal development

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

Qi Huan has spent four years at a Shanghai tech company, commuting two hours to work every day. She is in seven work chat groups and her heart races every time her phone buzzes on weekends.

One morning at 2 am, after finishing yet another business proposal, she stared at her screen for 10 minutes and decided on the spot to have a weeklong holiday. She immediately booked a flight to Sanya in Hainan province and a short time later arrived in the coastal city of Wanning by train. She had no itinerary or plan — just the knowledge that there was a "sports school" located there where people were active and energetic.

In Wanning, she found what she was looking for. "Before, I worked like crazy so I could have a better life. Now I realize life shouldn't be about that," she said.

Her mornings began with running or gym sessions. Days were filled with surfing, paddleboarding, and rock climbing. Afternoons consisted of more training, while evenings were filled with watching the sunset over the sea, dining, drinking, and dancing with new friends.

Qi is one of countless young people who flooded Wanning this summer. They call it "going to sports school" — but there are no gates, no uniforms and no diplomas. It's a lifestyle shaped by social media where gyms, surf clubs, paddleboard camps, beach volleyball courts, coastal cafes, bars, and long-term holiday rentals cluster together.

Sportcation is a travel model that integrates training, leisure, and social interaction, placing physical activity at the core of the holiday experience.

In China, the sportcation hashtag has generated over 40 million views. During the 2026 May Day holiday, searches for sportcation-related keywords surged 130 percent year-on-year, according to data from online travel platform Fliggy and social media platforms like Xiaohongshu (RedNote).

The rise of sportcations in China is being driven by a convergence of young urbanites seeking meaning beyond the daily grind and valuing physical exertion above passive indulgence, experts said.

The trend has also been advanced by Hyrox, a popular German-initiated fitness race that has grown from 650 global participants in 2017 to more than 1.5 million this year, with many young people in China embracing the event, according to data reported by CNBC.

Gao Shunli from the Tourism Research Center of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences said sportcation, an emerging trend of the sports tourism industry, has already demonstrated strong momentum and a high growth potential. However, its share of the overall tourism and sports industries could be bigger, and its development potential needs to be further unlocked.

The market size of China's sports tourism is projected to reach 3.88 trillion yuan ($576 billion) in 2026, Gao said.

Globally, sportcation is not new, but its growth is accelerating. The global tourism company TUI Musement's 2026 Travel Trends report named "sportcation" a key trend of the year, with bookings for sport-related activities rising nearly 37 percent year-on-year. In Southeast Asia, for instance, destinations like Bali have pioneered a "training camp" model.

Surfers' paradise

China's version, however, has developed its own characteristics, with a greater emphasis on self-improvement. The destination is the gym and the vacation is a personal development project.

Wanning's seaside playground provides the perfect setting for such journeys.

Surfing and tropical rainforest outdoor activities are two popular pursuits. As of May 15, searches for surfing-related products in Hainan grew 136 percent month-on-month, data from Tongcheng Travel showed.

Wanning has 109 kilometers of coastline, three distinct bays and more than 160 surf clubs. Riyue Bay's waves are rated among the most consistent in the world for nearly 300 days a year, with the average sea temperature hovering around 26 C. It has a dedicated community of surfers, coaches and enthusiasts, with more than 500,000 visitors coming every year for surfing, according to local tourism figures.

"China's surfing scene looks to Wanning, and Wanning's surfing is at Riyue Bay," said Li Zijia, founder of a local surf club.

International visitors are also taking notice of Wanning. Russian actor Ivan Maverick, who now resides in Wanning, said, "I've surfed in the US and Indonesia, but Wanning's wave conditions and community vibe are truly unique."

For foreign tourists, he added, "the visa-free policy and mobile payment options are also very traveler-friendly".

Booking demand for surfing-themed hotels near Wanning's Riyue Bay and Shenzhou Peninsula has risen rapidly, according to Tongcheng Travel.

Some visitors stay only a few days, buying passes and ticking off their bucket-list activities such as surfing, Hyrox, and paddleboarding, while snapping photos for their social media accounts.

Others rent apartments for a month or more, drawing up weekly training schedules and integrating exercise into their daily routines.

Avoiding a wipeout

However, the sportcation business is tougher than it looks, according to those involved in it.

Wang Zhiqiao, who runs the Wet Floor sports park on the beachfront, is called "Principal Wang" by participants in his Hyrox training sessions.

Wang realized the opportunities two years ago when he opened four training gyms in Jinan, Shandong province, betting on Hyrox before it had gained a foothold in China.

"For a city like Jinan, it was too early," he said. Only one gym survived.

An investor with Hainan real estate interests later approached him to open a gym in a hotel basement 100 meters from the sea. Wang took one look at the venue and rejected the plan. "Why not take it outside?" he wondered.

Wet Floor opened in January 2024, with the training equipment placed under coconut trees against an ocean backdrop. The Hyrox program quickly became Wet Floor's hottest offering.

Each Hyrox class regularly draws double-digit sign-ups, while other classes struggle to reach that number.

Wang said the appeal of such classes is that holidaymakers now want a nontraditional travel experience.

"The biggest difference between sports and luxury goods is that with luxury goods, you can buy them with money. But with sports, you can't," he said.

"The old middle-class status markers were about owning more luxury goods, traveling to more places, posting photos from Japan or South Korea. Now the middle class post photos of themselves doing all kinds of sports."

Wang conceded the economics of making the business profitable have been tough. Wet Floor's up-front investment was heavy, and the single location "can't make back its money", he said.

Peak season — Chinese New Year — draws about 200 visitors a day. In late May and June, the number drops to 20 or 30, and in summer it rises to 50 or 60.

To increase its viability, Wet Floor has opened a bar and restaurant next door.

But anecdotal evidence of Hyrox's growing popularity in Wanning and the rest of the country provides encouragement for operators like Wet Floor.

While there is no official data on China's total Hyrox participants, the scale of individual events is already remarkable. On Aug 15 and 16, Hyrox Shenzhen in Guangdong province attracted 12,000 athletes from 55 countries — with a total attendance of nearly 30,000.

The end of summer

In 2025, Wanning received 9.78 million tourists, generating 9.23 billion yuan in tourism revenue, according to government data.

About 70 percent of the visitors were young people, and roughly 70 percent participated in sports tourism.

For visitors such as Fang Fang from Beijing, who spent a month in Wanning, the coastal area was not simply a playground.

It offered her a chance to reflect on a healthier lifestyle and diet.

She was soon discussing the glycemic index of different foods with new friends, and eating protein before carbs, both medical recommendations to lower blood sugar spikes.

Fang also switched from evening workouts — which she said kept her awake — to morning sessions that reset her circadian rhythm.

After she returned to Beijing, she maintained the healthy habits she had cultivated in Wanning. Fitness had gone from being optional to essential.

Fang said in a laboratory "experiments fail all the time", but sports are different. "As long as you move, you see changes — in your body, in your mental state," she said.

Many of her graduate-school peers have only two stress outlets. "Either they're sports people, or they're heavy drinkers," she said, adding everyone needs a way to release pressure.

But not everyone is pleased with the influx of people to Wanning in search of sun and sports.

Some of the true "old surfers" have started to leave.

Seven years ago, before the COVID-19 pandemic, when freelance writer Chen Haiping arrived at Riyue Bay, it was pristine and low-key with only a few surfer guesthouses, he said.

"There weren't as many people, and it felt like a hermit's paradise," he said.

"Now, it has become more standardized, industrialized, but also commercialized. Most of my group, who truly embraced surfing as a lifestyle, have gradually left. They've moved to more remote bay areas around the world."

Chen said Wanning is neither a utopia nor a paradise to escape reality.

There are many real issues to deal with: rent does not match income, the cost of living is higher than expected, many things depend on transportation, and even fuel prices are higher because Hainan is an island.

"I have a deep affection for Wanning. Today, people seem to be flocking there as if heading to a carnival. I hope that after the excitement, people won't abandon it once they've had their fill."

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Left: A child practices surfing in Wanning on July 20. **Middle:** A cyclist performs stunts at a bicycle park in Wanning on Jan 18. PHOTOS BY MENG ZHONGDE / FOR CHINA DAILY **Right:** A surfer competes in the 2026 China National Artificial Surfing Pool Open in Wanning on March 7. LUO YUNFEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

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TOP NEWS

Tornado aftermath



Damaged houses and toppled trees are seen on Monday after a tornado struck Pomas in southwestern France. Local authorities said 39 people were injured, two critically, while about 300 homes were damaged. Emergency accommodation centers were opened for displaced residents.

IDRISS BIGOU-GILLES / AFP

Dialogue seeks tangible results in Sino-US ties

Representatives stress mutual respect while seeking progress in key areas

By ZHAO JIA
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Representatives from China and the United States participated in a dialogue on Tuesday in Beijing, where they called for joint efforts to translate the consensus reached by the two countries' heads of state into concrete action and tangible results, while also suggesting expansion of practical cooperation across a number of fields.

They highlighted mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation as key to keeping bilateral ties on a stable track, while stressing the need for the two countries to jointly address global challenges and bring greater stability to the world.

The gathering was the third China-US Track 1.5 Dialogue, jointly launched in October 2023 by the International Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the Asia Society as a platform connecting representatives from politics, strategy, business, academics, civil society and youth in both countries.

In May, President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump agreed to make the building of a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability the new positioning for bilateral ties, providing strategic guidance for the relationship over the next three years and beyond.

John L. Thornton, cochair of the Asia Society Board of Trustees, said Xi and Trump are both historic figures who know each other well and have a good personal relationship — a combination he described as highly unusual.

"I think it's very important that the benefit of that is concrete and seen by the people, both in the United States and in China," Thornton said.

He added that the key test was what the new positioning would mean in practice and whether it could produce results. "There are a lot of possibilities for progress, and I'm optimistic that there will be progress," he said.

> "There are a lot of possibilities for progress, and I'm optimistic that there will be progress."
>
> **John L. Thornton,** cochair of the Asia Society Board of Trustees

Christopher Nixon Cox, a member of the Richard Nixon Foundation's board of directors and a grandson of former US president Richard Nixon, called the leader-to-leader relationship "the most important thing", saying it gave him confidence about the future of bilateral ties.

While acknowledging that China and the US would continue to have differences, Cox said they should seek common ground in the fields of artificial intelligence, agriculture, food security and economic affairs to help build a stable and prosperous world.

"There are many things with AI that we can agree on," he said, citing the need to prevent it from harming children.

Cox also invoked Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972 as an example of the political courage required on both sides. "There are many lessons from my grandfather's trip to China," he said. "One is that nothing happens without courage."

Liu Haixing, minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, said that a stable China-US relationship was in itself the greatest contribution to world peace and development.

Liu called for expanding common interests, rejecting zero-sum thinking, managing differences through clear policy signals, and upholding the bottom line of no conflict and no confrontation.

Competition between major countries is normal, he said, but that should not define the entire relationship, emphasizing that it should be a healthy and positive race rather than a life-or-death gladiatorial contest.

A zero-sum approach, he added, would distort market rules, disrupt global industrial cooperation and undermine market confidence.

Craig Allen, former president of the US-China Business Council and a nonresident senior fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute's Center for China Analysis, said that both governments needed to follow the common framework agreed upon by the two leaders.

He said maintaining an open trade and investment environment was critical to achieving the two leaders' goals. Warning that decoupling would "make us both poorer" and that "neither side can afford to decouple", Allen described the Chinese and US economies as "the two engines of growth in the global economy", saying robust growth in both was essential to global stability.

Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, said that China's importance to US companies extended well beyond the size of its market.

"Think of China not as a market but as a platform. That's what's important," Stein said. China's technological ecosystem, the partnerships companies form and the experience they gain there help shape products and business processes used in other markets, he added.

The council's 2026 member survey found that 95 percent of respondents viewed their China operations as at least somewhat important to staying globally competitive.

"China is a really important part of global competitiveness for American companies," Stein said.

China ready to strengthen exchanges with India

By ZHOU JIN
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China is ready to work with India to strengthen communication, enhance mutual understanding, resolve differences and overcome obstacles, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Tuesday, calling on the two countries to be good-neighborly friends and partners that help each other succeed.

Wang, who is also director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, made the remarks when co-chairing the 25th Round of Talks Between the Special Representatives on the Boundary Question with Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval in Beijing.

Wang said that institutional exchanges and cooperation between the two countries are gradually resuming, with both sides committed to maintaining peace and tranquility in the border areas.

The two sides should place the boundary question in an appropriate position within the bilateral relationship, and continue moving forward without stalling, backsliding or deviating from the right course, he said.

Wang called on Beijing and New Delhi to gradually foster a positive narrative on China-India boundary affairs, and make dialogue, peace, consultation and cooperation the mainstream, so as to inject positive momentum into the sound and stable development of bilateral relations.

The two sides held in-depth discussions on advancing boundary negotiations, strengthening border management, improving relevant mechanisms and promoting cross-border cooperation, according to a news release issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

When meeting with Doval on the same day, Vice-President Han Zheng called on China and India to view and handle bilateral relations from a strategic and long-term perspective, and work together to implement the important consensus reached by their leaders.

The two sides should enhance strategic mutual trust, tap the potential for cooperation, maintain close multilateral coordination, properly manage differences and promote the sustained and stable development of China-India relations, he said.

As the world's two most populous and fastest-growing major economies, India and China have a historic opportunity for cooperation, Doval said, adding that India stands ready to work with China to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, properly address the boundary question and make new progress in bilateral ties.

Noodles: Legacy of Ancient Silk Road achieves modern reach, global appeal

From page 1

A steaming bowl arrives topped with slices of beef, white radish, garlic sprouts and cilantro. The noodles are pulled to order in a range of widths to suit each diner's preference. Once the last strand is gone and the broth savored to the last drop, there is a particular sense of satisfaction — a feeling locals describe as *manfu*, meaning comfortable contentment.

"Having a bowl of beef noodles is part of everyday life for people in Lanzhou," Ma said.

Yet the roots of this deeply local dish reach far beyond the city.

The clear, aromatic broth that Ma considers the soul of the dish is prepared with beef, bones and carefully selected spices — some of which, including pepper, nutmeg and fennel seeds, have traveled thousands of kilometers to reach Lanzhou.

Their journeys echo the exchanges that have long taken place along the ancient Silk Road, with Lanzhou historically serving as an important crossroads where regions and cultures meet.

Today, that movement is going in the other direction. The noodles that have long defined mornings in Lanzhou are increasingly being served far beyond Gansu — and well beyond China.

According to the Lanzhou Beef Noodle Industry Association, Lanzhou beef noodle outlets can now be found across over 60 countries and regions.

That expansion raises a question: How can a food so rooted in Lanzhou go global without losing its distinctive identity? Ma Chenghu, deputy secretary-general of the association, said the answer lies in preserving the essentials while allowing for local adaptation.

> Lanzhou beef noodles carry the imprint of the ancient Silk Road and the Yellow River civilization, and in a single bowl, you can see the meeting of Eastern and Western food cultures."
>
> **Ma Chenghu,** deputy secretary-general of the Lanzhou Beef Noodle Industry Association

At the heart of a traditional bowl is a combination known to Lanzhou diners as "one clear, two white, three red, four green and five yellow", referring to the clear broth, white radish, red chili oil, green garlic sprouts and cilantro, and golden noodles.

Behind that seemingly simple bowl lies a rigorous craft. The dough must be repeatedly kneaded to achieve the right elasticity before being pulled by hand into strands of varying thicknesses. Beef and bones are slowly simmered with spices to produce a broth that is rich in flavor yet crystal clear.

Ueno Tomokazu, a Japanese cultural communicator, came to Lanzhou to learn the craft. The dish has become increasingly popular in Japan, where diners are often seen lining up outside noodle shops.

Pulling noodles by hand, however, is harder than it looks. It requires not only strength, but also an intuitive sense of the dough — knowing when it is elastic enough, how much force to apply and how to keep the strands uniform as they multiply between the hands.

For Ueno, what stood out during his time in Lanzhou was not only the technique, but the deep emotional bond local people have with the dish.

"To make a good bowl, you need the skills, but you also need to have a genuine love for the food," he said.

As the Lanzhou specialty travels further afield, some shops have turned the noodle-making itself into part of the dining experience. Diners can watch the process, gaining not just a glimpse of the craft behind an otherwise simple bowl, but a deeper appreciation of Chinese culinary traditions.

Ma Chenghu from the Lanzhou Beef Noodle Industry Association said, "Lanzhou beef noodles carry the imprint of the ancient Silk Road and the Yellow River civilization, and in a single bowl, you can see the meeting of Eastern and Western food cultures."

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Technology: AI-driven growth strategy now requires more active policy support

From page 1

These figures capture the distinctive structure described above: Investment remains unusually high by international standards, consumption comparatively low. Exports still perform well, aided by industrial scale and diversification toward Europe and Latin America that has offset the weaker demand of the United States, but investment-led growth is harder to sustain as infrastructure can no longer serve as an unlimited stabilization tool.

Greater confidence should be built in consumption. Retail sales rose 3.7 percent in 2025, online retail increased 8.6 percent, and final consumption contributed 52 percent of GDP growth — five points more than the year before. That is a meaningful shift, but not yet a full substitute for property-led growth.

History offers a guide. Japan after 1990 showed that even near-zero rates cannot force households focused on repairing balance sheets to spend. China's own reform era is more encouraging: Deng Xiaoping's 1992 Southern Tour shifted expectations so decisively that real fixed investment rose 28.2 percent that year. Confidence returns when policy signals are sustained. China's own experience demonstrates how stronger expectations can unlock investment, entrepreneurship and economic activity.

> **China's own experience demonstrates how stronger expectations can unlock investment, entrepreneurship and economic activity.**

This is where AI — and the wider array of frontier technologies now emerging in China — becomes economically relevant, not as a symbol but as a potential fourth engine reinforcing the other three.

In exports, it can lift manufacturing productivity and push companies into higher-value segments, as Chinese labs such as DeepSeek have shown they can already do on the global stage. China's world-class manufacturing base gives it a strong platform for turning AI advances into productivity gains across the real economy.

In investment, it can redirect capital from basic infrastructure toward computing power and data centers — the very assets global markets now reward with premium valuations.

In consumption, it can open up demand in healthcare, education and digital services, while creating new products, services and employment opportunities for households.

The scale on display at the 2026 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance, backed by evident State commitment, signals this is a growth strategy, not a side project. Technology alone cannot inject confidence in all sectors. Turning that into domestic confidence still requires more active policy support — so that AI-driven growth becomes secure jobs and rising incomes, and eventually stronger household confidence and consumption.

China's transition can be summarized simply: In the earlier growth phase, expansion generated confidence; in the phase ahead, confidence will have to generate expansion. An economy with real capacity and increasingly sophisticated sources of innovation and growth, is still working to fully unlock the confidence needed to put that capacity to work. AI, if it can convert conference-hall momentum into household-level trust, may be the engine that helps supply it.

The author is a former tourism minister of Brazil, a distinguished professor at Tsinghua University and a professor at The Chinese University of Hong Kong in Shenzhen. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Birthday treat



Giant panda Katyusha enjoys a birthday cake at Moscow Zoo in Moscow, Russia, on Monday. Katyusha was the first giant panda ever born in Russia in August 2023.

PELAGIYA TIKHONOVA / SPUTNIK

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WORLD

Blaze battle



Firefighters battle a three-alarm fire along Main Street in Old Newhall, California, on Monday. The blaze broke out at 2:55 am, prompting an additional response as flames and smoke intensified, with flames destroying multiple businesses. MEDIANEWS GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES

China fuels tourism in Australia

Digital shifts reshape travel demand as arrivals edge closer to pre-pandemic peak

By ALEXIS HOOI in Sydney
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Australia's tourism industry recorded steady growth toward pre-pandemic levels, with the Chinese market helping fuel the pillar sector as it rides on digital and other technological trends amid global challenges, according to the latest analysis.

Travel to Australia is on the rise, with short-term visitor arrivals growing by 8 percent year-on-year to 9.1 million in 2025-26, according to figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on Aug 14.

Visits to the country have risen for the fifth year in a row, but they are still 3 percent lower than the peak of 9.3 million in 2018-19, it said.

Robin Mack, managing director of Tourism Australia, the government agency responsible for attracting international visitors to leisure and business events, told China Daily that in the year ending June 2026, Australia welcomed more than 1.1 million visitors from China, which was 18.2 percent more than the previous year.

"China continues to be a top inbound tourism market for Australia. We have seen the number of Chinese travelers arriving in Australia steadily increase since travel resumed in early 2023," he said.

China was Australia's largest tourism market by both visitor numbers and spending in 2019 and has "bounced back relatively quickly" to become the country's second-largest source of visitors, after New Zealand, and its largest market by spending, Mack said.

At an industry briefing on Aug 20 covering the latest trends and market insights, Mack also said international confidence in travel continues to rise as the situation in the conflict-hit Middle East, with its disruptions to fuel and other global supply chains, becomes the new "normal".

"Despite initial disruptions to travel earlier this year, Australia continues to welcome visitors from around the world. Australia's appeal as a destination remains strong, and importantly traveler confidence, and intention to visit, are steady," he told China Daily, adding that while there is a downturn in bookings from the United Kingdom and Europe in the months ahead, those in other key markets, notably China, are up.

"Our marketing continues to focus on building demand with campaigns targeted to key markets, working closely with distribution and airline partners to convert demand into bookings and a broad range of visitor experiences on the ground," Mack said.

He referred to Australia's "world-class nature and wildlife" as the main draws for Chinese visitors, as well as "great food and drink experiences".

Maturing market

"As the market continues to mature, Chinese travelers are sampling the best of Australian produce in urban and regional settings," Mack said.

The industry briefing also covered how artificial intelligence was becoming increasingly important in the sector's digital and technological development.

Tourism Australia's chief marketing officer Susan Coghill highlighted how 81 percent of Chinese travelers "use AI for trip inspiration, more than anywhere else".

Travelers now trust AI more than influencers to plan their travel, with AI-referred traffic to travel sites also up more than 2,000 percent since late 2024, she said.

"One is about how we create desire and how we connect emotionally with travelers and make them want Australia," Coghill said.

"Another is about how we get discovered by the machines; so it's AI tools and social platforms becoming more and more about how people are researching the next holiday or business event. We want to make sure that Australia ... is in the answers," she said.

John Pastor, who organizes tailor-made tours in Sydney, told China Daily he is banking on more Chinese tourist arrivals, in part by investing in advanced translation technology to help him communicate better with them.

"The Chinese are friendly, smart and generous," he said. "I like to create memories for people with their experiences here."

Zhang Liyun, an information technology professional from Shanghai, said her family of five is set for a trip to Australia during the Chinese holiday period in October.

"We'll be covering Sydney and its surrounding areas," said Zhang, 42. "Australia continues to be an attractive destination in the Southern Hemisphere, with its great outdoors and vibrant cities."

Beyond pandas, open doors draw visitors from afar



Chang Jun
Reporter's log

FIRST PERSON VIEW

I walked into the conference room not expecting much. Another tourism promotion event, another PowerPoint deck, another round of polished talking points. But something felt different last month as soon as I stepped into the room where officials from Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, told attendees that the city, with thousands of years of history, has much more to offer than its iconic giant pandas.

Industry representatives, policymakers, travel agents, and service providers packed the room shoulder to shoulder. There was an energy I had not felt at one of these gatherings in a long time.

Jason Carter, regional director for the USA and Canada at the World Travel and Tourism Council, or WTTC, said China's travel and tourism industry had entered a period of rapid expansion. His statement was hard to argue with: the numbers were solid. In 2025, China hosted more than 68 million international visitors, up 15.5 percent year-on-year, nearly triple the global average. Those visitors spent $135 billion in China, while the country's total economic contribution from tourism reached $1.8 trillion, growing 9.9 percent year-on-year — more than double the global average of 4.1 percent.

I found myself joining the chorus of loud cheers and applause.

Well, I am not ashamed of losing my composure. Since the COVID-19 pandemic first struck in 2019 and cast its long shadow over the world, I have felt suffocated by a relentless flood of gloomy headlines — economic downturns, business slowdowns, store closures, declining tourism, eroding public confidence, and the drumbeat of war. Against that bleak backdrop, words like growth, expansion, job creation, and profit, riding on the wave of China's tourism boom, are nothing short of music to my ears.

Carter was clear that none of this was accidental. The recovery is the product of China's real work at every level. Services were upgraded, policies refined, and procedures streamlined to remove any hurdle an overseas visitor might face. Vowing to continue its openness, China now offers visa-free access to 50 countries unilaterally, with reciprocal agreements covering another 29. More than 30 million foreign nationals entered China visa-free in 2025 alone.

This is a remarkable gesture from China — an open, standing invitation to friends all over the world, extended with hospitality and backed by millennia-long history, cultural richness, and tourism resources.

Chengdu is a microcosm of this broader trend. Qiu Wei, director of the Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Culture, Broadcast-TV, and Tourism, promoted his hometown at the event by underscoring Chengdu's charm of blending high-tech innovation and ecosystem diversity with a laid-back lifestyle.

It seems to me that being named the Happiest City in China for 17 consecutive years is a strong selling point for Chengdu — or any place that can provide a temporary haven for people worn down by the pressures of modern life. Fortunately, China has many similar tourist attractions to host those who are heart-wrenched and physically fatigued.

The hard work appears to be paying off. I talked to Alex Mortensen, sales manager at the HiSEAS International Tourism Group, who specializes in arranging trips to China for US travelers.

What impressed him the most about traveling in China was the efficiency, well-trained staff, and cost-effectiveness. He stayed at the Four Seasons in Chengdu with his family in June. "Compared to what you pay in the United States, the price was incredibly enticing — and the service was exceptional."

Mortensen is neither the first nor the last to return with a positive impression of China, I believe. When these positive experiences become the new normal and go viral across internet communities, the success story of China's tourism industry will continue.

Deputy Consul General Cao Yibin closed warmly. "Tourism brings people closer together and builds lasting friendship," she said. In the current climate of US-China relations, those words carry particular weight.

I left with a half-built Chengdu itinerary on my phone and, for the first time in a long while, something that felt like optimism. The numbers are real. The doors are opening. The cities are ready.

The only question is whether enough people on this side of the Pacific are willing to go find out for themselves. Based on what I heard there, more and more of them are.

The author is a China Daily correspondent based in San Francisco.

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Online
See more by scanning the code.

Europe heat waves kill 35,000, strain insurers

By EARLE GALE in London
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At least 35,000 excess deaths have been recorded during heat waves that have scorched Europe this year, The Guardian newspaper has reported.

The final death toll is likely to be far higher because data is not yet available for half of Europe's nations, and because none have yet published excess death totals for August.

The provisional death toll has prompted the US credit rating agency S&P Global Ratings to warn that Europe's heat waves will cause a spike in insurance claims, and increase the cost of life insurance and medical insurance.

It said insurance companies will have to pay many extra claims, including for crop damage caused by droughts, and devastation left by wildfires.

"Beyond heat-related deaths, it's also deteriorating health conditions and the resulting increase in treatment and hospitalizations that might weigh on insurers' financials and, subsequently, increase premiums," S&P Global Ratings said in its analysis.

Europe's fast-aging population is more susceptible to heat-related health issues, the company added, and "the increasing share of elderly people ... suggests that heat-related mortality in Europe is likely to rise".

A recent study in The Lancet Planetary Health found that people aged 60 and older are more susceptible to excess heat because they sweat less and because their hearts work harder as their blood vessels cannot widen and increase flow.

Of the 35,000 excess deaths recorded so far in Europe, 10,650 occurred during a heat wave between June 22 and June 28, with 9,000 of those deaths among people aged 65 and older.

The Robert Koch Institute, a public health agency in Germany, said 9,600 of the 10,650 deaths happened in Germany, where a typical summer usually leads to around 2,000 heat-related deaths.

Excess fatalities

The heat-related deaths mean Europe is likely to see its largest number of excess fatalities since July 2022, when there was a spike connected to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Karl Lauterbach, a former German health minister, said last week that the latest figures are likely to be massive underestimates.

The four heat waves that have hit Europe so far this year have largely impacted the western side of the continent, where they have broken several records, including in France, where the hottest national average day on record was recorded. In Germany, temperatures topped 40 C for three straight days in June. And Spain saw many days of at least 42 C.

The hot weather has been attributed to human-made global warming exacerbated by an El Nino weather system.

Swallowed by grief



A man mourns next to the covered body of a person killed during an overnight raid by an armed gang on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince in Kenscoff, Haiti, on Monday. The attack left at least 47 people dead and 22 injured, as Kenscoff has endured about a dozen gang attacks since last year, according to the United Nations. PATRICE NOEL / REUTERS

US proposes H-1B fee exceeding $100,000

WASHINGTON — The US Department of Homeland Security, or DHS, on Monday proposed a $103,265 fee for employers hiring highly-skilled foreign workers through the H-1B visa program, marking the agency's latest move to restrict the visa program on new grounds.

The move came after a previous effort to charge $100,000 for the visa was struck down by the courts.

"The proposed fee would generate revenue to recover a portion of the federal government's costs for administering the lawful immigration system," the DHS said in a news release.

The new fee is designed to recover a portion of the full costs of providing immigration adjudication and naturalization services incurred by multiple federal agencies in processing, adjudicating and supporting the lawful immigration system, according to a document scheduled to be published in the Federal Register on Tuesday.

The DHS estimates the proposed fee would generate approximately $8.8 billion annually, based on projections of petitions for the annual cap of 85,000 H-1B visas, according to the release.

Under the proposed rule, the additional fee would not apply to H-1B petitions that are not subject to the cap, such as petitions filed by certain nonprofit research organizations, governmental research organizations, and institutions of higher education, the release added.

The public will be given a 30-day period to submit comments on the proposed rule before it can take effect.

"If finalized, the new proposal would place a significant new burden on the technology and finance sectors, which rely on the H-1B visa to hire top international graduates from US universities," The Wall Street Journal reported.

The latest proposal came two months after the Trump administration's $100,000 fee on new H-1B visas was struck down by a federal judge in Boston, Massachusetts. The judge ruled that the executive branch exceeded its authority and violated the Administrative Procedure Act.

Plan may backfire

CBS reported that the plan could backfire by encouraging US companies to shift jobs overseas, especially in specialized fields such as research and development. It could also further deter international students from studying in the United States.

On Aug 10, the US State Department announced that it had revoked more than 175,000 visas since January 2025, when Trump began his second term.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is preparing to revoke the business and tourism visas of up to 200,000 foreigners who have applied for or are currently seeking asylum status in the United States, according to a report by The Associated Press on Tuesday.

"If it happens, the move would be the largest single mass revocation of visas in US history and would likely face legal challenges," the report said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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WORLD

In memoriam



People light candles next to a collapsed building two months after massive earthquakes in La Guaira, Venezuela, on Monday. The country's interim government on Monday reported 6,509 deaths from the twin earthquakes. MARYORIN MENDEZ / AFP

Japan Cabinet's poll ratings drop

Decline reflects rising public doubts about governing philosophy: Experts

By LIU JIANQIAO
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Latest Japanese opinion polls show support for Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's Cabinet has continued to decline, reaching its lowest level since she took office. Experts said the drop reflects growing public doubts about the administration's governing philosophy, policy competence and approach to governance.

The approval ratings fell to 41 percent in a Mainichi Shimbun survey conducted on Saturday and Sunday, their lowest level since the administration came into office in October 2025. A Kyodo News poll at the same time also found that the approval rate for Takaichi's Cabinet fell 3.5 percentage points from the previous survey in July to 50.2 percent.

The key focus of the weekend polls was the government's plan to cut the consumption tax on food from the current 8 percent to 1 percent for two years starting in April 2027.

The support for the policy stood at 54 percent in a Yomiuri Shimbun survey and 52.7 percent in the Kyodo News poll. An ANN survey found that 47 percent of respondents supported the measure, while 42 percent opposed it. Mainichi's survey showed a different trend, with 47 percent of respondents viewing the policy negatively, compared with 33 percent who viewed it positively.

Although three of the four polls showed more respondents supporting the tax cut than opposing it, anxiety over its consequences for government coffers remained high.

A high percentage of Kyodo's respondents, 71.7 percent, expressed concern over the impact of the tax cut on government finances, while a similar proportion expressed the same concern in ANN's poll.

Yomiuri's poll found that a majority of respondents were worried that the tax cut could make it more difficult for the government to sustain the social security system. Many questioned whether the government would be able to restore the tax to its original rate after the two years.

Besides, according to the Kyodo poll, 42.6 percent of respondents said they disapproved of Takaichi's decision to omit the word "remorse" from her address at a ceremony on Aug 15 marking Japan's defeat in World War II.

Liu Shuliang, an associate researcher at the Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences, said that public concerns over the tax cut policy underscore the continued pressure Japanese households face from rising prices and higher living costs.

The government's economic and livelihood policies, dubbed "Sanaenomics" by the media for their resemblance to "Abenomics" by former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, are essentially election-driven measures aimed at securing short-term political support, rather than addressing Japan's long-standing structural economic problems, Liu said.

He noted that in response to mounting public concerns over rising prices and the increasing cost of living, the Takaichi administration has introduced measures such as consumption tax cuts in an effort to win public support by offering immediate policy benefits.

"However, such measures could further increase fiscal risks and place a heavier burden on future governments and generations, while the administration appears both unwilling and unable to pursue structural reforms that would challenge Japan's entrenched vested interests," he added.

Slush fund scandal

Chen Hong, director of East China Normal University's Asia Pacific Studies Center in Shanghai, highlighted that 73.8 percent of respondents in the Kyodo News poll opposed Takaichi's plan to appoint lawmakers implicated in a political slush fund scandal to key positions.

These findings indicate that the Japanese public remains deeply dissatisfied with political funding scandals, political ethics and what is often described as "Liberal Democratic Party-style factional politics". It also suggests that such problems remain deeply rooted in Japanese politics and have yet to be effectively addressed, Chen said.

Since taking office, the Takaichi administration has pursued a distinctly conservative, and in some areas, right-leaning policy agenda, experts said.

"Over the past year or so, the Takaichi Cabinet's policies on national security, foreign affairs, historical perceptions and reform of the imperial household system have increasingly aligned with the core demands of Japan's right-wing forces, further pushing Japanese politics in a right-leaning direction," Liu said.

The administration's rightward political shift is likely to exacerbate long-standing ideological divisions between the left and right in Japanese politics and society, prompting political forces and social groups to take more clearly defined sides, Chen said.

"This could weaken social cohesion, undermine political and social stability, and further deepen polarization in Japanese society," he added.

Forum calls for Asian unity amid geopolitical challenges

By ZHANG YUNBI
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Asia is now in urgent need of boosting unity, shelving differences and building consensus when faced with challenges such as geopolitical rivalry, gaps in technologies and power politics, political figures and policy advisers have said.

They made the point at the Conference on Building a Peaceful and Prosperous Asian Community with a Shared Future, a high-level dialogue in Beijing on Tuesday.

The event gathered over 300 delegates from countries in various parts of Asia, including political leaders as well as executives of think tanks, friendship organizations and media.

At the conference's opening, Wang Dongming, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, voiced his hope that all parties would act on the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity and implement the four major initiatives — the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative, and Global Governance Initiative.

He called on parties to join hands in advancing the building of a community with a shared future for Asia and to jointly write a new chapter of peace, development, cooperation, and prosperity for Asia.

Omar Razzaz, Jordan's former prime minister, raised concerns over challenges posed by cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence, to Asia, which represents about 40 percent of the world's total GDP and 60 percent of the global population.

The younger generation is going through cognitive atrophy because of AI. While manual labor is being replaced by robotics and AI algorithms, economic monopoly by some IT giants based in Western countries may translate into political hegemony, he said.

He quoted President Xi Jinping as saying at the opening ceremony of the 2026 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in July that "AI development should not be a solo performance by a single country, but a symphony of international cooperation".

"I could not agree more. This is something that each of us needs to be involved in," he said.

Yukio Hatoyama, former Japanese prime minister, warned that armed conflicts persist around the world, and economic sanctions and bloc-based politics have become a weapon in diplomacy.

"What our era requires is not the continuation of an old order based on the strength of nations," he said.

Hatoyama noted that China, as a major country, does not coerce others through force but influences them through virtue, and it builds trust through reciprocity and cooperation.

Tao Jian, a leading Chinese scholar on international relations studies and former president of the University of International Relations in Beijing, underlined the importance of Asian countries joining hands in partnership building and resilience buildup against economic, political and social impacts brought by factors, including bloc confrontation.

"Only when Asian nations fully recognize that they are all sailors on the same ship will they be able to truly join forces and move forward together amid raging storms," he said.

Sodiq Safoyev, first deputy chairman of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan, said the region needs not just economic connectivity, but also "identity and a space of shared values".

Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, former Pakistani prime minister, said Asia "needs security that is common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable, where no country seeks security at the expense of another".

ACFTU Special

Man masters legendary machine to produce aircraft parts for country

From model workers and master craftsmen to factory hands and gig-economy workers, China's vast workforce is the bedrock of national development. Launched by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, this series shines a spotlight on the responsibility and resilience of the modern Chinese working class, documenting their struggles and stories from the front lines to showcase the dedication, craftsmanship and pioneering spirit driving progress across every sector.

By YUAN SHENGGAO



Ye Linwei, team leader of the 80,000-metric-ton die-forging press crew at China National Erzhong Group Deyang Wanhang Die Forging, reviews operations at the production site.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The first time Ye Linwei stood beneath the 80,000-metric-ton die-forging press, he was 26. Towering 42 meters above him — as high as a 15-story building and weighing 22,000 tons — was a legendary machine.

Ye, now 40, is team leader of the press crew at China National Erzhong Group Deyang Wanhang Die Forging. The press, developed by Erzhong Group, is one of the largest in the world and built to forge aircraft parts.

"I've dreamed of building aircraft since I was a child," Ye said. "My first encounter with the 80,000-ton press was as a freshman. It hadn't broken ground yet, but its legend was already whispered in every corner of the heavy machinery world."

In 2006, Ye was studying civil construction at Sichuan Polytechnic University when he learned his school was training specialists for an 80,000-ton press to support the development of homegrown aircraft. A budding pilot at heart, he switched to the forging program. "If I couldn't be the pilot," Ye recalls thinking, "I could at least help build the plane."

By 2012, the press was ready. So was Ye. Following a rigorous selection process, he was chosen as a candidate for the inaugural operation team.

The challenge was unlike anything in the textbooks. With no mature operating procedures to follow, Ye faced a maze of components: 10 kilometers of hydraulic piping, tens of thousands of electrical control modules and a mechanical frame that tolerated no mistakes.

"Mastering this unprecedented steel has no road map to follow; every step forward felt like navigating uncharted waters," Ye said.

To close the gap between theory and reality, Ye buried himself in studying the machine. During the day, he climbed the press to examine its structure against the blueprints. At night, he stayed at the console, recording data.

"At the toughest stage, we ran over a hundred trials on a single parameter. Constant tweaks, constant checks," Ye said. Undeterred by the setbacks, Ye's work finally paid off. He cracked the operating code a year early, earning the position as the press' inaugural chief.

Operating an 80,000-ton giant is less about brute force than microscopic control. Over years of repetition, Ye has developed a near-instinctive feel for operating the machine. "I taught myself to listen to the equipment," Ye said. By ear, Ye spots machine faults. He once used the press to crack an eggshell without rupturing the membrane inside.

That precision proved vital in national key projects, most notably in forging the C919's vertical stabilizer and its main landing gear. Working beside the press, Ye and his colleagues ran repeated trial forgings, adjusting parameters until the margin of error disappeared. The successful forging supported the aircraft's final assembly, maiden flight and commercial service.

Ye and his team took over 2,500 days to crack the core technology for central-wing titanium alloy edges, delivering more than 130 critical forgings, all now in active service.

"In aviation, nothing is trivial. Every forging is a layer of insurance for flight safety; there is zero tolerance for error," Ye reminds himself and his crew. Over the years, Ye's team has produced nearly 40,000 high-precision forgings. Among them are the world's largest gas turbine disc, ultralarge integrated titanium bladed disks and high-strength TC17 titanium alloy components.

"Serving national megaprojects as a frontline worker is my greatest pride," Ye said. For him, the work is less about awards and more about a quiet promise that ensures every part leaving the shop floor is strong enough to fly.



Waddle weigh

A zookeeper tries to lure penguins onto a scale during the annual Weigh In at the Zoological Society of London on Monday, as London Zoo's animals are weighed and measured on a regular basis as a way of continually monitoring their health, development and even identifying pregnancies.
FRANK AUGSTEIN / AP

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COMMENT

Editorials

US needs an exit ramp for itself, not an 'economic D-Day' for Iran

Watching a superpower that cannot win a conflict pretend it can win an economic siege would be comic if it weren't so tragic.

That is what we witnessed this week, when US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent stepped forward to declare the "single greatest financial offensive ever marshaled against an adversary" — in this case Iran — only to acknowledge that Washington was not actually naming the countries to be punished or imposing secondary sanctions yet. There would be a "cure period". The penalties would come later.

Washington wants to convince Tehran that tougher measures are coming while keeping its own options open. But the much-hyped "economic D-Day" looks more like a damp squib.

The United States' latest campaign targets almost 60 individuals, entities and vessels and expands the reach into digital assets, gold, technology, aviation and shipping. Failing to fully throttle Iran's oil exports, Washington is technically waging an open assault on the non-dollar financial order to preserve the US' dollar hegemony.

China — one of Iran's trading partners — has made its position clear. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said sanctions and pressure tactics do not resolve problems; they only escalate tensions and damage global economic growth and financial stability. China urges all parties to return to political settlement through dialogue and negotiation.

Washington cannot turn every trading partner into a US accomplice in the Middle East crisis. China will do what is necessary to protect its legitimate rights and interests.

The irony is that while Bessent was announcing an economic war, Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, was traveling to Tehran after speaking with US President Donald Trump. Pakistani sources said Washington had asked Islamabad to use its influence to bring Iran back to negotiations.

The world has seen this double act before. Washington has repeatedly made extravagant claims about the Strait of Hormuz, at one point declaring that the US blockade was "100 percent effective" and that it had "complete control", when evidently it didn't.

By dictating timelines for other countries to cut ties with Iran in the listed fields, Washington has all but admitted that domestic pressure has left it desperate to escape the mess that it created.

The whole world, particularly Iran, can clearly see that the US administration appears increasingly trapped in a crisis of its own making. Gasoline in the US has risen above $4 a gallon. Inflation and living costs remain painfully high. The US national debt has climbed beyond $40 trillion, while the US administration is intervening in the Treasury market to support demand for government bonds.

Against that backdrop, the Iran conflict offers an irresistible political stage. A US administration under domestic economic pressure before the midterm elections can always look stronger by threatening a foreign adversary and telling the rest of the world what to do. In politics you get far more mileage out of managing expectations than you ever will from keeping your word.

Iran has already endured decades of sanctions. It has built mechanisms to diversify its economic relationships. Tehran says it has prepared a two-year plan to withstand the latest US measures. Whether that plan succeeds is another question. But expecting new sanctions alone to produce a result that has not been achieved in nearly half a century is hardly a strategy.

The longer this war and economic siege continue, the more the costs spread — to global energy markets and ultimately to US households. The US administration does not need another "economic D-Day" for Iran. It needs an exit ramp for itself.

After its many military misadventures, the US should have learned by now that you cannot bomb a nation into submission, sanction it into surrender or bluff your way out of a quagmire created by yourself. At some point, even superpowers have to choose between the theater of strength and the hard work of diplomacy.

The last time the US administration played listmaker to the rest of the world, it was the great tariff fiasco — a spectacle later ruled unlawful and remembered for its lose-lose consequences. Yet here we are again, with Washington dusting off the same playbook, this time in the name of the Iran conflict. History is unlikely to be kind to this rerun.

People-to-people exchanges enduring bridge

Ronald Sakolsky, a retired teacher from Pennsylvania, the United States, recently returned to China after more than 20 years, completing a personal journey that began with a simple act of kindness. In an era of strategic rivalry and political turbulence, his story serves as a poignant reminder of what truly sustains international relations.

In 1999, while teaching English in Luoyang, Henan province, Sakolsky was inspired by a television report on Yin Yuzhen, a Chinese woman fighting desertification in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. Moved by her perseverance, Sakolsky raised $5,000 to support her tree-planting efforts on the barren land.

This week, he walked through the very land he helped rejuvenate, now a thriving forest and ecological garden. "Nothing but a miracle," he said, standing beside Yin. Their journey, from a small donation to a flourishing forest, encapsulates a powerful truth: individual human connections can transcend geopolitical divides and create lasting, tangible change.

This narrative is especially important today, as some politicians in the US continue to view China as a strategic rival, leading to restrictive policies that hinder bilateral cooperation and escalate tensions.

In such an environment, official channels often stall or get mired in suspicion and zero-sum thinking. However, international relations are not solely the domain of politics; they are also built on a foundation of mutual understanding between people from different walks of life.

When political rhetoric becomes adversarial, people-to-people exchanges act as crucial stabilizers, dismantling stereotypes, building trust and highlighting our shared humanity. As Sakolsky put it, "All Americans need to realize that Chinese and Americans can be family. We can get over the differences if we focus on the similarities."

This sentiment is not naive, but points to a historical truth. Ultimately, it is the people who uphold the bridge of understanding when political winds turn harsh. In times of diplomatic strain, grassroots connections play a critical role in keeping communication lines open and fostering dialogue and mutual understanding.

These interpersonal and cultural exchanges are the stabilizing forces for China-US relations, reminding both nations of their shared interests and the human connections that transcend political disagreements. Through sustained engagement at the individual and community levels, the potential for collaboration and peaceful coexistence is kept alive, even amid geopolitical tensions.

The promising areas for this cooperation should include green development and climate change — afforestation is part of these endeavors. As the world's two largest economies, China and the US share a common interest in combating climate change, advancing green technology and restoring ecological balance.

Yin's story is a metaphor for the engagement in these fields. With help from Good Samaritans such as Sakolsky, her painstaking efforts, which have turned over 4,600 hectares of desert into an oasis, are a victory for all of humanity.

Sakolsky's role sets an example of how cooperation can flourish despite political uncertainties. By focusing on shared environmental goals, both China and the US can contribute to a global public good while building a reservoir of trust and mutual respect that can positively influence other aspects of their relationship.

People-to-people exchanges and dialogues play a vital role in fostering mutual trust and cooperation. Demonstrating the broad scope of such links, the third China-US Track 1.5 Dialogue was held in Beijing on Tuesday, bringing together representatives from Chinese government departments and think tanks, as well as US representatives from several organizations. Centered on expanding economic and sci-tech cooperation, this face-to-face engagement exemplifies the kind of direct communication that is urgently needed between the two countries now.

It is through such sustained exchanges and cooperation that humanity's remarkable cultural tapestry endures and thrives.

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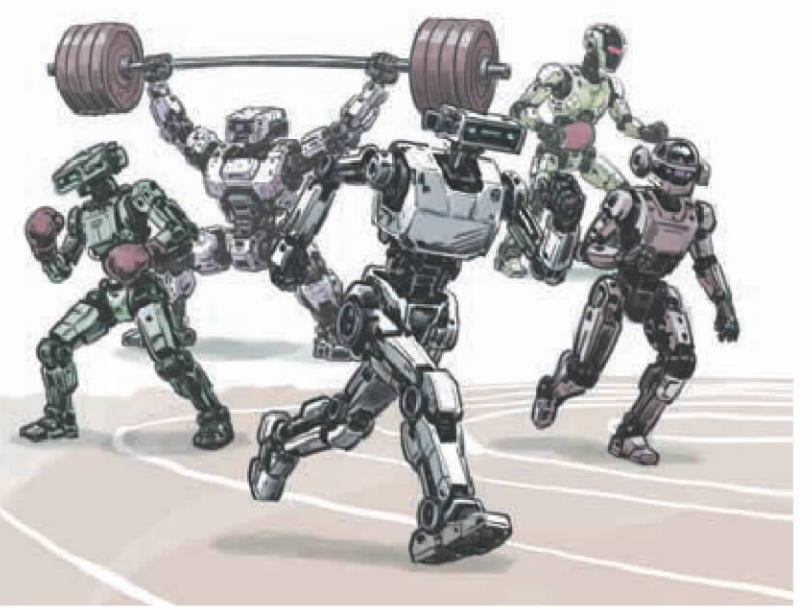

Opinion Line

Latin America knows who is cooperative, who exploitative

Apparently, in the eyes of some United States politicians, the latest threat to Latin America is not invasion, inflation or being treated like Washington's backyard. It is a Huawei router.

Juan Pablo Segura, the US assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, who oversees US foreign policy and relations across Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada, has issued a warning worthy of a Cold War spy thriller: Huawei, ZTE, Hytera, Hikvision, Dahua and DJI are "high-risk technologies" because Chinese law supposedly "forces" them to "spy, hack and shut down" networks.

The message to Latin America is essentially: Trust us. We know what surveillance looks like.

China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian called the baseless accusations fact-distorting fabrications and blatant techno-bullying. And Beijing's diplomatic mission in Panama accused Washington of acting like a thief crying "Stop thief".

The US' unwarranted alarm bell rings hollow because Washington has a credibility problem. The US has a long record of electronic surveillance, tapping and cyber operations, including across Latin America and the Caribbean. So when Washington suddenly becomes the hemisphere's anxious aunt warning everyone about "Chinese spyware", Latin Americans have a reasonable question: Who exactly is listening to whom?

And, why should Panama, Brazil, Peru or any other Latin American country be told which telecommunications equipment, drones or cameras it may buy?

Washington's answer is "national security". But that phrase is becoming remarkably elastic. It now seems capable of covering everything from semiconductors and ports to lithium, telecommunications and, apparently, even *siu mai*, Chinese steamed dumplings.

There is a more uncomfortable explanation: China is gaining influence because it is offering things Latin America actually wants. It is building ports, railways, factories and digital infrastructure. The Chancay Port in Peru has shortened shipping times between South America and Asia dramatically. Chinese companies are localizing production of electric vehicles and cooperating on telecommunications, renewable energy and advanced manufacturing projects.

Washington wants Latin America to provide oil and critical minerals for US supply chains and to exclude Chinese companies. The US' trade initiatives come with geopolitical conditions. Its immigration policies have alienated millions of Latin Americans. And the US' maneuvering in the Panama Canal has revived fears that Washington still regards the hemisphere less as a community of sovereign states and more as a US preserve.

That is the problem with the "Donroe Doctrine" as it is known. The old Monroe Doctrine said, in effect, that outsiders should stay out of the US' neighborhood. The new version seems to say something more alarming: Latin Americans themselves should be careful about whom they invite into their neighborhood.

The seizure of control over the Balboa and Cristobal ports after pressure to push out CK Hutchison should be a caution to the region. If a company can operate legally for decades and then discovers that geopolitics has suddenly rewritten the contract, every investor should ask what "sovereignty" means when Washington disapproves of the business partner.

China does not want Latin America to become a zero-sum game arena. If US companies want to win local contracts, they should compete by offering better projects, better financing, better technology and better partnerships — instead of relying on Washington's coercion to dictate whom Latin Americans are permitted to work with.

If Washington keeps shouting "Chinese spy" every time Latin America buys a camera, a drone or a telecom system, it may eventually become just background noise.

Latin American countries have witnessed and taken full note of everything the US has done to Panama, Cuba and Venezuela. And they have noticed who is offering projects — and who is offering threats.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Standards for AI-driven services to help customers

Editor's note: *China's first national standards for coordination between human and artificial intelligence-driven customer service will come into effect on Sept 1. China Central Television spoke to Xue Jun, director of the e-commerce law research center at Peking University, about the new standards. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The integration of AI into business operations, particularly in after-sales service, is one of the most common applications. AI-powered customer service can significantly reduce operating costs, prompting many companies to adopt AI solutions for handling after-sales inquiries and resolving service issues.

However, while many businesses are reluctant to invest heavily in human customer service, AI technology is not yet fully mature. This has led to a growing number of consumer complaints.

To address this problem, the national standards set rules to guide the development of the sector. The objective is to use technology to deliver after-sales services more efficiently and at lower cost, without compromising the consumer experience.

One common problem is that customers struggle to reach a human customer service representative, often finding themselves trapped in repetitive automated responses or being endlessly directed from one service to another, with no clear path to human assistance.

There are two possible reasons for this. First, although AI is increasingly being used for customer service, the technology is not mature enough to handle every problem. When an AI system encounters an issue it cannot resolve, it may simply keep the customer going around in circles.

Second, some companies may deliberately make it difficult for customers to find a way out of the automated system, hoping to exhaust customers' resolve to pursue their complaints and avoid addressing the underlying issues.

The new standards emphasize coordination between human and AI customer service because the two approaches have different strengths: AI offers efficiency, while humans provide superior user experience. These two strengths are not necessarily in conflict.

As AI technology continues to evolve in China, AI-powered customer service may eventually be able to resolve most customer issues. Then consumers may not care whether they are interacting with an AI system or a real person.

The problem today is that AI technology is still developing. Businesses must not pursue efficiency at the expense of the user experience. This is precisely why coordination between AI and human customer service is important. When AI can effectively handle an issue without affecting the customer experience, it should be used to improve efficiency. However, for complex or unique problems, the system must be able to quickly transfer the case to a human representative.

This coordination is essential to truly respect and protect consumer rights and interests. The new standards establish a very effective mechanism for achieving this coordination.

The potential applications of AI go beyond customer service, including marketing and promotional activities. Unlike human employees, AI systems can operate round the clock without fatigue. But when AI is used for outbound calls or marketing, businesses must strictly comply with the laws and regulations on marketing, advertising and commercial promotion.

They must not infringe on the rights and interests of others or abuse the technology simply because AI is a cheaper option. Technological advances should be used to improve efficiency, but always within the bounds of the law.

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VIEWS

China and the World Roundtable | Media Cooperation with New Possibilities

Editor's note: *The 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation convened in Beijing on Aug 20. One of the parallel sessions, "AI Integrated Applications in the Radio Television and Audio-Visual Sector", explored how artificial intelligence and digital technologies are creating new possibilities for China-Africa media cooperation. Below are reflections from four of the speakers, as reported by Li Wei of China Daily.*

China-Africa can usher in AI media revolution

AI could help Africa find its voice



Aurélie Adam Soulé Zoumarou is the minister of digital economy and communications for Benin.

A young African woman loves to sing, cherishing both her talent and her country. For years, talent like hers was confined by geography, language and the prohibitive costs of reaching a wider audience. However, technology is beginning to change that. With digital platforms, artists who once had only a small audience can make their voice heard far beyond their local communities.

The potential of artificial intelligence in Africa is not just about making existing technologies faster or cheaper. It also offers the opportunity for more people to share their stories, in their own languages, and on their own terms.

This is particularly important in countries such as Benin, where more than 50 languages are spoken. Much of today's digital content is produced in a few dominant languages, creating a less visible digital divide. While people may have access to smartphones or the Internet, the technology often does not speak their language.

AI could change that. It can help produce and translate radio and television programs, educational materials and other forms of public information into local languages at a scale and cost that were previously unimaginable. Instead of relying on expensive, large-scale productions, communities could create content that responds to their own needs and circumstances.

The same technology can also help Africa preserve its rich history. Digital tools can help restore and organize archives, including historical records that might otherwise be lost. This ensures that future generations can connect with their heritage.

But a larger digital public sphere also introduces new risks. When everyone can become a publisher, the question is no longer simply who can speak, but how society can distinguish reliable information from manipulation. Cybersecurity, misinformation and the responsible management of digital platforms will therefore become as important as expanding access to technology itself.

This is where international cooperation can make a difference. Benin's experience shows that cooperation with China should extend beyond the mere transfer of technology. China's expertise in digital education, media platforms and technological applications offers valuable lessons for African countries to adapt to their circumstances. The goal should not be to reproduce another country's model, but to leverage technology to serve local needs.

Africa's technological future should not be measured by the number of AI systems it develops or how quickly it catches up with global technological powers. A more meaningful measure may be whether technology enables more Africans to learn, create, preserve their history and participate in public life.

The AI revolution will be truly inclusive only when it amplifies voices that have too often been left at the margins and empowers them to tell their stories through technology.

Beyond hardware, build human capacity



Evariste Ngamana is the minister of state for communication and media and the government spokesperson of the Central African Republic.

When a country acquires new technology, the most visible signs of progress are often the easiest to quantify: cameras, broadcasting equipment, digital networks and computers. However, for countries striving to build their media industries, the more important question is how technology can create lasting local capabilities.

The experience of the Central African Republic offers valuable insights. In a country where radio and television are essential channels for public information, educating young people and supporting economic activity, digital technology presents enormous opportunities. China has already supported the country in broadcasting, professional training and exchanges among journalists. Such cooperation can enhance media reach and connect more people with information.

Yet technology alone cannot create a flourishing media industry. The Central African Republic is also working to strengthen its media infrastructure, expand coverage, improve content production and develop a larger pool of trained professionals. But several basic constraints have to be addressed. Sophisticated broadcasting systems need reliable power, connectivity and maintenance systems. A newsroom cannot become digitally capable simply because new computers have been installed.

This is why the most important part of digital cooperation may be the part that is least visible: people.

A camera can be delivered, and a broadcasting network can be built. But the ability to operate a newsroom, produce engaging programs, edit videos, manage digital platforms and develop sustainable media businesses has to be cultivated. Developing local expertise is essential to turning technological cooperation into sustainable development.

This distinction becomes even more important as AI transforms the economics of content production. Social media and AI tools are lowering the cost of producing and distributing audio and video. For young people in the Central African Republic, this could open possibilities that were once reserved for organizations with substantial financial and technical resources. They can now become not merely audiences for digital content, but also its producers.

The significance of this shift extends beyond the media industry. A country capable of producing its own news, educational programs and cultural content has greater capacity to communicate with its citizens and to present its perspective to the outside world. Digital transformation, in this sense, becomes a question of who gets to create and disseminate knowledge.

The next stage of China-Central African Republic cooperation should place greater emphasis on joint capacity-building. Training journalists, developing technical skills and jointly producing audiovisual content could have a more significant impact than adding more hardware. Joint production, in particular, offers a way to turn cooperation from something delivered by one side into something created by both.

That doesn't mean infrastructure is not important. On the contrary, reliable electricity, communications networks and appropriate equipment are essential. But infrastructure should be developed alongside training, knowledge transfer and long-term maintenance. Otherwise, the hardware may outlast the capacity needed to operate it.

This principle applies in other countries as well. Across the developing world, digital transformation is often described as a race to acquire the latest technologies. But technological development is not a shopping list. The real question is whether societies can absorb technology, adapt it to local circumstances and eventually use it to create something of their own.

The success of international digital cooperation should therefore not be measured by what is delivered, but by what endures: the skills acquired, the local industries created, the content produced and the capacity to innovate and develop sustainably in local contexts.

The ultimate goal of cooperation is not merely to increase the use of technology, but to empower people to adapt, innovate and create with it. It is to give people the capacity to make technology their own.

When everyone can create, trust matters more

For much of modern history, publishing required an institution. A newspaper needed a printing press; a television station needed cameras, studios and transmission needed networks; a broadcaster needed a frequency; and a publisher needed a distribution system.

That world is rapidly changing. Today, a smartphone can be a camera, a radio station, a television studio and a publishing house all at once. Social media can transform an ordinary person into a global broadcaster. AI is propelling that transformation further, making it possible to produce text, images, audio and video with a speed and sophistication that once required a professional newsroom.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY



Ibrahim Manzo Diallo is the president of the National Communications Observatory, Niger's media regulatory authority.

This may be one of the most consequential changes in media history. It gives millions of people a new ability to speak for themselves. But it also poses a challenge that is hard to ignore: When everyone can produce information, how do we determine what to trust?

AI can help a journalist produce an audiovisual report in minutes. It can also generate images of events that never happened, imitate voices of people who never spoke and create videos that appear to show something that never occurred. Social media can spread knowledge to millions of people, but the same networks can also amplify rumors, manipulation and disinformation at extraordinary speed.

The challenge, therefore, is not to choose between technological progress and caution. It is to build the institutions, professional standards and public literacy that enable societies to benefit from new technologies without being overwhelmed by their abuse.

This is reshaping media regulation. In the age of radio and television, regulators focused primarily on broadcasters: who could operate, what could be transmitted and the standards to be followed. The digital world is much harder to contain. When almost anyone can publish and algorithms can distribute content to millions, regulation must increasingly address the information environment itself.

This requires more than rules. It requires people who understand technology, journalism and ethics simultaneously. Young people, in particular, need the ability to recognize manipulated information, understand how digital platforms shape what they see and question content that appears convincing simply because it looks real. Media literacy is no longer a specialist skill, but a fundamental aspect of citizenship.

For African countries, there is another dimension to this challenge. The question is not only whether Africans can consume information, but who gets to produce the images and narratives through which Africa is understood.

The ability to produce and distribute their own content offers African countries the opportunity to introduce more diverse perspectives into the global information space. Television programs, documentaries, films and digital media produced by African journalists and creators can offer perspectives that are difficult to capture from afar. The goal should not be to replace one dominant narrative with another, but to create a more plural information space where different societies can speak for themselves and listen to one another.

This is one area where China-Africa media cooperation can take on a broader meaning. Cooperation should go beyond technology and equipment to include professional exchanges, joint research, training and, above all, co-production. Chinese and African media organizations could collaborate on documentaries, television programs, journalist exchanges and mechanisms for verifying digital content. Such projects would not merely increase the volume of information but would also help build mutual understanding.

China's expertise in applying AI and digital technologies to the audiovisual sector, as well as its efforts in cybersecurity and digital media, offers useful areas for cooperation. But the objective should not be to import a ready-made model. The goal is to develop approaches that reflect local realities while allowing countries to learn from one another.

Africa's young population adds urgency to this effort. A young person with a smartphone and an internet connection can now acquire skills, create a documentary, build an audience or start a digital enterprise with resources that were once not enough. The task is to make sure that these new tools create producers and creators rather than merely larger audiences.

The larger question facing the media industry is therefore no longer who has access to information, but who has the ability to create it, verify it and give it meaning.

AI may make information abundant, production faster and communication cheaper. But it cannot decide what deserves to be believed. That remains a human responsibility — and perhaps the most important one the digital age has given us.

Time for Africa to take tech leapfrog



Yang Hanhan is the director of the AI-generated short drama "Huo Qubing".

For much of the past century, the global film industry has been governed by a simple fact: making movies is expensive. Money, talent, technology and distribution have created formidable barriers to entry, allowing only a few Western countries to dominate the industry and shape the narratives that reach global audiences.

AI is beginning to change that equation. For developing countries, it offers something more important than a cheaper way to make films: the chance to bypass an entire industrial model rather than spend decades trying to catch up with it.

There are three propositions to consider. First, AI is breaking down the century-old barriers of the traditional film industry. Second, China has already demonstrated on an industrial scale that AI-generated content can dramatically reduce production costs while accelerating the process. Third, Africa might be uniquely positioned to seize this opportunity, precisely because it is not constrained by the legacy of a mature film industry.

Why have latecomers struggled to compete with Hollywood and other established film industries? The answer lies in four barriers: capital, talent, distribution and industrial infrastructure.

A successful feature film or television series is the result of decades of accumulated expertise, huge financial investment, specialized teams and cross-border distribution networks. Established film powers have spent generations building these systems. For newcomers, replicating them from scratch is costly, time-consuming and, ultimately limiting.

AI changes the starting point. A conventional blockbuster such as *Avengers: Endgame* required hundreds of people and months of work on visual effects. By contrast, comparable AI-generated material can now be produced by a single creator in roughly an hour, at a computing cost of less than 1,000 yuan ($149), based on the experience of Chinese creators. The significance is not merely that one film can be made more cheaply, but that an entire layer of industrial accumulation can be bypassed.

China's emerging AI film industry offers a glimpse of what that could look like. Production can now be managed through an end-to-end AIGC workflow, covering everything from scripts and storyboards to visual assets, video, music and distribution. This means smaller teams, shorter production cycles and much lower costs. A core team of three to five people can produce a 120-minute AI drama within three days at a computing cost of less than 30,000 yuan. A similar live-action production would typically require months, dozens of professionals and hundreds of thousands — or even millions — of yuan.

Nor is AI limited to short dramas. It is already being applied to films, animation, special effects, advertising, promotional videos and digital characters. In other words, AI is not simply making conventional productions more efficient. It is expanding what can be produced by creators who previously lacked the resources to enter the industry.

This is where Africa may have an unexpected advantage. Africa's greatest asset is cultural abundance: its languages, histories, traditions, landscapes and diverse societies. Global audiences may be increasingly familiar with standardized Hollywood formulas, but stories rooted in the African experience remain dramatically underrepresented on the world stage. For decades, production constraints limited the reach of those stories. AI could remove that constraint.

The technology is highly adaptable. Characters, settings and visual styles can be localized rapidly, allowing established production workflows to be combined with African stories, aesthetics and cultural references. The result could be something more significant than cheaper filmmaking: the creation of a new global content ecosystem in which African creators are not merely consumers of other people's stories, but producers of their own.

For a century, much of the world's cinematic influence has been concentrated in a handful of countries. The opportunity created by AI is not to run faster on the old track, but to build a new one.

That is the real meaning of technological leapfrogging — and Africa has every reason to believe it can be among the leaders of the new race.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

ERIK SOLHEIM

Chinese miracle

It shows that, with the right approach and continued collective efforts, one generation can travel a road that took others centuries



Today China is one of the fastest moderning countries on Earth. Extreme poverty is gone and the green transformation of the global economy runs through China. No other major nation, at any point in human history, has reduced poverty at such scale and such speed.

Out of that long road, I draw four lessons for the rest of the world.

The first lesson is political leadership dedicated to going the last mile to eradicate poverty. At the end of 2012, close to 100 million rural Chinese still lived below the poverty line. They were not in Shanghai or Shenzhen. They were in the mountains of Gansu, Guizhou and Yunnan provinces, in villages the market would never reach on its own. China sent officials to live in those villages and solve the problem family by family. Could this household run ecotourism? Could that one grow a new mountain crop, or sell handicrafts online? Should another move to a town nearby? Not cash handouts but creating productive work, for everyone, down to the very last village. I know of no other country that has attempted anything like it. By 2020 the job was done. Every last person was helped out of extreme poverty. That is what leadership dedicated to development actually means.

The second lesson is family farming. China's reforms started in the fields. Earlier this year I visited Xiaogang village in Anhui province, where it all began. In 1978, 18 farmers there divided the collective land among their families and started working it as their own. One year later the harvest jumped. Their village became the model for the whole country, and the reform that followed lifted many people out of hunger. I asked one of those farmers, now an old man, what made the difference. His answer has stayed with me. "We had no idea we were making history," he said. "We only wanted our families to eat well. That is the entire secret." A family that owns its harvest tends its land like a garden and squeezes more from each hectare than vast industrial estates manage. And a nation of hundreds of millions of such families is food secure in the most fundamental way, because the people who grow the food are the people who eat it, with the surplus flowing to the towns and the income staying in the countryside to pay for houses and schools.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

The third lesson is special economic zones, concentrating industries in competitive regions. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China created four zones. The most famous, Shenzhen, sat next to Hong Kong. In 1980, it was a fishing town of some 30,000 people. Today, it is a city of over 18 million, one of the fastest-growing cities in the history of the world. The idea behind it is simple. Gather the best people, the best technology and firm government support in one place and let them learn from each other.

The United States proves the same point today. Some of the finest computer talents crowd into the San Francisco Bay Area, and out of that concentration has come one of the strongest innovation hubs in the world. Many governments hesitate to favor one city over others. But for a country trying to break into world markets, there is no way around concentration. And the development paradigm of special zone travels well beyond China. I have seen it in Ethiopia. Its construction of industrial parks draws on the development experience of Shenzhen, and Chinese companies such as shoemaker Huajian helped build them.

The fourth lesson is that green is gold. Going green is not a constraint on the economy. It is a huge opportunity for jobs and prosperity. In the past, development meant pollution, because fossil fuels were the only road to wealth. The United Kingdom and the US both took that road. In 2005, when visiting Anji county, Xi Jinping, then Party secretary of Zhejiang province, said that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets. China has since proved it in hard numbers. According to China's General Administration of Customs, electric vehicles, lithium batteries and solar products, what the Chinese call "the new three", earned close to 1.3 trillion yuan ($192.8 billion) in exports in 2025, three and a half times the level of 2020, and have made China the indispensable nation of the green economy.

The green wave has moved beyond industry into nature itself. China has the largest area of artificial afforestation by far. More than 66 billion trees have been planted since 1978. I have seen them myself in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, walls of forest rising against the desert. China is building the world's largest national park system and has brought the giant panda and the snow leopard back from the edge of extinction. As one keynote speaker at the Symposium 2026 for Eco Forum Global Guiyang in Guiyang, Guizhou province, this summer I heard Chinese colleagues explain how they are turning the restoration of rivers such as Chishui River into tourism and growth. The environment is no longer the price of development. It is an engine of it.

And the growth engine is being renewed again. The old three pillars of Chinese exports were built on intensive labor. Remarkably China remains the global leader in all three.

The new three — electric cars, batteries and solar panels — are built on green technology. Now China speaks of the next new three — artificial intelligence, robotics and innovative medicine. The change runs deeper than products. China is beginning to export capabilities, not just goods but the knowledge behind them, from drug development to intelligent manufacturing. The country that once staked its future on labor-intensive industries is now staking it on scientific innovation.

Can these lessons be copied wholesale? No. The whole system cannot be transplanted. But the lessons and inspiration can travel, and each of the four lessons has already demonstrated this in practice.

The thread that runs through all four lessons is the one those farmers in Xiaogang grasped without any theory. Under strong leadership, people have a real reason to build, and they will build farms that reward hard work, zones that gather talent and a green economy that renews the country. Each is a way of releasing the energy of ordinary people and making sure no one is left out. And that is why China's message to the developing world is one of enormous hope.

The author is the chair of the Europe-Asia Center and the former under-secretary-general of the United Nations. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

LI SILE AND ZHANG XIAOHUI

Old wisdom of balance shines anew

Shaped by ancient Chinese philosophy, the practice of *taijiquan* can help foster inner composure and mutual understanding across civilizations



Li Sile



Zhang Xiaohui

Over the centuries, *taijiquan*, or tai chi, has evolved from being a combat-oriented martial art form — rooted in traditional Chinese principles of yin and yang equilibrium and flexible resistance, and practiced by a relatively small circle — into an everyday practice that emphasizes physical health, mental well-being and harmonious living.

Unlike its combative origins, modern international *taijiquan* competitions are not fighting sports. They judge athletes on the execution of choreographed routines, assessing form, balance, rhythm and flow. The sport's growing popularity was vividly demonstrated in April at the fifth World Taijiquan Championships in Burgas, Bulgaria, which drew 400 athletes from 44 countries and regions — up from 320 participants from 32 nations and regions in the previous edition in Singapore. This November, *taijiquan* will reach another historic milestone when it becomes an official medal event at the Summer Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, Senegal.

In recent years, greater evidence has emerged that *taijiquan* has transcended its martial arts origins to become a cross-cultural lifestyle, embraced by people seeking relief from constant strain and a gateway to mutual understanding across divides.

In 2020, UNESCO inscribed *taijiquan* on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Last year, UNESCO designated March 21 as International Taijiquan Day, the first UN-recognized international day named after a martial art.

Against the backdrop of intensified cultural competition and widespread societal anxiety, the centuries-old practice delivers humble, tangible lessons for individuals and communities striving to build gentler, more harmonious human connections.

Rooted in intertwined traditional thought, *taijiquan* embeds the core Taoist ideas of yin and yang equilibrium and the Confucian preference for moderate coexistence within every shift of weight and turn of the limbs. Its accessible, body-based wisdom requires no complex academic background, making it uniquely capable of bridging gaps between disparate communities across continents.

Statistics from China's national sports authority confirm *taijiquan* attracts regular enthusiasts across more than 180 countries and regions. About 3 million overseas learners have become registered formal lineage disciples under certified Chinese masters, and thousands of international students travel each year to Wudang Mountain in Hubei province for long-term immersive training. Jake Pinnick, a practitioner from the United States, who obtained formal lineage certification after prolonged practice on Wudang Mountain, a Taoist holy site, exemplifies how consistent practice bridges cultural divides through shared, embodied experience.

Major countries including the US, Germany and Japan have built nationwide *taijiquan* or tai chi federations, arranging regular public courses and inter-city group events to share this harmony-centered practice with local residents.

This traditional wisdom has steadily woven itself into mainstream global daily life. Primary and secondary schools across multiple nations integrate *taijiquan* into scheduled break-time activities, while some universities list it as an official physical education elective.

Young people's surging enthusiasm for *taijiquan* may stem organically from their shared modern struggles and aspirations to find mental and physical equilibrium amid mounting daily pressures, rather than top-down promotion.

Confrontational mindsets continue to drive estrangement between neighbors, communities and nations, leaving people worldwide searching for simple, low-cost ways to rebuild mutual trust. *Taijiquan* meets this demand by translating millennia-old Chinese philosophical values into repeatable everyday physical practice, prioritizing personal inner peace as the foundation of collective harmony.

Turning to its philosophical core, *taijiquan* embodies a foundational precept long embedded in Chinese thought: sustainable collective harmony invariably originates from individual inner tranquility. Texts from Taoist and Confucian classics all uphold this principle, which *taijiquan* brings to life through structured physical movement.

As practitioners flow through often slow, seamless routines, they gradually release built-up stress, irritation and latent hostility, stepping out of humanity's instinctive "fight or flight" defensive mode. Far from simple leisure or relaxation, each sequenced *taijiquan* motion guides practitioners toward balancing internal yin and yang energies, calming inner turmoil to foster a placid, compromise-oriented outlook that shapes how people interact with those around them.

Another philosophical pillar drawn from ancient Taoist thought centers on the enduring maxim from the *Tao Te Ching*: Gentleness prevails over rigidity, and pliability over brute strength. Rejecting the reflex to meet friction with head-on resistance, *taijiquan* trains practitioners to align with natural rhythms and respond flexibly and strategically when met with overwhelming force. This lesson comes to life during pushing-hands drills, in which practitioners anchor their core firmly while flexing appropriately against outside pressure.

Translated into everyday human interactions, this mindset offers a pragmatic blueprint for cross-group coexistence: hold fast to one's own identity and core values, yet respect the unique life paths and legitimate needs of others. This way of thinking stands as a gentle counterweight to zero-sum, adversarial mindsets that strain personal, community and cross-cultural bonds, taking measured flexibility not as weakness, but as thoughtful, sustainable conduct for shared living.

Adding to its universal appeal, *taijiquan* is also easy to pick up. Built around fundamental bodily actions familiar to every human being — standing, stepping and shifting weight — it easily crosses geographic and cultural divides without rigid entry barriers.

Unlike ideologies or spiritual traditions that demand strict doctrinal commitment, *taijiquan* requires no prior adherence to specific beliefs. Communication forged through shared body movement bypasses linguistic barriers, opening up an organic space for spontaneous mutual understanding among people of disparate cultural backgrounds.

International Taijiquan Day and its accompanying global celebrations now sit as a footnote to *taijiquan*'s worldwide expansion. But the art's power to unite people operates independently of that single annual observance. The core insight behind the UN's institutional recognition shines brightly: Humanity universally craves practical tools to ease internal unrest and bridge divides, and *taijiquan* fills this grassroots need. It equips ordinary people with small, transformative personal qualities to engage others with patience and restraint.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Every opening and closing stance of *taijiquan* gently recalibrates a practitioner's emotional balance, and every calm-minded participant carries that balanced mindset into daily exchanges, adding incremental warmth and understanding to an increasingly volatile and fragmented social landscape.

As millions of people across the world embed harmony-focused ancient wisdom into their everyday lives through regular *taijiquan* practice, mutual respect may evolve from abstract ideal into a lived, accessible reality. Anchored in every extended breath and coordinated movement, humanity's collective pursuit of shared well-being develops into a persistent, embodied global practice — solid proof that age-old Chinese wisdom of balance can deliver gentle, practical guidance for people everywhere seeking kinder, more harmonious ways to live alongside one another.

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BUSINESS

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Bourse seen enduring fluctuations

Equities expected to retain their longer-term investment appeal

By ZHOU LANXU in Beijing and **SHI JING** in Shanghai

Chinese equities are expected to retain their longer-term investment appeal despite spillovers from heightened global market volatility, underpinned by China's distinct technology opportunities and ongoing reforms to improve shareholder returns, experts said.

The A-share market has been fluctuating amid external volatility as rising US long-term Treasury bond yields and sticky inflation expectations — alongside ongoing geopolitical tensions — put global equities under pressure.

Domestically, concerns that the current listing wave of tech champions — such as chipmaker CXMT and Unitree Robotics — might possibly strain market liquidity also weighed on the market.

A shares ended mixed on Tuesday, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index edging up 0.19 percent to 3,889.44 points, while the growth-oriented ChiNext Index fell 1 percent to 3,397.52 points.

Despite the recent volatility, UBS' medium-term view on Chinese equities remains constructive. The Swiss wealth manager continues to rate China equities as attractive, while emphasizing that the opportunity set is broader and more balanced than it was earlier in the year.

James Wang, head of China strategy at UBS Investment Bank Research, said that northbound flows via the stock connect programs turned net positive in the second quarter, with a record $33 billion in net inflows into A shares.

That was compared to a $1.8 billion outflow in the previous quarter, Wang said, led by purchases in the industrials and information technology sectors.

Zhu Liang, chief investment officer for AllianceBernstein in China, said the Chinese market offers opportunities arising from both growth-oriented sectors and ongoing reforms.

"In artificial intelligence, while Chinese tech companies exposed to global export supply chains could be affected by overseas volatility, a more diversified range of AI opportunities — including those engaged in homegrown alternatives to imported technologies and cost-effective large language models — continues to offer investment value."

Nevertheless, Zhu said investors should avoid excessive concentration in a single AI theme given the historically extreme valuation gap between A-share high and low-valuation sectors, citing city commercial banks as a potential sector to help offset volatility associated with the AI theme.

On the reform front, Zhu said regulators have been advancing improvements in corporate governance, while listed companies have gradually increased dividend payouts and share buybacks. The overall market has begun to see net share buybacks rather than net financing, providing support for A-share performance.

At a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on July 30, it was stressed that comprehensive reforms of investment and financing in the capital market should be deepened to enhance its resilience and boost market confidence.

Kelvin Tay, chief investment officer for Asia at Pictet Wealth Management, said the large-scale offerings of emerging technology champions in China may create a short-term imbalance between stock supply and demand, weighing on market performance this year.

However, such near-term pressures do not undermine the longer-term investment case for China, Tay said, adding that he sees exposure to China as essential for investors' portfolios over the next five to seven years.

"The newly listed companies have strong fundamentals, with decent profitability and positive net cash flow, pointing to solid long-term growth potential for the Chinese stock market," Tay said.

Liu Jipeng, a professor at China University of Political Science and Law and a senior capital market expert, said a healthy bourse should enable the majority of investors to benefit from long-term value creation, rather than becoming a zero-sum game in which gains by a small group come at the expense of others.

Liu said regulatory efforts should prioritize market fairness, arguing that some quantitative trading strategies that rely on technological advantages to profit at the expense of ordinary investors should be better regulated.

Tian Xuan, dean of Peking University's Guanghua School of Management, suggested that policies for refinancing — as well as mergers and acquisitions — should be further optimized so that the quality of listed companies can be improved from the outset.

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Briefly

Bankruptcy law draft revision reviewed

Chinese lawmakers on Tuesday began reviewing a draft revision to the Enterprise Bankruptcy Law, with the second draft incorporating refinements to provisions on individual bankruptcy, bankruptcy protection, restructuring and cross-border bankruptcy. Based on feedback from the first draft, the second draft adds a new section on pre-restructuring consultation. In addition, the draft improves provisions on cross-border bankruptcy, clarifying the extraterritorial effect of bankruptcy proceedings, the jurisdiction of Chinese courts and mechanisms for international judicial assistance. The current law was enacted in 2007. The first draft of the revision was submitted to the 17th session of the 14th National People's Congress Standing Committee in September 2025 and was later released for public comment.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 11 pips to 6.7852 against the US dollar on Tuesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY



View of Shein's booth during an expo in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. HUANG TAIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

What is behind Shein's drop in valuation?

By LI JIAYING
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Shein's Hong Kong IPO is testing how public investors value a global e-commerce model being reshaped by slower growth, rising fulfillment costs and tighter rules for low-value parcels, industry experts said.

At the top of the proposed HK$47.6 ($6.07) to HK$49.5 range, Shein would have a market capitalization of up to $27 billion, roughly 70 percent below its nearly $100 billion private valuation in 2022.

Pan Helin, a member of the expert committee for information and communication economy under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, attributed the valuation reset partly to the maturity of e-commerce, where growth has slowed and competition has intensified.

"Shein's rapid rise in 2022 coincided with overseas supply-chain disruptions and sharp price increases, while today's market conditions leave less room for the exceptional growth expectations reflected in its earlier private valuation," Pan said.

Pan added that Hong Kong investors generally apply more restrained valuations to mature internet businesses, particularly apparel e-commerce, which operates in a largely established market. Capital has also recently shifted toward artificial intelligence-related companies, further limiting the valuation premium available to traditional e-commerce platforms, he said.

Although HK-listed e-commerce and internet companies are currently trading at relatively low valuations, a Hong Kong listing could help Shein reduce the compliance risks associated with cross-border fundraising and facilitate its domestic operations, Pan noted.

"It would give Shein access to a market recognized by international investors while also bringing it closer to domestic investors, particularly as the Chinese mainland could become a more important growth market for the company in the future," he said.

Pan's comments came as overseas policy changes have added to the company's operating pressure. The United States ended duty-free de minimis treatment in May 2025 for covered goods from the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong that had previously entered in parcels valued at no more than $800. From July 1 this year, the European Union also abolished its customs-duty exemption for consignments valued at no more than 150 euros ($175) and introduced a temporary duty of 3 euros per item category.

The e-commerce giant is responding by shifting from its previous direct-to-consumer shipping model into a more flexible business-to-business-to-consumer pattern — consolidating goods in China, shipping them to Europe in bulk and completing delivery from local warehouses, said Chen Liteng, a senior analyst at the Internet Economy Institute, a domestic consultancy.

"This model subjects the goods to the EU's regular apparel import tariffs instead of a flat duty on each item category," Chen said. "Even after adding the cost of sorting, packing and local delivery, the model's total cost remains below the per-category duty incurred by direct shipment of small parcels."

The senior analyst added that the use of local warehouses could also reduce customs-related costs while allowing Shein to retain the inventory discipline of its signature "test-and-repeat" model, under which products are initially made in small batches and replenished according to demand.

The IPO comprises about 280 million Class B shares. At the midpoint, without over-allotment, net proceeds are expected to reach HK$13.1 billion. According to its prospectus, the company has earmarked 40 percent for technology capabilities, 40 percent for brand building and global expansion, 10 percent for corporate responsibility and the balance for general purposes.

Pool cleaning robots make global splash

By ZHENG YIRAN in Shanghai
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With technological breakthroughs, Chinese companies are driving structural changes in the pool cleaning robot sector.

According to a recent report jointly released by global market consultancy IDC, the global shipment of pool cleaning robots is expected to hit 3.97 million units by 2029, with a compound annual growth rate of over 20 percent.

The market pattern dominated by foreign companies five years ago is gradually being rewritten by domestic manufacturers. On the cross-border export side, a group of Chinese enterprises with self-developed capabilities have transformed from simple production execution roles to technology solution exporters.

Data from market consultancy huaon.com show that in 2024, the world's top five cable-free swimming pool cleaning robots in terms of shipment were all Chinese companies — Wybotics Co Ltd, Sunwoda Electronic Co Ltd, Sensomics, Wavefuture and Shenzhen Aiper Intelligent Co Ltd. The five companies took up 51.4 percent of the world's cable-free swimming pool cleaning robot market.

Another Chinese company from Taizhou in East China's Zhejiang province, Deep Cleaner, is also making a noticeable splash in the market. Established in 2022, the company had an annual shipment volume of over 100,000 units by 2025, a customer repurchase rate exceeding 70 percent, and a product return rate controlled at 2 percent to 3 percent, far below the industry average of around 15 percent.



A pool cleaning robot seen at an expo in Tianjin earlier this year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In addition, more than 95 percent of the company's products are sold to overseas markets, covering three major categories — underwater cleaning, water surface cleaning and swimming pool disinfection and sterilization, and all core components are self-developed.

Wang Hua, general manager of Deep Cleaner, said: "Pool cleaning robots are a category with a high proportion of plastic parts. The shell, internal structural components, transmission gears, seals — almost all are injection molding parts built on molds. The first step for a swimming pool robot from design to mass production is not the circuit board or motor, but the mold."

The factory of the company is located in Huangyan in Taizhou, the most densely populated area of China's mold industry. From mold design, steel processing, heat treatment, mold testing to injection molding mass production, Huangyan has the most complete mold industry chain cluster in China. Whether it's mold delivery time or repair response speed, Huangyan takes a lead in the country.

In terms of research and development, the company invests 7 million yuan ($1.04 million) to 8 million yuan annually, and has technical cooperation with Zhejiang University and Zhejiang University of Technology. These two universities have a deep academic accumulation in the fields of motor control, fluid mechanics and materials science, which happen to coincide with the core technology direction of swimming pool cleaning robots.

Lin Xianping, an associate professor at Hangzhou City University, said that domestic swimming pool robots are completing the transformation from original equipment manufacturer assembly to technical solution output, with the vast majority of products sold to the European, American and Australian markets.

Intensified efforts to help attract more FDI

By ZHANG CHENXU
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China's intensified efforts to attract foreign investment and promote two-way investment cooperation will help global businesses better tap opportunities arising from the country's vast market and innovation-driven industrial upgrading, while underscoring its firm commitment to opening-up, officials and experts said.

Their remarks came ahead of the 26th China International Fair for Investment and Trade, one of the country's key platforms for promoting mutual investment.

Scheduled to take place Sept 8 to 11 in Xiamen, Fujian province, the fair is expected to connect capital with projects across borders, reinforcing China's role as both a major destination for — and source of — global investment, they added.

"The fair has so far drawn delegations from 123 countries and regions, with 60 set to take part as exhibitors," Ling Ji, vice-minister of commerce and deputy China international trade representative, said at a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday.

Finland and Saudi Arabia will serve as guest countries of honor at this year's fair, Ling said. Saudi Arabia will send a large economic delegation to CIFIT for the first time. Investment from the kingdom into China surged 343.7 percent year-on-year in the first seven months, Ling's ministry said.

Zhao Zenglian, vice-governor of Fujian province, said the exhibition area at this year's fair will cover 200,000 square meters. The fair will feature 14 specialized zones spanning three major sections — "Invest in China", "Chinese investment" and "International investment".

Foreign firms and business associations have also shown strong interest in attending, Ling said.

Foreign investors now look beyond merely labor and land costs, placing greater weight on China's industrial ecosystem, infrastructure, access to green power and computing capacity, he added.

The latest data demonstrate that shift. In the first seven months, the number of newly established foreign-invested enterprises in China rose 4.4 percent year-on-year to 37,711, while foreign direct investment in actual use totaled 438.33 billion yuan ($65.23 billion), with the pace of decline easing from a year earlier, said the Ministry of Commerce.

Notably, FDI in high-tech industries rose 32.7 percent year-on-year, accounting for more than 40 percent of the national total, Ling said.

In a world facing rising protectionism and geopolitical tensions, foreign enterprises are looking to deepen their investment in China as a hedge against external shocks, said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

On outbound investment, Ling said China's outward FDI flows rose 11.1 percent year-on-year to $213.58 billion in 2025, while its total accumulated outward FDI value reached $3.4 trillion, ranking among the world's top three for the ninth consecutive year.

China will broaden economic and trade cooperation with other countries in the second half, expand trade in services and promote more balanced trade, according to a State Council report on the implementation of this year's plan for national economic and social development, delivered to the NPC Standing Committee for review on Tuesday.

The report also called for better outbound investment management, stronger support services for Chinese companies overseas, and further efforts to attract and make better use of foreign investment.

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BUSINESS

Hunan scenic area boosts hot spot bona fides

Wulingyuan's spiked peaks made famous in 2009 blockbuster movie *Avatar*





Top: Foreign visitors get a taste of local wedding customs in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, on Aug 14.
Above: Visitors experience the Cili Banban Dragon boat in Zhangjiajie on Aug 14.
PHOTOS BY GENG FEIFEI / CHINA DAILY

By LI JING
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On a theater stage framed by the towering sandstone peaks of Wulingyuan Scenic Area in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, Pablo, a Spanish tourist, donned traditional Tujia wedding attire, playing the role of bridegroom as hundreds of spectators cheered.

The mock ceremony at Charming Xiangxi Theater offered him an unforgettable introduction to local customs. For local business owners and operators, it represents something more strategic — a golden opportunity to attract tourist revenue after travelers descend from the world-famous Zhangjiajie peaks.

"We had never seen a performance like this," Pablo said afterwards. "I would like to learn more about traditional Chinese culture."

Across Zhangjiajie and neighboring historical towns in western Hunan, rising inbound arrivals are encouraging businesses to expand beyond scenic-area tickets into evening entertainment, accommodation, dining and cultural experiences.

Official data underscore the momentum. Zhangjiajie welcomed 860,700 inbound visits from 195 countries and regions in the first seven months, up by 19.01 percent year-on-year. Tourism foreign-exchange earnings increased 40.52 percent to $98.5 million.

The demographic profile of visitors is also undergoing a structural shift. European and US travelers accounted for nearly 35 percent of total inbound arrivals, with their numbers rising 211.36 percent year-on-year and helping diversify a market long dominated by travelers from South Korea.

This surge has been powered in large part by China's expanding visa-free policies. China has expanded unilateral visa-free access to citizens of 50 countries for stays of up to 30 days, while nationals of 57 countries are eligible for its visa-free transit policy, following the addition of Kyrgyzstan and Vietnam on Thursday.

Zhangjiajie Hehua International Airport is among the 65 designated ports for the transit policy. The airport operates 13 passenger routes to eight countries and regions, and long-haul travel Western visitors increasingly bundle the city into multi-stop itineraries across China.

For years, Zhangjiajie's international acclaim rested largely on its quartz-sandstone pillars, famously associated with the floating mountains in the blockbuster 2009 film *Avatar*. Today, regional stakeholders view these iconic vistas merely as the starting point of an extended consumer journey.

"The underlying business logic is to shift from one-off gate admissions to capturing spending across the entire travel chain as visitors extend their stays. Accommodation, dining, performances and immersive cultural experiences can all generate additional revenue," said Huang Yuanji, vice-president of Hunan University of Finance and Economics.

At Charming Xiangxi Theater, which showcases the heritage of the Tujia, Miao and other ethnic groups, the number of overseas visitors reached 116,000 from 188 countries and regions between January and July, up 43 percent year-on-year.

To bridge cultural divides, the theater provides subtitles in English and Korean, with Russian and Spanish in the works. Promotional materials have also been tailored. Traditional acrobatic acts, for example, are introduced using references to Chinese kung fu that foreign viewers intuitively grasp.

"Foreign visitors might not know what Xiangxi is, but they know Zhangjiajie's mountains and are interested in authentic traditions. Our job is to interpret local heritage in ways they understand," said Xu Shan, general manager of the theater.

A short distance away, Xiangxi Fu, a newly opened cultural tourism attraction in Wulingyuan, welcomes guests with traditional drum performances, ethnic folk songs and ceremonial welcome wine before ushering them into a courtyard complex dedicated to centuries of Tusi history.

The attraction says foreign visitors account for 30 to 40 percent of its tourists.

"Our goal is to transform static heritage exhibitions into participatory workshops and performances, giving visitors compelling reasons to linger in town after their mountain hikes," said Tang Linfang, the site's marketing director.

A different experiment is unfolding in downtown Zhangjiajie. On July 10, Dayong ancient town reopened after an extensive renovation led by Zhangjiajie mango cultural tourism, a joint venture involving local operators and leading broadcast media.

The riverside complex blends historical architectural style streets with television-themed shops, youth-oriented cultural merchandise, craft workshops, street performances and evening boat rides. Within its first month, it drew more than 1 million visits and generated more than 10 million yuan ($1.49 million) in business turnover.

"We want travelers who spend their daylight hours among the peaks to return downtown at night for an entirely different cultural texture," said Zhou Yang, general manager of the operating company, adding that roughly 80 percent of weekend visitors arrive after dusk.

This strategy to capture extended stays is rippling across neighboring destinations in the Xiangxi Tujia and Miao autonomous prefecture.

In the town of Furong, perched dramatically above a cascading waterfall, foreign tourists browse tea workshops, stroll through historical alleyways and stop to dine alongside locals who still live inside the centuries-old settlement.

The town received 6.53 million visits in 2025, including 338,000 from overseas, up 61 percent year-on-year, according to local official figures.

Zhong Fei, chairman of Hunan Huaxia Investment Group — which operates the destination through a JV with the local government — said international tourists accounted for roughly 40 percent of independent arrivals and about half of independent visitor spending.

Evening performances, guesthouses and hands-on workshops have helped extend average stays from half a day to one or two nights in the town, Zhong said.

Local restaurants have also adjusted. Local smoked pork appears on pizzas and in burgers, while coffee is sweetened with local ginger candy, offering foreign visitors familiar formats with local flavors.

"The visitors are not just coming for the scenery. They are interested in the culture and in seeing how local people live," Zhong said.

Crucially, the town has preserved its ancient social fabric, retaining native residents within the scenic core. The settlement hosts roughly 200 guesthouses and nearly 1,500 small nighttime enterprises, with locals making up 80 percent of the resort's workforce.

Further south, Fenghuang ancient town received 111,313 inbound tourist visits in the first half, up 5.12 percent year-on-year, while inbound tourism spending increased 15.18 percent to $44.3 million, said Xiang Yang, deputy head of the Fenghuang county government.

To connect these scattered gems, Hunan provincial authorities are accelerating development of the "Greater Zhangjiajie" international tourism zone, spanning 38 county-level areas across five cities and prefectures, including Zhangjiajie, Xiangxi and Huaihua.

The province has introduced eight inbound tourism routes and aims to attract 2 million inbound tourists annually by 2027, targeting $1.12 billion in inbound tourism spending.

Challenges persist. Huang said overseas travel agencies still tend to sell the mountain parks as standalone destinations, while fragmented administration, limited transport connections and uneven international services continued to restrict travel beyond Zhangjiajie's best-known attractions.

The provincial plan seeks to address those gaps by improving transport connections, developing cross-regional itineraries, upgrading multilingual services and encouraging tourism companies to work across administrative boundaries.

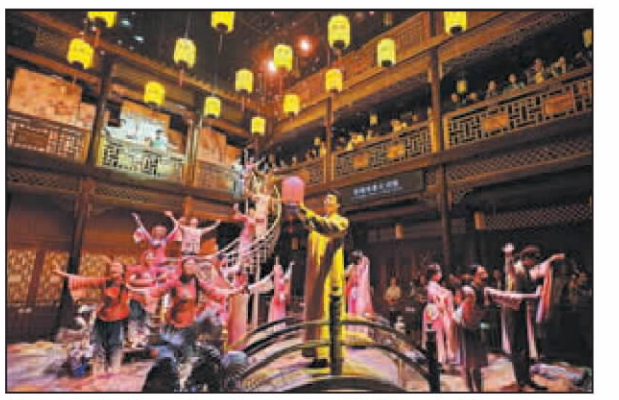
Huang emphasized that while eliminating low-cost package competition and administrative barriers takes time, the evolving mix of inbound visitors provides strong tailwinds for higher-value, tailor-made products.

The vibrant overseas reception across regional theaters, craft workshops and historic towns demonstrates that global travelers are eager to explore beyond the mountains.

"By improving regional connections and enabling travel agencies, hotels and cultural-tourism businesses to work together across the region, visitor flows can be converted into tangible and sustainable economic growth," Huang said.

He Chun in Changsha contributed to this story.

Immersive *Changde Stories* a boon to night economy



A large roving live-action show is staged in Changde, Hunan province, on Aug 13. Visitors follow performers to experience the region's history and charm. GENG FEIFEI / CHINA DAILY

By LI JING

As night falls over Changde in Central China's Hunan province, visitors board boats and follow actors along a historical riverside quarter, moving between illuminated waterways, old streets and a small theater as *Changde Stories* unfolds.

The immersive production, which blends local history, traditional opera and digital projections, has become a primary engine for the city's burgeoning night-time economy. After the show, visitors spill into nearby restaurants and handicraft shops, extending an evening of entertainment into hours of consumer spending.

This integrated model is helping the Changde River Street block convert into business for local merchants. The 1.5-kilometer block received 18.25 million visits in 2025, up 75 percent year-on-year, while revenue rose 58.9 percent to 1.24 billion yuan ($184.39 million), according to local official data.

Crucially, more than 70 percent of revenue was generated at night, underscoring the commercial value of retaining visitors in the area beyond daytime sightseeing.

Changde's success highlights the growing role of services in driving domestic consumption. National service retail sales increased 5.3 percent in the first half of 2026, outpacing the 1.1 percent rise in goods retail sales, with tourism, cultural and recreational services among the fastest categories, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

At the block, *Changde Stories* serves as the evening's centerpiece. First staged in May 2025, the production uses the Chuanzi River as a natural stage to weave the city's history with local folk music and customs.

Spectators watch from boats and stroll through the old quarter before entering an indoor theater, becoming part of the performance amid floating live sets. More than 50,000 people have attended since its debut.

The route seamlessly channels audience traffic into restaurants, tea parlors and specialty retailers, forging a cohesive "show-shop-dine" consumption chain.

Gastronomy plays a pivotal role in that momentum.

At Changxiangyue, a 1,400-square-meter restaurant serving local specialities such as *leicha*, or pounded tea, Changde rice noodles and claypot dishes, daily customer numbers have exceeded 2,000 during peak periods.

"During holidays, customer traffic can be five to 10 times the normal level," said store manager Zhu Xueqin.

Nearby, a rice-noodle restaurant has sold more than 2,000 bowls on its busiest days, while snack and tea shops continue serving customers through lunch, dinner and late-night periods.

The integrated approach delivered standout gains during the five-day May Day holiday, when the block received nearly 1 million visits, peaking at more than 200,000 on May 1 alone.

Businesses generated 66.56 million yuan during the holiday, with food and cultural experiences accounting for more than 70 percent of revenue, according to local official data.

Rich heritage provides the lasting anchor. The block hosts 87 intangible cultural heritage projects, ranging from woodcarving and traditional incense to Changde opera and *leicha*.

More than 800 regular heritage performances drew more than 300,000 spectators between March 2024 and August 2026. Notably, half of the audience was born in the 1990s or later, suggesting that traditional art forms are finding new consumers through live performances and social media.

"A commercial district must be rooted in culture," said woodcarver Pan Nenghui, who is working with his wife on a 30-meter carving inspired partly by the writings of celebrated Hunan-born author Shen Congwen. "The essence of intangible cultural heritage is to bring our culture alive."

The block has also embraced technology-driven attractions. A traditional Chinese medicine zone launched in May features herbal dining, artificial intelligence-assisted diagnostics and a holographic installation of ancient TCM physician Zhang Zhongjing. It received nearly 100,000 visitors in its first month.

This steady influx has solidified the commercial ecosystem. Waterfront shop occupancy has reached 100 percent, while the merchant survival rate has improved by nearly 60 percent since the block's launch.

Changde's approach closely matches national initiatives prioritizing service-led consumer demand and calling for upgraded performing-arts offerings, vibrant night tours, and deeper integration among scenic sites, dining and retail. In the city, that policy has crystallized into a proven formula: captivate visitors after dark with immersive art, and sustain them with rich local culture, food and entertainment.

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CHINA

Scientists map rock glaciers on plateau

By **LI MENGHAN**
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Chinese scientists have identified 132,867 rock glaciers across 16,500 square kilometers of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau in the first comprehensive inventory of its kind.

While glaciers are what come to mind when people think of the plateau's "solid reservoir", the number and significance of rock glaciers — periglacial landforms made of ice-rich debris that slowly move downhill in cold alpine environments — have been seriously underestimated.

The figure exceeds the total number of rock glaciers previously known worldwide, suggesting a long-standing underestimation of their quantity and their role in the plateau's frozen water reserves.

The study was published recently in the journal Science Bulletin. The dataset has been made public through the National Tibetan Plateau Data Center.

Although not true glaciers, rock glaciers serve as indicators of mountain permafrost and potential reservoirs of solid-water. The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, dubbed a core part of the "Asian Water Tower", is home to one of the largest concentrations of mid- to low-latitude permafrost on Earth, nurturing many rock glaciers.

However, a comprehensive and unified dataset tracking the movement of rock glaciers has been elusive, largely due to the challenges posed by the region's high altitude, rugged terrain and the labor-intensive nature of manual data interpretation.

The research team integrated high-resolution optical remote sensing imagery, radar data and digital elevation models to develop a deep-learning method for automatically detecting rock glaciers across the plateau. They employed multi-temporal radar techniques to extract surface deformation rates and obtained kinematic data for 99.3 percent of the cataloged features.

In addition to location and boundaries, the inventory records the morphological type, terrain attributes, glacier connectivity and motion status for each unit, supporting research into rock glacier activity and periglacial geomorphic dynamics.

Notably, the team estimated that ice stored within the plateau's rock glaciers is equivalent to roughly 92 to 186 cubic kilometers, which is comparable to the storage capacity of dozens of large reservoirs.

"This represents a solid-water reserve in the Asian Water Tower that has been largely underestimated," said Feng Min, a professor at the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences who led the study.

"This discovery could have substantial implications for long-term hydrological regulation in regions lacking glaciers or where glaciers are rapidly retreating," Feng added.

The dataset also provides insights into geohazard risks. Rock glaciers creep continuously and, where they intersect roads or river valleys, can trigger ground deformation, river blockages and debris flows. By documenting the spatial relationship between rock glaciers and nearby infrastructure, the inventory offers a new tool for assessing mountain hazards, Feng noted.

"When mapping permafrost, we used to lack direct geomorphic evidence. Rock glaciers are natural markers that indicate where frozen ground exists," Feng said.

He said that the dataset is expected to support permafrost monitoring, water resource assessment, cryospheric hazard identification and surface process modeling, while providing an important baseline for reassessing the global extent and water storage of rock glaciers in cold mountain regions.

Bridging cultures through innovation



Youth from China and abroad photograph a bionic hand playing an electronic piano in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday. The international science exchange event welcomed 50 offline attendees, including international students, domestic university students and experts, alongside over 5,000 online participants. The event focused on cutting-edge AI fields like brain-computer interaction and bionic technology, fostering dialogue and collaboration while advancing Hangzhou's international sci-tech ecosystem. LI ZHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Officials to face lifelong ecological accountability

Guideline outlines when leaders may be held liable for protection failures

By **HOU LIQIANG**
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Chinese central authorities on Tuesday unveiled a guideline on holding Communist Party of China and government leaders accountable for ecological and environmental damages, with a clear emphasis on lifelong accountability.

The document, issued by the general offices of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, makes clear that accountability is not limited by time or position.

Where distorted views of governance performance, violations of the new development philosophy and the requirements for high-quality development, or other similar acts have caused serious ecological damage, the responsible persons shall be held strictly accountable, "regardless of whether they have been transferred to another post, reassigned, promoted, left office or retired", the guideline said.

The rule applies to leading members of local Party committees and governments at or above the county level, relevant departments of the central and State organs, and related institutions. It also refers similar cases involving township governments, public institutions, development zones and State-owned enterprises to the same framework.

In defining major accountability situations, the rule said local principal officials should be held responsible if they fail to carry out central decisions on ecological civilization, make decisions that breach laws or policies, or cross the red lines for environmental protection, minimum standards for environmental quality, and ceilings on resource utilization.

It also covered failures in promoting green transition, poor coordination in ecological protection and mishandling major pollution or ecological incidents.

For other local leaders, accountability may be triggered when they fail to supervise departments under their charge, tolerate violations, or mishandle environmental funds, it said.

For department leaders, examples include issuing rules that conflict with environmental laws or policies, greenlighting projects that fail to satisfy statutory requirements, failing to enforce inspection requirements, or ignoring public complaints and reports, according to the document.

The rule further specified that leaders who use their influence to obstruct environmental inspections, interfere in judicial handling of environmental cases, meddle in project approvals, or order the falsification of statistical, survey, assessment, monitoring or environmental impact data will be held accountable.

Accountability measures may include reminder talks, criticism and education, orders to make self-criticism and admonition; organizational adjustment and punishment; and disciplinary penalties.

Suspected criminal acts must be transferred to the relevant authorities for handling under the law, it noted.

Government bodies that are responsible for the supervision and administration of ecological and environmental protection must, upon discovering any circumstances warranting accountability as prescribed in these measures, conduct an investigation into the ecological and environmental damage in accordance with the law and within the scope of their duties, the guideline ruled.

It said, where the issues involve major ecological and environmental damage, or where complex problems cut across regions, watersheds, or departmental boundaries, the investigation may be escalated to a higher-level authority.

Disciplinary inspections, environmental and resource inspections and departure audits of natural resource assets may uncover major ecological damage or official negligence, it continued. Such cases must be referred to the disciplinary and supervisory authorities and the personnel departments under established procedures. Those bodies will then pursue accountability in line with regulations, discipline and the law.

The guideline shall take effect upon promulgation.

Gift exchange highlights duo's long-lasting green drive and friendship

By **WANG SONGSONG** in Ordos, Inner Mongolia and **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot

Yin Yuzhen, a national model worker renowned for her decades-long desertification control efforts in Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, exchanged gifts with her American friend Ronald Sakolsky on Tuesday, as part of his long-awaited reunion tour in China.

The gift-giving ceremony took place in the morning. Yin presented Sakolsky with embroidered insoles inscribed with the words "desert" and "friendship", along with the phrase "never forget". Other gifts included an embroidery piece bearing the message "one Earth, one dream", with images of the planet, trees, and the names of both individuals, as well as a plate with their portraits on it and some local specialty foods.

In return, Sakolsky, who hails from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, brought gifts for his Chinese counterpart, including a scarf and a hat featuring the Pittsburgh Steelers, an American football team.

He also brought two large suitcases, adding that "I brought two suitcases because I know China. They are almost full and I only just arrived. I have to take these gifts home."

Sakolsky expressed his gratitude to the China Education Association for International Exchange, saying, "Let us not forget that CEAIE. I would not be here if it were not for CEAIE. They sent me to China. Now I am back again."

Their remarkable story began in 1999 when Sakolsky, who taught English in Henan province under a China-United States teacher exchange program, organized by CEAIE, was moved by a television report on Yin's tireless efforts to turn the desert green. He raised $5,000 in donations to support her afforestation work — a sum that helped transform the barren landscape into a thriving forest of over 50,000 trees.

"I am just playing my part in a broader story. I thought it was impossible. She made it possible," said Sakolsky as he reflected on their shared mission.

He added, "She shares the same dream to make the Earth more beautiful. She made the changes. Now the Earth gives it back: all the trees, fruit, vegetables. She is the miracle hero and she never quits."

> "She shares the same dream to make the Earth more beautiful. She made the changes. Now the Earth gives it back: all the trees, fruit, vegetables. She is the miracle hero and she never quits."
>
> **Ronald Sakolsky,** a retired teacher from the United States

On the same day, Sakolsky visited the global innovation research and development headquarters of Kargobot Autonomous Driving and experienced an unmanned bus.

"I've never been in a vehicle with no driver. It is amazing and it proves that Ordos is a city of the 22nd century," he added.

According to Yao Kai, vice-president of the headquarters, the technology makes cargo transportation more efficient and environmentally friendly, contributing to ecological protection efforts.

Sakolsky arrived in Ordos on Sunday to reunite with Yin for the first time in 26 years. Their emotional reunion, which attracted wide public expectations after Yin's online search for her benefactor went viral in May, has been hailed as a vivid example of people-to-people friendship between China and the US. On Monday, the pair planted three evergreen trees together in Maowusu, China's fourth largest sandy area, fulfilling a promise made during their online reconnection months earlier.

According to previous reports, Sakolsky's trip to China will run through Sept 1 and includes visits to Henan and Beijing.

Contact the writers at wangsongsong@chinadaily.com.cn

Online
See more by scanning the code.



Yin Yuzhen presents an embroidery piece bearing the message "one Earth, one dream" as a gift to Ronald Sakolsky in Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, on Tuesday. ZENG YUE / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Pioneering designer of JH-7 fighter-bomber dies

By **ZHAO LEI**
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Chen Yijian, chief designer of China's JH-7 fighter-bomber and an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, died on Monday in Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province. He was 96.

Born in June 1930 in Fuzhou, Fujian province, Chen grew up amid the flames of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and completed his primary and secondary education in his home province.

In interviews prior to his death, Chen said when Japanese forces invaded his hometown of Fuzhou, he was forced to move with his father to Nanping county. With no air-raid shelters available, he and his family would often flee into the mountains whenever Japanese warplanes carried out bombing raids.

Chen explained that the Japanese pilots were so brazen that they flew extremely low — so low that people on the ground could clearly see their faces.



Chen Yijian

After graduating from high school in 1948, he applied to Xiamen University in Fujian, listing the newly established aeronautical engineering program as his only preferred choice.

"I was determined to study aviation and build aircraft — if we had no planes of our own, we would continue to be bullied by others," he said.

Three years later, following a nationwide restructuring of university departments, Chen and his classmates in the aeronautical engineering department were transferred to Tsinghua University in Beijing to continue their studies.

After graduating in 1952, the young engineer was assigned to the State-run No 122 Factory in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, now known as Harbin Aircraft Industry under the Aviation Industry Corp of China.

At the time, the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53) was underway, and a number of damaged Chinese aircraft were rushed to aircraft factories in Harbin, Shenyang and other cities for repairs. Upon reporting for duty at the factory, Chen joined the repair work and gradually acquired the knowledge required for aircraft design.

In late 1956, Chen was selected to join the People's Republic of China's first aircraft design office, the predecessor of the Shenyang Aircraft Design and Research Institute in Liaoning province. It was there that his career in aircraft design took off.

He participated in the early development of several models, including the JJ-1, New China's first domestically developed aircraft, the CJ-6 trainer and the Q-5 attack aircraft.

In 1961, the Shenyang institute was formally established. That same year, Chen was promoted to head of fuselage design at the institute.

In 1964, Chen was transferred to the Xi'an Aircraft Design and Research Institute, now known as the AVIC First Aircraft Institute, where he was mainly involved in the development of the Y-7 transport aircraft and took part in modification work on two bomber models.

During the mid-1970s, Chen took the lead in exploring the development of a next-generation tactical bomber. Their proposal was accepted by the government and military in 1977, resulting in the launch of the H-7 bomber project.

In 1978, Chen was appointed deputy chief designer of the Xi'an institute. In 1982, he was named chief designer of the new aircraft, which by then had been renamed the JH-7 "Flying Leopard" fighter-bomber.

With no prototype or reference model to draw on, Chen broke with convention and, despite considerable pressure, made the decisive call that the new jet's design standards would be brought in line with international norms.

In his 50s, Chen taught himself to write simple aircraft design software. The JH-7 became one of the earliest aircraft models in China to use computer-aided design.

In December 1988, the long-troubled JH-7 finally made its maiden flight, followed by a decade-long flight-test phase. It underwent more than 1,600 test flights before receiving design certification in August 1998.

In 1999, the JH-7 received the top-grade prize in the national science and technology advancements awards. Chen was elected an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering in December that year.

After stepping away from aircraft design, Chen served as a professor of aeronautical engineering at several domestic universities and took part in feasibility studies for China's domestically developed large aircraft.

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CHINA

CROSSING THE STRAIT

Editor's note: *The Taiwan question is a key focus for China and the international community. China Daily is publishing a series of reports to track hot Taiwan-related topics and address disinformation from the Democratic Progressive Party administration.*

Fujian league attracts cross-Strait players

Taiwan soccer talent find goals, massive crowds at mainland matches

By ZHANG YI in Xiamen, Fujian and **HU MEIDONG** in Fuzhou









Clockwise from top left: Team Xiamen and Team Jinmen exchange gifts before a friendly match in Xiamen, Fujian province, on July 5. Taiwan's Peng Chia-en waves a flag for Team Xiamen. Taiwan's Huang Wei-chieh (right) dribbles during a match representing Team Fuzhou. Supporters cheer for both teams during the Xiamen-Jinmen friendly match. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The Fujian city soccer league is inviting Taiwan players to compete on the Chinese mainland, and welcoming residents from across the Strait to enjoy the matches firsthand to deepen compatriot affinities and bring hearts closer together.

Representing Fujian province's nine cities and the Pingtan Comprehensive Experimental Zone, 10 teams and nearly 500 amateur players are competing in the tournament, which will conclude with the final in October.

To boost cross-Strait integration, Fujian — the primary ancestral home for Taiwan compatriots — allows every participating team to add two Taiwan players to its roster. By August, 19 Taiwan players had joined different city teams, according to the Fujian provincial administration of sport.

Data shows that more than 1,500 people from Taiwan have attended matches across Fujian, and that the league serves as an active catalyst for deepening cross-Strait people-to-people exchanges.

Ni Pei-hsu, 24, from Taiwan, joined Fuzhou's soccer club in late June after learning about the recruitment online and was drawn by the massive crowds. It's his first time playing on the mainland.

At Saturday night's match, Fuzhou defeated Longyan 3-1 at the Fuzhou Strait Olympic Sports Center. Ni repeatedly tore through the opponent's defense, while his teammate Huang Wei-chieh, also from Taiwan, scored the opening goal.

"Hearing fans shout my name during the match felt incredible, an experience I've never had before," Ni said, adding that he could feel the energy from the nearly 50,000 spectators who filled the stadium.

Ni said he enjoys living, dining and training together with his teammates in Fuzhou. They visit local scenic spots and watch movies on weekends, inspiring him to stay and continue his soccer career on the mainland.

Another Taiwan compatriot, Yang Chih-po, joined the Pingtan soccer club in June through a coach he met during previous matches in Fujian.

On June 27, he made his debut in Pingtan's away match against Nanping. In the 65th minute, Yang scored the winning goal from a set piece. This marked his very first goal since joining the league, helping Pingtan secure a crucial 1-0 victory and snapping their previous seven-game losing streak.

Recalling his debut, although Yang felt nervous due to the massive crowds both in the stadium and online, he remained focused. "With such a great opportunity, I told myself to just enjoy this stage and perform well," he said.

"There are many young soccer players on both sides, and the sports environment and atmosphere on the mainland are excellent," Yang added, encouraging more Taiwan players to hone their skills and embrace the challenges on the mainland platform.

By reserving dedicated viewing areas and distributing free tickets, the league warmly welcomes both first-time and frequent visitors from Taiwan. It has also established a short-video collection event to encourage soccer fans from both sides to cheer together.

Chen Yu-hsuan, a Taiwan student at Xiamen Information School, performs as a cheerleader for Xiamen's club. Her squad wears white uniforms representing Xiamen's symbolic egrets, and ocean-blue ones representing the sea, beautifully capturing the coastal city's unique local character.

"When our team scores, the whole stadium erupts, and I stand up cheering with everyone in pure excitement," Chen said.

As a Taiwan student residing in Xiamen, Chen said that representing the city before crowds of both local and visiting fans makes her feel incredibly proud of her life and community on the mainland.

Rita Chen and her husband Joe Peng traveled from Taoyuan, Taiwan, to Xiamen over the weekend specifically to cheer for their son, who played for Xiamen on Saturday night against Putian. Prompted by the soccer matches, the trip marked the family's very first visit to the mainland.

In July, their son, Peng Chia-en, represented the team of Jinmen, an outlying island off the coast of Fujian, in an exchange match against Xiamen — a key sub-activity of the city league that drew many Taiwan spectators. After touring locally to boost cross-Strait understanding, Peng and another Taiwan player were officially invited to join the Xiamen squad, while another two joined the Nanping club.

"We discovered that so many people support soccer matches in Xiamen, which is rare in Taiwan," Chen said. "The atmosphere is incredible. I hope other Taiwan compatriots who are interested can come over, enjoy the soccer spirit, and grow."

Zhang Yuehong, assistant coach of the Xiamen team, said: "Taiwan players travel to Xiamen to play just like visiting relatives. There is a very harmonious atmosphere as soccer enthusiasts from both sides exchange ideas and build friendship."

The matches offer talented Taiwan players more opportunities to showcase their skills, Zhang said, adding that the league lays a foundation for the possibility of Taiwan soccer teams joining the tournament in the future, which is a highly anticipated wish for many Taiwan players.

"The league is like a seed planted in the hearts of sports-loving young people from Taiwan," said Lee Chen-hsuan, a Taiwan player participating in the league.

Lee, president of the Pingtan Taiwan Business Association who moved to the mainland in 2016, said the event serves as a grand platform for those from Taiwan to experience diverse local customs and Fujian's unique culture.

"Many from Taiwan want to participate in the event," Lee said, noting that participants can also integrate into coaching staff and logistical support teams to gain broader experience in the sports industry.

Lee added that the event's influence is expected to extend to other provincial leagues in Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Sichuan provinces, inspiring more young Taiwan players to explore and develop careers across the mainland.

Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, said that grassroots city soccer leagues across the mainland have ignited the passion and energy of fans from both sides of the Strait every weekend this summer.

"In the Fujian league, Taiwan players fight alongside their mainland teammates, scoring multiple goals and receiving passionate support," Zhu said. "Facts prove that anyone with passion and perseverance can win applause on an expanding stage."

Wang Jinghan and Qiu Yuwen contributed to this story.

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Online See more by scanning the code.

Animal communicator heals pet owners' hearts

By ZHANG YI and **HU MEIDONG**



Tseng Yi-ju, from Taiwan, works in her pet studio in Xiamen, Fujian province. WANG JINGHAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Tseng Yi-ju, who comes from Taiwan, has served hundreds of pet-owning families on the Chinese mainland, helping people decode the unspoken needs of their animals while healing the hearts of the owners.

With the rapid expansion of the pet market and a growing focus on the human-animal emotional bond, she has found a clear direction for her entrepreneurial career in this emerging field in Xiamen, Fujian province.

"Xiamen feels just like home to me," Tseng said, noting that her move to the coastal city in 2021 was eased by its familiar climate, warm hospitality and strong government support for Taiwan entrepreneurs — including intellectual property workshops that greatly accelerated her start-up's growth.

"People increasingly treat pets as core family members," Tseng said. Her business integrates patented animal communication training and custom pet accessories.

Tseng recalled one corporate executive who joined a session to bridge the gap with younger employees as he wanted to organize pet-centric activities to boost team cohesion, and hoped that understanding pets would help him better connect with the younger generation, as many raise pets.

"The initial and primary motivation of most clients is simply to forge a deeper, more meaningful connection with their own pets," Tseng said, noting that proper communication also offers critical solutions to severe animal behavioral issues.

Tseng shared a case where an indoor cat was constantly biting its own fur bald despite medical tests showing no physical illness. Through a communication session, she discovered the cat felt disturbed and unsafe due to its noisy environment.

This was because the cat owner's former apartment had poor soundproofing and creaky floors.

The owner later reported that the self-harming behavior stopped after she relocated to a quieter residence.

Tseng also helps owners navigate emotional crises during pets' final days. She recalled a client who enrolled because his dog was extremely old, deeply desiring to understand and accompany his companion through its final stage.

Another client sought Tseng's help for an aging cat suffering from severe organ failure following major liver surgery. During that emotional session, they spent most of their time addressing the owner's past regrets and saying a proper goodbye. The cat remarkably stabilized afterward, allowing the owner to adjust his life and maximize their remaining time.

Liu Jingruo, a Xiamen resident, experienced the deep emotional impact of this practice when she sought Tseng's help for her 17-year-old poodle, Youyou, which suffered from a painful, ruptured abdominal cyst.

"Veterinarians across the city warned me that Youyou was too old to survive an operation," Liu said. However, through a joint session with Tseng, she learned that the dog actually desired the surgery so it could leave the world with a whole body.

Tseng maintained constant communication with the owner and the dog right up to the operation. Just three hours after surgery, the elderly poodle managed to stand up independently.

"I burst into tears when I saw it. It was so tough," Liu said. "Though Youyou later passed away, the experience left me with absolutely no lingering regrets."

The experience inspired Liu to study animal communication herself, finding it deeply therapeutic. She now allows her middle-school child to join the training to help the teenager understand the pure, selfless love that animals offer.

Liu said that there are times when her child prefers to confide in the family pet rather than speak to her. "The animal might give the child a gentle gaze or a very calming feeling," she said.

Sun Xiaonan, another student, found that studying communication heightened her ability to manage multi-pet households, especially after she adopted a fierce stray cat that bullied her resident pet.

Sun discovered that her resident cat was enduring immense stress just to keep the peace and spare its owner from conflict. By providing targeted reassurance, Sun successfully gave the animal an emotional outlet, preventing further stress accumulation.

"Having reliable, trustworthy animal communicators is essential for modern families," Sun said, adding that she believes this specialized emotional support is quickly shaping up to be a major future trend across the mainland market.

Liu Yizhou and Wang Jinghan contributed to this story.

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Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY

Where law meets humanity

A suspense drama follows three legal professionals to explore justice, morality and human nature beyond courtrooms.



(From left to right) Francis Ng, Zhong Chuxi and Zheng Yunlong portray three legal professionals whose lives become intertwined in a decade-spanning case in the suspense drama *The Trembling of Cicada*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By WANG XINGWEI
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In the courtroom, criminal defense lawyer Ding Ning methodically presents evidence and points out uncertainties she has uncovered in a rape case. Rather than simply accepting a guilty plea, the young lawyer works to protect the legal rights of her client, a young nursing home caregiver accused of rape.

The scene appears in the first episode of the suspense drama *The Trembling of Cicada*.

Starring Hong Kong actor Francis Ng, Chinese mainland actor Zheng Yunlong and actress Zhong Chuxi, the drama premiered on Zhejiang TV on Aug 20 and is also available on streaming platforms including iQIYI, Tencent Video and Migu Video.

Through the perspectives of three legal professionals, the drama gradually unveils a complex case spanning more than 10 years, using the law as a lens through which to explore justice, moral choices and human nature.

For Ng, who plays judge Yu Songfan, the role offered a new experience despite more than three decades in acting.

"It was a rare opportunity. Almost every scene carried its own emotions and meaning, so I never allowed myself to relax," Ng said.

It is his first time playing a judge on the Chinese mainland, and the role gave him an opportunity to gain a better understanding of a judge's work.

"My character, Yu Songfan, carefully researches each case before it reaches the courtroom, and judges must deal with many cases every day. It made me realize just how demanding their work can be," Ng said, adding that judges need to remain clear-headed and make balanced judgments based on evidence and legal procedures.

For Zhong, who plays criminal defense lawyer Ding Ning, the role prompted her to think about a profession that can sometimes be controversial in the public eye because it involves defending people accused of serious wrongdoing.

"It takes courage to become a criminal defense lawyer," Zhong said.

She noted that being a suspect does not necessarily mean a person is guilty, and that criminal defense lawyers work to safeguard the legal rights to which suspects are entitled.

"Cases are rarely one-dimensional. There are often many sides to them," Zhong said. "At its core, the work of a criminal defense lawyer is about upholding justice and equality, and I find that deeply admirable."

> "At its core, the work of a criminal defense lawyer is about upholding justice and equality, and I find that deeply admirable."
>
> **Zhong Chuxi,** actress

For her, Ding's story is also one of personal growth. "Ding goes through a transformation after a long period of dormancy, much like a cicada emerging from underground. In that sense, her journey also echoes the title of the drama," Zhong said.

While Ding seeks to protect the rights of the accused, Zheng's character approaches the law from a more morally ambiguous direction.

Zheng plays prominent lawyer Zhao Yijie, who is adept at reading and manipulating others while navigating the gray areas of the law.

"It's an unconventional role," Zheng said. "He has his own ambitions and difficulties, but the way he deals with them can be quite unusual."

For Zheng, portraying the character required looking closely at the relationship between the legal profession and human nature.

He believes lawyers need to interact with people and, more importantly, understand them.

"My character, Zhao Yijie, is very good at identifying people's weaknesses. He observes them, provokes them and sets traps for them, pushing them to the point where they lose their rationality," Zheng said.

"When you play a complex character, you have to understand exactly where that complexity comes from and what lies behind it," he added.

That complexity also shaped how Zheng approached the character. As a musical theater actor, he drew on his stage experience while adapting it to the different demands of television.

"Stage and television are completely different. On stage, you're always conscious that some audience members are sitting far away, so your movements and expressions often need to be larger and more pronounced," he explained, adding that television acting, by contrast, calls for greater subtlety.

But beneath Zhao's dramatic persona and the twists and turns of the plot, Zheng believes the story ultimately deals with questions that extend beyond the legal world.

"It touches on something many people may experience: when you face adversity or even injustice, how do you overcome the negative emotions that come with it?" he said. "That is a universal theme, and I think it can resonate with audiences overseas as well."

According to the production team, the drama is set to reach audiences worldwide, with priority given to Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei.

Zheng said cross-cultural communication can be strengthened by finding emotional connections that resonate with people from different backgrounds.

He cited a production of *Hamlet*, in which he performed last year, as an example. Although the play is a Western classic rooted in a different cultural tradition, its central questions about choice and uncertainty remain recognizable centuries later.

Believing sincere emotions can cross language and cultural boundaries, Zhong hopes Chinese productions can offer international audiences perspectives they have not encountered before.

She likens an actor to a transmitter. "Our job is to convey emotions, ideas, values and perspectives," she said. "Chinese culture is incredibly diverse, and we are still exploring new ways to present it. I hope this drama can offer overseas viewers a fresh take on Chinese suspense storytelling."

For Zhong, audiences encountering stories from other cultures are often searching not for differences, but for something recognizable in themselves.

"They may see something of their past, their future or the possibilities in their own lives," she said.

"As a young actress, I also hope to keep discovering new possibilities for myself," she added.

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Rewriting the story together

China-Africa media cooperation is expanding through co-production, training and technology, with greater emphasis on local voices and shared storytelling.

By **SHAMIM ZAKARIA**
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When asked how direct media partnerships could give African countries a greater role in shaping how they are represented internationally, Chernor Bah, Minister of Information and Civic Education of Sierra Leone, returned to a fundamental question: Who gets to tell the story?

"For years, Africa has been diminished and Africa's story has been told by Western narratives," Bah said. "Those narratives do not exalt us and they never make us really the heroes of our own stories."

Bah's concern was the extent to which Africans themselves help shape coverage of their continent. Closer China-Africa media cooperation, he said, offered "a huge opportunity to learn from each other" and to "author a different story" rooted in people's experiences, cultures and aspirations.

That idea ran through discussions at the 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation, held in Beijing from Aug 19 to 21. Delegates noted that authentic representation requires practical involvement at every stage, from developing ideas and identifying sources to local-language reporting, editing and distribution.

The forum brought together about 400 representatives from China and 45 African countries, including a record 33 ministerial-level guests from African countries, according to the organizers. It was co-hosted by China's National Radio and Television Administration, the Beijing municipal government and the African Union of Broadcasting.

The forum came as 2026 marks the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Africa and is the China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges. Egypt became the first African country to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1956.

Co-production emerged as a main way to give local partners a role from the outset, bringing them into story development, editorial decision-making and production, rather than simply exchanging completed programs.

Dr Ismaila Ceesay, Minister of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services of The Gambia, said agreements reached with Chinese partners, including arrangements involving the country's public and private broadcasters, should provide a foundation for moving beyond content exchange toward co-production, particularly of programs concerning young people, culture and history.

Chinese programs were already being broadcast weekly on two television stations in The Gambia, Ceesay said, while a coordinating team was being established to bring media organizations together around co-production.

He also identified modern technology, digital skills, technology transfer and newsroom modernization as pressing needs. Gambian professionals trained in China, he said, should apply and share their knowledge at home so that one training opportunity can benefit an entire newsroom.

Ceesay described young journalists as eager to demonstrate their abilities and adept at using technology to introduce their cultures and countries. Bringing Chinese and African journalists together during planning and production, he said, could also build lasting professional relationships and improve access to local languages, sources and knowledge.





Top: Journalists interview a guest at the 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation in Beijing. **Above:** The 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation takes place in Beijing from Aug 19 to 21. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Tech expands reach

Beyond policy discussions, the forum gave delegates a close look at the technologies increasingly shaping media production. They visited the 8K facilities of Beijing Radio & Television Station (BRTV) and the 33rd Beijing International Radio, TV & Film Exhibition (BIRTV 2026). The forum also featured three themed exhibition areas presenting China-Africa media cooperation, audiovisual innovation and cultural exchanges.

Displays included digital content management systems and a mobile production vehicle using 5G, AI and cloud tools.

Marie-Louise Diallo, deputy director-general of Guinea's national daily Horoya, said she was highly impressed by BRTV's technical capabilities, particularly the image quality offered by its 4K and 8K systems.

She also noted that Guinean journalists were participating in a training program in Beijing.

Infrastructure cooperation is also extending beyond broadcasting. Bah cited a project in Sierra Leone where, in July 2025, he led the signing in Beijing of a $5 million memorandum of understanding with China's Diming Yimo (Tianjin) Printing Co Ltd to modernize Sierra Leone's Government Printing Department, provide equipment and training, and support a national printing training institute.

Some displays also showed how technology could address another challenge raised repeatedly at the forum: language.

At a display by Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, an AI function translated speech and written messages in real time. An interactive map generated a postcard for a selected African country.

Speaking during a visit to BIRTV 2026, Jean Maurice Uwera, deputy spokesperson for the government of Rwanda, identified language as a practical obstacle to the wider circulation of audiovisual content.

"Chinese culture is quite rich, but there is always that barrier of language," he said, adding that dubbing and subtitles could help productions reach audiences who might otherwise be unable to engage with them.

As AI plays a larger role in media production and distribution, the issue also extends to which languages such systems can recognize. Bah said African languages should be included in AI models and African partners should participate in developing them. Such cooperation, he said, could improve translation and digital tools for the communities whose stories they carry.

Bah noted the exchange should also work both ways, with African stories reaching Chinese audiences just as Chinese stories reach Africa. Joint reporting and content creation, he added, could introduce audiences to everyday life, entrepreneurship, history, culture and the experiences of young people.

The forum released a joint declaration and announced 80 achievements in China-Africa cooperation in areas including production and exchange, professional development and media technology. According to the organizers, the declaration advocates sustained news cooperation, joint productions, program translation and mutual broadcasting, AI application and governance, and youth exchanges.

For Ceesay, the purpose of such cooperation ultimately comes back to how people understand one another.

The objective, he said, should be to "tell our story, tell the African story, tell the Chinese story" in a way that enables people to understand one another's challenges, aspirations and history.



Participants in the 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation pose for a group photo. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Seeds of health care take root in mountain villages

By **MENG WENJIE**
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In July, as cicadas echoed through the mountain villages of Enshi Tujia and Miao autonomous prefecture, Hubei province, 20-year-old Wu Yutong followed a village doctor along winding paths to visit local residents. As she met elderly villagers, she felt an unexpected sense of familiarity.

"Their accents sound very similar to those in my hometown, so I feel like I am seeing my own grandparents," Wu said.

Wu, a clinical medicine student at Taikang Medical School (School of Basic Medical Sciences) of Wuhan University (WHU), was among 17 students who traveled to Baiguoshu village to study rural healthcare and provide health education to elderly residents and children.

The visit was part of a tradition stretching back nearly a decade. Since July 2017, when the school's first group of 19 students established a volunteer health service base in the village, successive groups of medical students have returned to continue the work.

Wei Lei, a professor at the school and the team's instructor, was leading the program for the fourth time. The program included undergraduates studying clinical medicine, stomatology and public health. Wei said serving rural communities allows students to understand what it means to be a medical worker in ways textbooks alone cannot.

Over the years, the initiative has expanded from basic health checks to chronic disease follow-ups and research on local disease prevention. This year, the students turned their attention to how digital technology is changing access to healthcare in rural areas.

Focusing on the digital empowerment of primary-level healthcare, the team conducted research in Baiguoshu and seven surrounding villages, visiting hospitals, health centers, village clinics and residents' homes to examine the use of digital medical services at different levels of the healthcare system.



Volunteers from Wuhan University teach students how to use bandages at Enshi No 3 Middle School in Hubei province in July 2026. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

For team leader Li Wen, 20, the fieldwork revealed a gap between technological progress and accessibility. Questionnaires showed that many residents over 65 struggled to use smartphones or self-service registration machines when making medical appointments.

The students discussed their findings with local health authorities and proposed placing illustrated guides beside registration machines to help elderly patients better understand how to use them.

"It may not be solved overnight, but through sustained efforts, we can make progress little by little," Li said.

But the program's impact is not measured only in research findings and proposals. Years of repeated visits have also brought tangible changes to villagers' lives.

Wu recalled the case of a villager named Long Fubing. In 2024, the team discovered during a medical consultation that Long had severe hypertension and began monitoring his condition. When Wu met him again this year, she found that his health had improved significantly. He was taking medication regularly and no longer stopped treatment without consulting doctors.

"Standing there, I felt I was seeing the results of years of work by previous teams," Wu said.

Long's experience reflects broader changes across the village. In 2017, 45.7 percent of residents had fallen into poverty because of illness, while only 2.49 percent put health knowledge into practice in daily life. By 2025, 87.5 percent of surveyed villagers were receiving regular checkups, and all surveyed patients with chronic diseases were taking medication as advised.

"These figures show that an important idea has gradually taken root among villagers — health should be managed proactively rather than addressed only after illness occurs," Wu said. "This is the most valuable achievement of the past 10 years."

A decade of visits has brought more than medical services to Baiguoshu — it has also forged a lasting bond between the students, villagers and younger generations.

That bond was clear to Ning Zhenghao, 22, a basic medicine student who led the team in 2025. Although many villagers were meeting him for the first time, they immediately recognized the WHU T-shirts worn by the students.

"They told me that our team's story had even been recorded in the village archives," Ning said.

Ning and his teammates also gave health education classes at Baiguoshu village primary school, where he was encouraged by the children's enthusiasm for learning and their grasp of basic health concepts.

"Every health education class we give plants a seed in children's minds — an awareness of the importance of caring for their health," Ning said. "Perhaps one day, some of them may enter the medical field and use their knowledge to improve healthcare in their hometown."

Li Bo contributed to this story.

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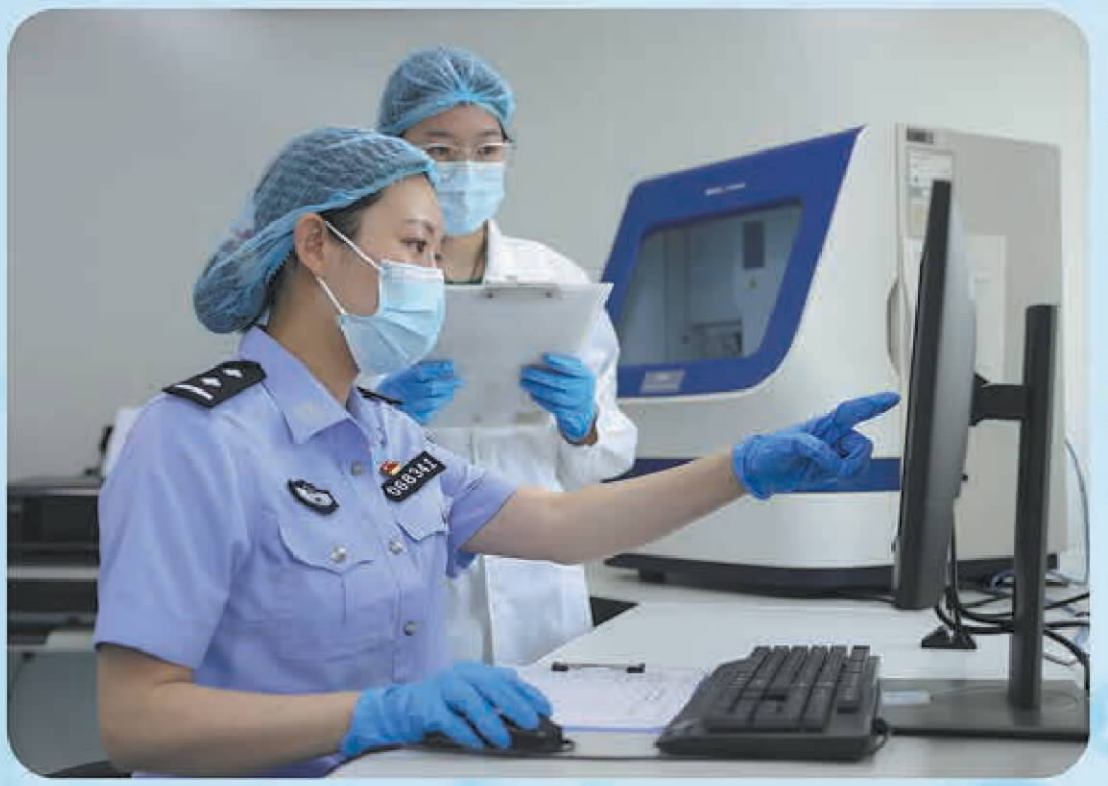
Z WEEKLY

Truth found in tiny traces

Zhang Mengting combines biotechnology training with police work, helping investigators identify suspects, crack difficult cases and bring families back together.





Left: Zhang Mengting (front), a forensic DNA analyst with the Xiangyang Public Security Bureau in Hubei province, analyzes results on a computer with a colleague. **Right:** Zhang conducts laboratory work.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By GUI QIAN and **LIU KUN**

On a sweltering afternoon in August 2020, mosquitoes and other insects swarmed around a dilapidated shack in Gucheng county, Xiangyang, Hubei province.

Police believed a suspect who was on the run after committing a serious crime might have spent the night there.

After receiving the call, Zhang Mengting, a forensic DNA analyst with the Xiangyang Public Security Bureau, went to examine the scene.

Bending over, she searched the entire shack inch by inch. Once. Twice. Ten times.

Finally, on a worn sleeping mat, Zhang spotted a dark-red bloodstain measuring only about 2 millimeters across. It was not human blood, but blood left behind by a mosquito that had been swatted.

She carefully collected the almost imperceptible trace and took it back to the laboratory for analysis.

"Evidence doesn't reveal itself," Zhang said. "Only by staying focused and examining a scene meticulously can we find the crucial clue among countless traces."

DNA extracted from the blood eventually led police to the suspect, who had fled elsewhere, and the case was solved.

Zhang, however, stresses that solving cases is a team effort.

"Tracing the suspect's escape route and figuring out how he got there all depended on colleagues from other police units," she said. "I simply did my part."

Her ability to spot such an unlikely clue grew out of her scientific background and an unconventional path into policing.

Zhang, 32, is a native of Xiangyang. After graduating from Qingdao University in Shandong province in 2016 with a degree in biotechnology, she worked in new media and advertising.

In 2019, when the Xiangyang Public Security Bureau began recruiting DNA analysts from outside the police academy system, Zhang applied.

The decision brought her back to an ambition she had expressed years earlier. In middle school, when her English teacher asked students what they wanted to be when they grew up, Zhang answered, "A police officer."

"I found it fascinating that a tiny detail could help reconstruct the truth step by step," she said.

A changing profession

Her scientific training soon found a practical application in police work. The criminal technology unit where Zhang works covers a range of disciplines, including DNA analysis, trace evidence examination, forensic medicine, chemical and physical analysis, document examination, imaging and electronic evidence.

"Police academies usually focus more on training officers in investigation and case handling," Zhang said. "But policing today also brings together specialists from different fields, combining traditional investigative experience with better teamwork and procedures, as well as technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence. This makes investigations more efficient and precise."

> "If I could say one thing to the person I was back then, I would tell her: 'I hope you always hold on to your respect for science, your determination to pursue the truth and your commitment to serving the people.'"
>
> **Zhang Mengting,** a forensic DNA analyst

In recent years, more people without police academy backgrounds have entered the public security system through open recruitment, including some from fields outside the sciences. Zhang's career reflects that broader shift toward a more professionally diverse police force.

For Zhang, combining her biotechnology expertise with police work has yielded concrete results.

In 2024, a bottle was thrown from a high-rise residential building in Xiangyang and it struck a car below. With more than 1,000 people living in the building, investigators faced the challenge of narrowing down a suspect.

Rather than recommending that blood samples be collected from every resident, Zhang extracted DNA from the rim of the broken bottle. The DNA profile provided investigators with a crucial piece of evidence as they worked to identify the suspect.

Another case took her work in a very different direction. It involved a family separated for half a century.

In 1974, a 3-year-old boy referred to by the pseudonym Zhao was abducted and trafficked. His mother provided a blood sample for inclusion in a DNA database in 2017, but the search stalled because no DNA sample was available from Zhao's father, who had died.

Zhang and her colleagues proposed an unconventional solution: collecting blood samples from Zhao's biological brothers and using algorithms to infer their deceased father's genetic information.

The approach eventually helped establish the family connection, and mother and son were reunited after 50 years apart.

In more than six years as a police officer, Zhang has examined over 16,400 biological samples without error. Her DNA work has contributed to identifying suspects in more than 320 difficult cases, locating 35 missing or trafficked people and reuniting 42 families.

On April 29 this year, Zhang was awarded the Hubei May 1 Labor Medal.

But the moments she values most do not come with an honor or a title. As a technical officer who spends much of her time in the laboratory, Zhang rarely gets to meet victims or receive their thanks in person. After a case is closed, however, she often asks colleagues the same question: "How did the case turn out?"

Hearing that a difficult case has been solved or that her work has helped someone gives her a sense of fulfillment. "I realize that my expertise can really make a difference for victims," she said.

For Zhang, that sense of purpose goes back to what first drew her to detective work as a schoolgirl: the idea that something small, examined carefully, can reveal something much larger.

"If I could say one thing to the person I was back then, I would tell her: 'I hope you always hold on to your respect for science, your determination to pursue the truth and your commitment to serving the people,'" Zhang said.

Contact the writers at guiqian@i21st.cn

Global Insights

China's C919 through an AI student's eyes

On July 13, at 10:20 pm, I boarded a flight from Harbin in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province to Beijing, where I would transfer to another flight to Budapest and return home to Europe. The trip marked the end of my first academic year at Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT).

I expected the Harbin-Beijing flight to be an uneventful first leg of a long journey home. Instead, it became my first experience aboard the C919 — China's domestically developed narrow-body passenger jet — and it gave me a new perspective on the country's technological progress and my own studies in artificial intelligence.

Because we boarded via a jet bridge, I did not get a clear view of the aircraft from the outside. I realized it was a C919 only after entering the cabin and noticing that the interior looked different from those of the aircraft I usually flew on.

This discovery immediately excited me and gave the flight an unexpected sense of significance.

Although the cabin layout was familiar, several details on this Air China aircraft made the experience feel modern. The first was the wireless in-flight entertainment system. After connecting my phone to the onboard network, I could open a portal offering films, television programs and games. It did not provide regular internet access, but it allowed passengers to use their own devices as personal entertainment screens.

Another practical feature was a dedicated phone holder above the tray table. I could place my phone at a comfortable angle, connect my headphones and watch a Chinese action movie without having to hold the device throughout the flight.

I was beginning my journey back to Europe, yet I was still surrounded by the Chinese language, Chinese entertainment and an aircraft that represented one of the country's major engineering achievements.

Silent precision

The flight felt calm and comfortable throughout, but what stayed with me most was the fact that everything worked exactly as it should.

As a passenger, I experienced only a quiet cabin and a smooth flight. Behind that ordinary experience, however, countless electronic, mechanical and software systems had to work together with exceptional precision and reliability.



Bartosz Turczynski shares his perspective on China's technological development through his experience aboard the C919. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

As a first-year AI major at HIT, I began to think more deeply about those hidden systems. My courses included electronic circuits, computational thinking and practical programming in C, a widely used programming language. Until then, much of what I had learned existed mainly in the form of diagrams, exercises and small programs.

Sitting inside the aircraft connected those subjects to a much larger world of engineering. It made me consider how sensors, electronic components and software systems must cooperate continuously to keep a modern aircraft operating safely.

The area that interests me most is AI-assisted and increasingly autonomous aviation. Such technologies could help pilots interpret sensor data, identify abnormal conditions, optimize routes and make safer decisions.

For me, this area represents an exciting combination of AI, electronics, software and physical engineering.

I had already encountered this combination on a much smaller scale during a two-week robotics program at HIT over the winter vacation. At the end of the program, my group built a small autonomous vehicle that could receive information from sensors, process it and respond through movement.

The vehicle was simple but seeing it act according to our code changed my understanding of robotics. We were no longer only reading about autonomous systems; we had created one ourselves.

Before coming to China, I knew that the country was developing rapidly, but that knowledge was mostly abstract. During my first year here, I began to encounter technology not only as a topic in the news, but also through my studies and daily life.

The robotics program gave me the opportunity to help build a small autonomous system. The C919 flight allowed me to experience a far more complex engineering achievement as an ordinary passenger.

By the time we landed in Beijing, my initial surprise had developed into something more lasting. The flight gave me a clearer sense of why I had chosen to study AI and how much I still had to learn. It also strengthened my confidence in my decision to study in China, where the connections among research, engineering and everyday life are becoming increasingly visible.

Written by Bartosz Turczynski, a Polish undergraduate student majoring in AI at Harbin Institute of Technology. He has studied Chinese for five years and is particularly interested in AI, robotics and China's technological development.

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SPORTS

BASKETBALL



Team China players pose on the podium after finishing second in the FIBA U18 Asia Cup with an 89-79 loss to Australia, its best finish since winning the tournament in 2014. FIBA

China celebrates silver lining

Under 18s narrowly miss out on Asia Cup glory, but runner-up finish hints at a golden future



Team China players celebrate reaching a first U18 Asia Cup final in 12 years after beating New Zealand 79-66 in Saturday's semifinal. FIBA



The rise of school-league prospects, such as Lyu Feiyan (center) of Tsinghua University High School, shows China's youth basketball pipeline is evolving. FIBA

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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It might have been a near-miss, but an inspiring run at the FIBA U18 Asia Cup has delivered a silver lining for the future of Chinese basketball, with the national program committed to revamping its talent development system.

For a second straight summer, Chinese men's basketball has fallen just short of continental glory, but its youth squad's runner-up finish at the Asian showpiece, after being overpowered by Australia 89-79 in Sunday's final, was anything but a disappointment.

The squad's gutsy final run, which marked the country's best result at the biennial U18 tournament in 12 years, has served up as encouraging a boost for the national program's rebuild as the senior squad's narrow one-point defeat to the mighty Aussies at the Asia Cup a year ago.

The last time China's U18 team won the continental title was in 2014, when Australia and New Zealand were not yet included in FIBA's Asian zone.

Despite coming up short against the Emus in the final in Ahmedabad, India, the Chinese team successfully avenged its 15-point loss to New Zealand in the 2024 semifinal, taming the Junior Tall Blacks 79-66 at the same stage on Saturday to reach its first title decider in over a decade — while securing a spot to next year's U19 World Cup in the Czech Republic.

Head coach Wang Jianjun, who guided his young squad to tournament bests in assists per game (27) and three-point shooting (43 percent), took pride from the teenagers' fighting spirit and future potential.

"From start to finish, everyone fought for every possession in every minute and every second of the game. I'm grateful for all the hard work these players have put in and I am really proud of them," Wang said in his post-final news conference.

"We have regrets about missing out on the title, but youth is our biggest advantage.

"This silver medal proves the huge potential of this young team. This precious international tournament experience will lay a solid foundation for their future growth.

"I hope they can show the world what they've got at next year's World Cup."

Talented, but lacking some physical and mental maturity, the Chinese team was dominated in the paint, out-rebounded 57-35 by the Emus with a stark 26-6 disparity in offensive rebounds, which allowed the Aussies 36 second-chance points.

However, the fact that Team China was the youngest among all quarterfinal contenders, with an average age of 17.2 years old and with four key members born after 2010, signifies a bright future for the squad.

Sixteen-year-old starting forward Zhang Yizhaojie, a versatile 6-foot-7 (2.03 meters) scorer, led China with a game-high 20 points in the final, before being selected into the All-Star Five as the youngest player in the tournament's best lineup.

He didn't get carried away by the recognition, though. "Playing against such a physical, high-intensity team like Australia has made me realize just how much we have to improve," said Zhang, who also led the team's scoring across the whole tournament, averaging 14.3 points per game.

"We need to further improve our ability to keep up with the physical nature and high intensity of international play."

Young center Li Junxian, a raw, 18-year-old talent that stands at 2.12 meters, notched a double-double of 15 points and 12 rebounds in the final, while sharp-shooting guard Zhang Yuchen, another 16-year-old prospect, added 13 points and seven assists on Sunday.

Zhang Yuchen also led the entire tournament field in three-point accuracy, shooting 56.2 percent from 16 attempts beyond the arc.

His rise from China's high-school league to the international spotlight, after leading Tsinghua University High School to the national championship in May, underlines China's evolving youth development system.

Once relying heavily on State-run sports schools and professional league clubs' youth reserves, the drafting scope of Chinese basketball is now expanding to school leagues, overseas academies and commercial training institutes.

Four of the 12 players on the current U18 squad were selected from outside the traditional pipelines, with Zhang Yuchen emerging as the brightest prospect and turning heads of North American scouts.

According to Li Qun, a former Chinese national team guard and a youth training promoter, Zhang Yuchen has attracted serious interest from Arizona-based Bella Vista College Prep School and the Royal Crown School in Canada, suggesting a potential move this fall with an eye on earning a future NCAA scholarship.

"A young guard like Yuchen, who attacks aggressively to make plays for teammates, fits into the modern style of basketball, and we should make it possible for him to tap into his full potential," said Li.

Zhang Bin, a former youth training director with the Chinese Basketball Association, stressed it's critical to give developing talent more international exposure and more competitive opportunities as early as possible.

"We have more games at home for junior players than ever, but the intensity and quality are still not enough," he said. "We should encourage more young talent to explore pathways to develop and study overseas."



Zhang Yizhaojie, China's top scorer at the tournament, was selected into the FIBA U18 Asia Cup's All-Star Five. FIBA

Klay joins Heat, set to team up with Adebayo, Antetokounmpo

MIAMI — Klay Thompson has signed his deal with the Miami Heat, which waited patiently for weeks to see if it would get the chance to add the sharpshooter to its reworked roster.

Thompson — who is No 4 on the NBA's all-time three-pointers list with 2,899 — cleared waivers Sunday afternoon and wasted little time finalizing a two-year deal worth about $11.5 million. The second season of the deal is at Thompson's option.

In many ways, the deal makes sense for both sides. Thompson makes no secret about how much he loves the water and boating; the Heat plays its home games at the edge of Biscayne Bay. He's of Bahamian heritage; the island nation is a short flight from Miami and is home to a sizable base of Heat fans. And, perhaps most importantly, the Heat knew it wanted to add shooting to surround the newly acquired Giannis Antetokounmpo and incumbent center Bam Adebayo.

"Klay is one of the most iconic players to ever suit up in the NBA," Heat president Pat Riley said. "A four-time battle-tested world champion who will fit perfectly into his role as an all-around player at both ends of the court. We all talk about his shooting skill, but there is so much more he brings to the game. We are blessed that Klay chose the Heat in our quest to challenge for championships."

Thompson, a 36-year-old about to enter his 14th season (not counting two missed because of injury), fits that bill perfectly. He's a career 41 percent shooter from beyond the arc, and last season marked the 11th time that he's made more than 200 three-pointers in a season. For context, only seven times in its history has the Heat had a player make 200 threes in a single year.



Following his contract buyout Klay Thompson will join the Miami Heat to play alongside Bam Adebayo and Giannis Antetokounmpo. AP

There's also the winning pedigree that Thompson brings. He paired with Stephen Curry to be part of Golden State's famed "Splash Brothers" duo that helped lead the Warriors to four NBA championships. He's a five-time All-Star, holds the league record with 14 made threes in a game, has connected on at least 10 threes in a game nine times and will enter this season just 74 three-pointers behind Ray Allen — a former Heat guard — for third place on the league's all-time list.

It's the latest big move for the Heat this summer. It acquired Antetokounmpo and Bobby Portis from Milwaukee in a deal that saw it send Tyler Herro, Jaime Jaquez Jr, Kel'el Ware and Kasparas Jakucionis to the Bucks. It also signed another big-time three-point threat in Tim Hardaway Jr, who grew up in Miami while his father was playing for the Heat.

Thompson and the Dallas Mavericks agreed on a contract buyout that was executed Friday, the end of his two-year run there that didn't get anywhere close to what either side originally envisioned — especially after the shocking trade of Luka Doncic by the Mavs to the Los Angeles Lakers.

Thompson joined Dallas in a sign-and-trade with Golden State, giving the Mavericks one of the league's all-time great three-point shooters to complement Doncic and another high-scoring guard in Kyrie Irving.

But the high hopes for that threesome imploded after the Mavericks sent Doncic to the Lakers for Anthony Davis in a deal before the trade deadline in 2025. Irving tore the ACL in his left knee a month later and hasn't played since, while Davis was traded to the Washington Wizards just before the February trade deadline last season.

AP

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2026



President Xi Jinping hosts a welcoming ceremony for President of Ecuador Daniel Roy-Gilchrist Noboa Azin in Beijing on Tuesday. Noboa is on a state visit to China until Sunday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Xi calls for deepening cooperation with Ecuador

By **MO JINGXI**
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President Xi Jinping called on China and Ecuador to better align their development strategies, advance Belt and Road cooperation and deepen collaboration in fields ranging from energy and infrastructure to green development and artificial intelligence, during talks with visiting Ecuadorian President Daniel Roy-Gilchrist Noboa Azin in Beijing on Tuesday.

Noboa arrived in Beijing on Sunday for a state visit that will run through Aug 23. It is his first state visit to China and his second trip to the country as president.

Following the talks, the two heads of state witnessed the signing of cooperation documents covering green industries, economic and trade cooperation, the digital economy and people's livelihoods.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the China-Ecuador comprehensive strategic partnership, which was established during Xi's state visit to Ecuador in November 2016.

Xi said China has always viewed its relations with the Latin American country from a strategic and long-term perspective, regardless of changes in the international landscape.

"China is ready to work with Ecuador to take bilateral relations to new heights and deliver greater benefits to the two peoples," he said.

Xi called on the two countries to consolidate political mutual trust and continue to understand and support each other on issues involving their respective core interests and major concerns.

China respects and supports Ecuador in pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions and is willing to strengthen exchanges between the two countries' governments, legislatures and political parties and share experience in governance as both countries pursue their respective paths toward modernization, he said.

Economic and trade ties between China and Ecuador have expanded steadily since their free trade agreement took effect on May 1, 2024. In the first half of this year, bilateral trade value reached $9.831 billion, up 20.1 percent year-on-year. China remained the largest destination for Ecuador's non-oil exports.

"This reflects both the benefits generated by the bilateral free trade agreement and the potential of China's superlarge market," Xi said.

He urged the two sides to further unlock the agreement's potential, so that more businesses and consumers could benefit.

China is also willing to work with Ecuador in healthcare, poverty reduction, and disaster prevention and mitigation in support of Ecuador's national development, Xi said. He also called for stronger exchanges in education, culture, youth and sports and between local governments, along with steps to facilitate travel and deepen friendship between the two peoples.

Noboa said China is an important partner and friend of Ecuador and that bilateral relations have entered a new stage, delivering tangible benefits to both peoples.

He said Ecuador is ready to deepen political mutual trust with China, support China in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and respect its position on the Taiwan question.

Ecuador is willing to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation with China in trade, finance, mining, renewable energy, science and technology, and culture, Noboa said. The country also seeks to expand its exports to China and welcomes more Chinese companies to invest and operate in Ecuador, contributing to improvements in people's livelihoods and the country's development, he added.

The two leaders also exchanged views on developments in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Xi said China has always maintained that the status of the Latin American and Caribbean region as a zone of peace should not be shaken.

The course of development and revitalization of Latin American and Caribbean countries should not be disrupted, and the right of countries in the region to independently choose their cooperation partners should not be interfered with, he said.

China supports Latin American countries in upholding independence and self-reliance, pursuing foreign cooperation based on their national interests, and safeguarding regional peace and stability, Xi added.

Noboa said Ecuador values China's position and role and is ready to remain a good friend of China on the other side of the Pacific.

Humanizing the future of robotics

WORLD WATCH
By Carlos Magariños

During my visit to the 2024 World Manufacturing Convention in Hefei, East China's Anhui province, I felt as though I had stepped into a scene from a science fiction movie. Before me, a 1.8-meter-tall humanoid robot weighing 60 kilograms was using its 38 degrees of freedom — or 38 independent ways to move or rotate — to fold clothes, open bottles, pour water and wash dishes with remarkable precision.

Since then, the race to develop more advanced robots has only gained momentum.

Improvements in actuators and sensors now allow humanoid robots to walk, run and perform increasingly complex tasks. At the same time, advances in artificial intelligence are rapidly enhancing their ability to interpret surroundings, interact with people and adapt to changing situations.

Applications now extend far beyond the factory floor. Humanoid robots are now finding roles in agriculture, customer service and healthcare, as well as in assisting older people, patients and persons with disabilities.

However, humanoids are only part of a much broader transformation.

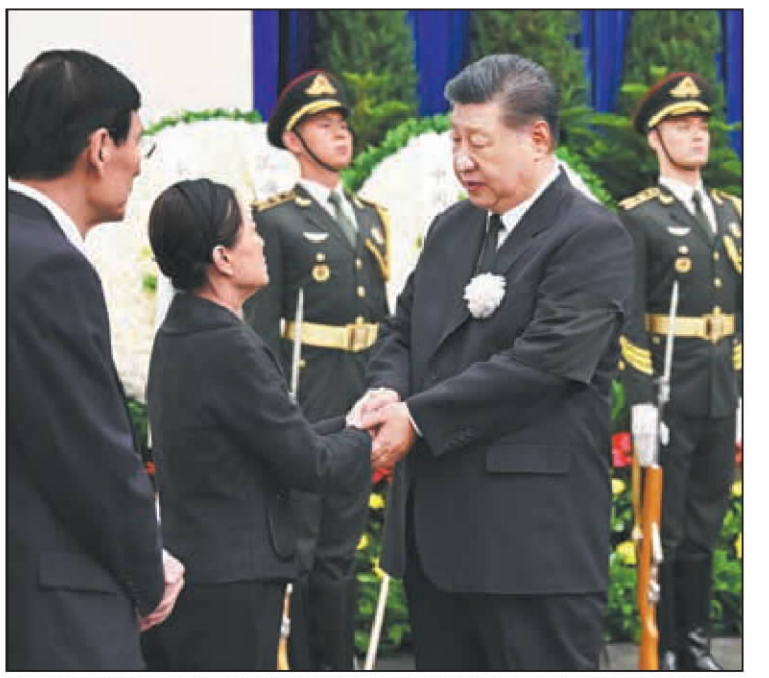
Collaborative robots, or cobots, work alongside people, augmenting human capabilities in factories, laboratories and hospitals. Swarm robotics enables multiple robots to coordinate on tasks such as searching for and rescuing survivors, inspecting infrastructure or exploring hazardous environments.

This new generation of robots is pushing the boundaries of possibilities. But perhaps the more important question is not what robots will eventually be capable of, but what we want them to do.

As the father of a young man with an intellectual disability caused by a rare genetic condition, I have seen firsthand the extraordinary contributions of robotics and intelligent technologies to everyday life. They can help organize routines, facilitate communication, improve safety and enhance personal autonomy. For many families, these are not abstract possibilities, but tangible improvements in daily life.

This experience has also taught me an important distinction that no technological advance should blur: assistance and care are not the same thing. Machines can perform tasks with ever greater efficiency, but care requires recognition, responsibility, patience, empathy and affection. Those qualities arise essentially from human relationships, rather than from algorithms.

See ***Robots,*** *page 3*



President Xi Jinping extends his condolences to a family member of Zhu Rongji on Tuesday at the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

Zhu Rongji's remains cremated in Beijing

Senior Party and State leaders pay their last respects to former premier

By **CAO DESHENG**
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The remains of former Chinese premier Zhu Rongji were cremated in Beijing on Tuesday.

President Xi Jinping and other senior Party and State leaders, including Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, Li Xi and Han Zheng, bade farewell to Zhu at the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in the morning.

Amid solemn music, they walked slowly toward Zhu's remains and stood in silent tribute. They then paid their final respects with three bows and shook hands with Zhu's family members. Former Chinese leader Hu Jintao sent a wreath to express his condolences over Zhu's passing.

Zhu died of illness on Aug 12 in Beijing at the age of 98. He had served as a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the 14th and 15th Central Committees of the Communist Party of China.

To mourn his death, national flags flew at half-staff on Tuesday at Tian'anmen Square, Xinhuamen, the Great Hall of the People and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs office in Beijing, in seats of CPC committees and governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, at land ports, seaports and airports, and at Chinese embassies and consulates.

Zhu was extolled in an official obituary as an excellent Party member, a time-tested and loyal communist fighter, and an outstanding proletarian revolutionist, statesman and leader of the Party and the State.

Zhu, who was born in October 1928 in Changsha, Hunan province, joined the CPC in October 1949.

During his tenure as vice-premier and premier of the State Council, China's Cabinet, between 1991 and 2003, the country was in a critical period of transition — from a planned economy to a socialist market economy.

Under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Jiang Zemin at its core, Zhu organized and implemented a series of major reforms, promoting the establishment of the basic framework for a socialist market economy.

Zhu spearheaded reform of the fiscal and taxation systems, actively promoted the reform of the financial system, carried out the reform of State-owned enterprises, and pushed for the establishment of a unified, regulated and comprehensive framework for the social security system.

He oversaw the completion of the arduous negotiations for China's accession to the World Trade Organization and advanced the country's opening-up in both scope and depth.

Zhu also advanced China's housing reform, gradually replacing the allocation of housing to employees with monetary housing benefits.

He had deep affection for the people, and emphasized that government officials should always bear in mind that they are public servants, have the courage to speak the truth and refrain from seeking special privileges.

Zhu's life was a revolutionary, fighting and glorious one, the obituary said, adding that his death is a great loss to the Party and the State.

XI'AN EATERY SERVES UP A UNIQUE TASTE OF THE CITY

Open-ended, pan-fried and steamed, these special *guotie* are part of a neighborhood tradition stretching back eight decades

By **LI YINGXUE**
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China Vibes — FOOD —

The sizzling sound of an iron pan and the aroma of freshly fried dough drew Ukrainian travel blogger Oleksii Lisianskyi to a small restaurant in Xi'an, Shaanxi province.

There, he discovered *guotie* — open-ended, pan-fried dumplings with juicy fillings. What stayed with him was not only the taste, but also the story behind the dish. "It looks similar to dumplings. The bottom is crispy, while the filling is flavorful," Lisianskyi said.

The dumplings he enjoyed at Hairong Guotie are part of a family tradition dating back nearly eight decades. Listed as an intangible cultural heritage item in Xi'an's Beilin district in 2022, the technique for making the signature *guotie* offers a glimpse into how an everyday dish can preserve neighborhood memories, sustain a family legacy and find new life among younger and international audiences.

Much of the appeal lies in the contrast of textures. The underside is crisp and golden, while the upper layer remains soft and tender. Inside, the filling is moist and flavorful.

See ***Dumplings,*** *page 3*

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INDEPTH

Shangri-La's mushrooming reputation

Highly-prized forest delicacy links mountain communities to tourism opportunities, Asian market

By **YANG FEIYUE** and **LI YINGQING**
in Diqing, Yunnan

Ngawang Duchin moved slowly through the forest in Shangri-La, Yunnan province, scanning the ground beneath towering pine trees.

In Jidi village, Diqing Tibetan autonomous prefecture, pine needles carpeted the forest floor and chestnut trees lined the mountain slopes at an altitude of 3,300 meters. Summer mist drifted across the ridges.

To an untrained eye, there was little difference between one patch of forest floor and another. But since July, 38-year-old Ngawang has been searching for signs of what was hidden beneath it. The Tibetan villager suddenly stopped, crouched down and brushed away a thin layer of pine needles.

"The ground is slightly raised here. When it bulges like this, there is usually something underneath," he said.

He carefully loosened the soil and a small brown mushroom slowly emerged, its cap still partly closed and covered with traces of forest earth.

The fungus was matsutake, known in China as *songrong* — a delicacy grown in the mountain forests of Yunnan and popular in high-end restaurants across Asia.

For visitors accompanying Ngawang, seeing one of the world's most-prized mushrooms being foraged in the wild was a magical experience.









Anticlockwise from top: Tourists, guided by a local villager, search for matsutake mushrooms in Jidi village, Diqing Tibetan autonomous prefecture, in Yunnan province; villagers sort matsutake mushrooms in Jidi; traders take photos of packed matsutake from Jidi at a local trading market. PHOTOS BY GAO YONGWEI / XINHUA Freshly picked mushrooms from mountains in Diqing are displayed in July. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Seasonal treat

This summer, similar scenes played out across countless mountain slopes in Yunnan, a province known as the kingdom of wild mushrooms. With the rainy season arriving between June and September, forests across the region have been yielding their underground treasures. More than 900 species of wild edible mushrooms grow here — accounting for about 36 percent of the world's known varieties and more than 90 percent of China's total, according to the Kunming Institute of Botany of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The secret lies in Yunnan's dramatic geographical variance. Altitudes range from just 76 meters to nearly 6,740 meters, creating a vertical climate where temperatures, humidity and sunlight vary sharply from valleys to ridges. This remarkable diversity of habitats gives mushrooms their own corners of the forest to grow, but matsutake stands above the rest.

Diqing prefecture — home to Shangri-La — produces more than 65 percent of the province's matsutake, according to the Fourth Shangri-La Matsutake Forum held in July, making it the undisputed heart of China's matsutake industry. Here, wild mushrooms have supported mountain communities for generations.

Unlike ordinary agricultural products, matsutake cannot simply be planted and harvested. It depends on a delicate relationship with its natural environment.

The fungus grows together with certain trees, forming underground networks around their roots. Through this partnership, the mushroom helps trees absorb water and nutrients, while receiving energy produced by the trees through photosynthesis.

It can take five or six years before a matsutake fruiting body — the part people eat — appears above ground.

And once it emerges, the clock begins ticking. Within about 48 hours, its freshness starts to decline.

This combination of rarity, seasonality and dependence on the forest has made matsutake one of nature's most sought-after delicacies.

The mushroom has been appreciated in China for centuries. Its name, literally meaning "pine deer-antler mushroom", refers to the way young mushrooms resemble antlers and the fact that they often grow in pine forests. References to matsutake appeared in ancient Chinese texts, and the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) pharmacologist Li Shizhen included it in his *Compendium of Materia Medica*.

In Japan, where matsutake has been treasured for more than 1,300 years, it remains closely associated with autumn and the aroma of forests. *Honcho Shokkan*, a book of Japanese food published in the 1690s, described it as "the foremost mushroom" and it has continued to influence Japanese cuisine.

Ngawang said good matsutake usually grows where small chestnut trees and pine trees meet. "When the mushroom is still young, you cannot see it. You have to understand the forest," he said.

For many tourists this summer, entering Jidi's forests provided a major insight. Ngawang taught them to look for subtle changes such as disturbed pine needles, tiny cracks in the soil and slight differences in the landscape.

"It is not always covered by moss. Sometimes it is just bare earth opening slightly," he told one group.

The visitors followed his instructions carefully. After successfully foraging for a while, the visitors sat down to taste the morning's discovery.

Ngawang took out traditional Tibetan butter, or *suyou*, and melted it on a heated stone. He placed thin slices of fresh matsutake on top. "Just fry it like this. Two minutes," he said. "Or you can eat it raw with wasabi."

Return of the Jidi

Ngawang was born in Jidi, and like many young people from mountain villages, he left home in search of a better life.

At 18, he joined the army and served for eight years. After returning to civilian life, he moved to Lijiang, another popular tourism destination in Yunnan, where he ran businesses including a homestay, hiking club, restaurant and tea house, and gained experience in tourism.

But after the COVID-19 pandemic, he began thinking more seriously about returning to his hometown. By then, Jidi had already developed a reputation for matsutake.

Every summer, when the rainy season arrived, villagers entered the mountains to collect the mushrooms. The harvest lasted only two to three months, but the income from this short period supported families throughout the year.

Ngawang wondered whether the forest could offer visitors something beyond a scenic view.

"People come to Shangri-La to see mountains and nature. But they do not always know the stories behind them," he said.

After spending several years exploring different opportunities, he leased one of the village's four designated mushroom-picking areas, paying 5,000 yuan ($690) a month during the three-month harvest season.

His idea was to cooperate with hotels in downtown Shangri-La, bring visitors into the mountains and allow them to witness how the mushrooms are harvested and sent to dining tables.

"I know the mountain and can at least make sure people are safe," he added.

For visitors, his greatest asset was knowing where mushrooms were likely to appear, when they should be picked, and which ones should be left behind. "Do not pick mushrooms smaller than 3 centimeters," he told one group.

The advice was not merely traditional wisdom. It reflected scientific understanding of the mushroom's life cycle.

Sun Dafeng, director of the Kunming edible fungi research institute under the All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives, explained that immature matsutake does not have fully developed reproductive structures.

"If they are picked too early, they cannot release spores effectively," Sun said. "That affects future growth."

In Diqing, regulations prohibit harvesting immature mushrooms and encourage practices that allow the fungal root network to recover.

Tsering Norbu, director of the Jidi village committee, said the mushroom industry accounts for a major share of the local economy.

"Seventy to 80 percent of the village's GDP comes from matsutake," he said.

For more than 300 households, the summer harvest season influences almost every aspect of their life. "When the mushrooms grow well, villagers have more confidence about the future," Tsering said.

Jidi has established four designated mushroom-picking areas with clear rules on harvesting hours and seasonal protections. Villagers adopt a "harvest and fallow" approach, part of what experts call a joint conservation and breeding expansion model.

Sun compares this approach to rehabilitating farmland.

"The forest also needs recovery time," he said. "The underground fungal system is living. If the environment is damaged, production will eventually decline."

In Jidi, more than 267 hectares of matsutake-producing forest have been protected and expanded through measures including designated harvesting zones and seasonal restrictions.



A vendor displays fresh matsutake at a market in Kunming, Yunnan, in September. YANG ZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

This approach has helped stabilize annual output at around 300 metric tons.

Preparing for sales

The mushrooms' commercial value must be hastily maximized when villagers lift them from the soil. From the moment they are picked, the clock starts ticking to get them to dining tables in time.

At the Shangri-La matsutake trading center, about 30 kilometers from Jidi village, workers sort, pack and dispatch the fragile harvest.

Inside the market, the atmosphere is frantic. Phones ring constantly and buyers inspect the quality of the mushrooms under bright lights. The fungi are separated by hand, according to size, appearance and freshness before being sent to destinations hundreds or even thousands of kilometers away.

At the center of the trading hall stands a large model airplane — a reminder that these mushrooms, once collected mainly for local consumption, have become part of a global food network.

Fresh matsutake is highly perishable, making transportation a challenge.

During the peak harvest season in July and August, dealers handle dozens of kilograms each day. Mushrooms are packed with ice and moved quickly through cold-chain logistics to preserve their texture and aroma.

Some major buyers travel to Shangri-La in search of the highest-quality mushrooms.

Trucks transport matsutake to Kunming, the provincial capital, in the morning to larger distribution networks and for export. Flights from Diqing Shangri-La Airport connect with major domestic markets, including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Guangdong province and Chongqing.

But expansion of the market has brought new challenges.

For generations, matsutake buyers relied on experience to judge quality and developed their own standards based on size, appearance and aroma. As demand increased, however, the industry needed clearer standards.

"Matsutake is different from ordinary agricultural products," said Jia Xiao, a researcher at the Research Center for Rural Economy of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. "Because it cannot be cultivated on a large scale, protecting the natural environment where it grows is the foundation of the industry."

A global appetite

At the forum, local officials and experts highlighted the growing recognition of Shangri-La matsutake as a regional agricultural brand.

According to data released at the forum, its brand value had reached 4.41 billion yuan, but experts said its reputation could not be measured by numbers alone.

Earlier this year, Shangri-La introduced new grading standards for matsutake, classifying mushrooms on a five-level scale.

The grading system considers factors including length, integrity, maturity, color, cleanliness and aroma. Among them, aroma remains the most difficult to measure.

"Matsutake's fragrance comes from a combination of volatile compounds," Sun Dafeng explained. "Technology can detect these compounds, but it cannot fully describe the human experience of smelling something fresh, earthy and connected to the forest."

Experts believe standardized grading and traceability systems can help consumers better understand the mushrooms they purchase. Each batch of matsutake can now be tracked through digital records showing its origin and processing information.

The international market for Shangri-La matsutake has continued to grow.

According to Diqing prefecture authorities, the region exported 55 metric tons of matsutake in 2025, generating 15.66 million yuan in foreign exchange.

The 2026 export season began on July 4, when a 14-kilogram shipment cleared customs at Kunming Changshui International Airport and was transported overseas within 24 hours of being picked, according to Kunming Customs.

Logistics companies have also expanded services to meet international demand.

At the forum, SF Express introduced new delivery solutions connecting matsutake-producing areas in Shangri-La, Kunming and Lijiang with overseas markets including Osaka in Japan, Seoul in South Korea and Singapore.

The company said its services could shorten door-to-port delivery time to about 28 hours and support exports via more than 50 international routes.

"To succeed in high-end global markets, Shangri-La matsutake needs more than quality and logistics," Sun said. "It needs sustainable harvesting, reliable standards, traceability and a story that reflects where it comes from."

For Ngawang, the future of matsutake is about helping more people understand the mushroom's history and essence.

"I hope the whole village can do this together," he said. "I bring the guests, and they experience it themselves. There is no need for a big investment."

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TOP NEWS

Robots: Innovation should translate into well-being

From page 1

Therefore, the purpose of robotics in care should not be to replace human relationships, but to augment human capabilities, allowing caregivers, families and professionals to devote more time to the distinctly human dimensions of care.

As a development practitioner, I have learned that this principle extends far beyond healthcare and caregiving. I made this point recently at the Web Summit Rio: The greatest challenge posed by a new technology is not merely to develop it, but to transform technological progress into development.

International experience shows that countries do not prosper simply because they acquire advanced technologies. They progress when they build the institutions, human capabilities and productive structures needed to translate innovation into productivity, opportunity and greater well-being.

Similarly, robotics becomes a tool for development only when integrated with education, skills development, entrepreneurship, industrial capabilities, infrastructure and sound public policies that accompany technological change.

This is also one of the key lessons from China's remarkable advances in robotics.

What impressed me the most during my visit to Hefei was not only the sophistication of the machines, but also the ecosystem surrounding them — universities, research centers, manufacturers, digital infrastructure, supply chains and industrial policies evolving together. Robotics did not appear as an isolated technological achievement, but as part of a broader strategy for productive modernization.

This is an important lesson for developing countries.

The goal should not simply be to buy robots or imitate those leading the technological race. Instead, it should be to develop the capabilities needed for robotics to increase productivity, expand opportunities and promote more inclusive and sustainable development.

The same principle applies whether robots operate in factories, farms, hospitals or homes.

An industrial robot should not be judged simply by the number of workers it can replace, but by its ability to make production safer, more productive and more competitive. An agricultural robot should not be valued merely for automating harvesting, but for enabling us to produce more food with fewer resources and less environmental impact. And an assistive robot should not be considered successful because it mimics human interaction, but because it empowers a person with a disability to gain autonomy, allows an older person to live more independently, or enables a caregiver to devote more time to genuinely human care.

Robotics, perhaps more than many other emerging technologies, reminds us that innovation should never be an end in itself. Its true value lies in the human possibilities it creates.

Ultimately, the measure of technological progress will not be what robots can do, but what human beings can achieve because of them.

The author is former director-general of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), former state secretary for industry of Argentina, and now a board member of several Latin American companies. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Dumplings: Legacy grows with new fillings, stores

From page 1

The family's restaurants prepare all fillings fresh each day, which include shrimps, mushrooms and leafy greens, as well as wild vegetables with eggs. The signature beef-and-yellow chives *guotie* features freshly cut beef with 80 percent lean meat and 20 percent fat.

According to Xuan Jianjun, the current owner and operator of the Hairong Guotie, the yellow chives are sourced from a designated growing area in Ankang, Shaanxi.

Each *guotie* weighs about 26 grams — approximately 9 grams of dough and 17 grams of filling. Bone broth is used to scald part of the flour and season the filling, giving the dumpling a richer taste.

Its preparation reflects the traditional Chinese balance of water and fire. The *guotie* are first lightly fried in oil. Once the bases begin to color, a mixture of flour, starch and water is poured into the pan. The pan is then covered, so that the dumplings can steam before more oil is added for a final crisping. The family describes the ideal appearance as a "golden back and fish belly".

Unlike many southern-style pan-fried dumplings, the northern-style *guotie* made through the Xuan family's technique leaves both ends open. Each dumpling curves as it cooks, helping to lock in the juices, while the thick cast-iron pan distributes heat evenly.

The family tradition began in 1947, when Xuan Hairong, the grandfather of current owner Xuan Jianjun, and his wife, Wang Guilan, settled in Xi'an. With three earthen rooms and an iron pan, they began selling *guotie* and sweet fermented-rice soup to the locals. They became known for generous fillings, carefully prepared dough and warm hospitality. When neighbors faced difficulties, the couple offered extra food without asking for payment.

After Xuan Hairong died in 1962, the passing down of the technique was interrupted. As Xuan Jianjun grew up, he was deeply influenced by his grandmother, Wang, and her dedication to the craft. In 1989, he decided to revive the technique and continue family tradition.

Wang, now 105, still visits the restaurant when her health allows, checking the food and reminding younger family members to preserve the original flavors. Her principle is simple: Run the restaurant honestly and make food with a clear conscience.

For Xuan Jianjun, preserving the craft goes hand in hand with innovation. The family has introduced crayfish *guotie* and explored seasonal fillings inspired by the traditional Chinese practice of eating according to the 24 solar terms.

The family now runs 12 franchised restaurants and eight directly managed ones in Xi'an and its neighboring areas. "We hope to build a century-old family business and pass the craft down from one generation to the next," Xuan Jianjun said.



The photo shows *guotie* at Hairong Guotie, whose dumpling-making technique has been listed as an intangible cultural heritage item in Xi'an's Beilin district since 2022. HAO YANGBIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Aid shipment



Earthquake relief supplies provided by the Chinese government are loaded onto a cargo plane bound for Colombia at Beijing Capital International Airport in Beijing on Monday night. The supplies included power generators, mobile water purification devices, disinfection machines, solar-powered lighting equipment, tents and blankets. The chartered flight was scheduled to arrive in Bogota, the capital of Colombia, on Tuesday. The recent magnitude 7.4 earthquake in Colombia killed hundreds of people. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Unitree raises mega debut hopes

First A-share listing by a humanoid maker offers key valuation benchmark for investors

By CHENG YU
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Expectations are running high for Chinese humanoid robot maker Unitree Robotics' debut on Shanghai's STAR Market on Wednesday, after its record-breaking initial public offering was oversubscribed more than 8,000 times by retail investors, with some institutions predicting a potentially explosive first-day jump.

Industry experts said that Unitree's IPO has become more than a company-specific event. According to them, it is a defining moment for China's fast-growing humanoid robot industry, which is setting a key valuation benchmark for global investors in the sector.

Investors were already placing their bets on Tuesday. Although the broader market came under pressure, a group of stocks of companies in the humanoid robot sector jumped in early trading.

Swancor, a leading new materials manufacturer that expanded into the field of humanoid robots, closed at 188.97 yuan ($28.03), up 10.26 percent, while Leaderdrive, a precision robotic component maker, edged up about 5 percent to 380.8 yuan.

Unitree sold about 40.45 million shares at 150.80 yuan apiece, raising roughly 6.1 billion yuan. Retail demand exceeded the shares available by more than 8,000 times, a record for Shanghai's tech-focused STAR Market.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, described Unitree's IPO as a defining moment for the humanoid robot sector. "For years, investment in the sector has been driven by competing technology road maps and expectations of long-term growth. The IPO will allow investors to compare robot makers more directly on their technology, product maturity, commercialization and path to profitability.

"As the first humanoid robot company to list on China's A-share market, Unitree has established a valuation anchor for the humanoid robot sector both for China and the world, gradually shifting the sector from thematic investment to industrial pricing," he said.

The IPO offer also values Unitree at about 60.99 billion yuan, representing 35.89 times its 2025 sales value and 219.23 times its earnings, far above an average price-to-earnings ratio of about 38.56 times for China's general equipment manufacturing sector.

Xu Guangtan, chief analyst for the machinery sector at China Securities, said that Unitree's offer price and estimated valuation far exceeded previous market expectations and could help reshape how investors value humanoid robot manufacturers.

"Chinese companies are simultaneously strengthening robots' AI 'brains', motion-control cerebellums and physical bodies while pushing toward industrial and commercial applications," Xu said.

On Monday, Unitree unveiled another high-speed robot capable of running at up to 12.66 meters per second and jumping two meters from a standing position. The company said it had produced and delivered about 18,000 bipedal humanoid robots across different models till the end of July.

Tian Lihui, a finance professor at Nankai University, said, "Whether Unitree can grow into that valuation will depend heavily on whether orders from factories and other industrial customers begin to scale."

Just a day before Unitree's debut, Precilasers, a Chinese laser maker, also made its STAR Market debut and surged more than 500 percent in early trading. At its intraday peak, an investor who secured one standard IPO allocation could have been sitting on gains of more than 550,000 yuan.

"The arrival of a group of hard-tech companies including memory-chip maker ChangXin Memory Technologies and Unitree on public markets also pointed to a broader change in how Chinese investors value technology companies. Greater weight has been placed on technological barriers, domestic substitution and future commercial potential rather than current earnings alone," Tian said.

Trends reshape how youth see China

By ZOU SHUO
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A wave of social media trends is reshaping how China is being viewed by younger audiences around the world, as foreign tourists bypass traditional news outlets to share unfiltered experiences of daily life across the country.

Under hashtags such as ChinaTravel, ChinaShopping, ChinaCool and Chinamaxxing, young creators on TikTok, YouTube and Instagram are documenting immersive visits to Chinese cities. The trends reflect a broader shift toward firsthand cultural exploration among travelers from Generation Z, who were born between the mid-to-late 1990s and the early 2010s.

The term Chinamaxxing blends China with the Gen Z internet slang "maxxing", a word meaning to fully embrace and optimize a certain culture's lifestyle. It gained traction globally after online creators shared clips featuring everyday Chinese lifestyle habits such as drinking warm water, practicing *baduanjin* — a traditional Chinese aerobic exercise, wearing traditional outfits and watching Chinese short dramas.

ChinaTravel documents immersive city trips beyond iconic landmarks. ChinaShopping highlights booming purchases of *guochao* (China chic) electronics, beauty goods and daily consumer products. ChinaCool carries dual meanings — both refreshing summer getaways in China's mountainous regions and admiration for its sleek digital infrastructure, convenient public transportation and vibrant urban culture.

Deng Ning, a professor and vice-dean at Beijing International Studies University's School of Tourism Sciences, said that there is a fundamental difference between inbound travelers today and those in earlier eras.

Decades ago, foreign tourists came to China with the notion of seeing an "ancient Eastern nation" and merely visited symbolic landmarks such as the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, Deng said, adding that today's Chinamaxxing phenomenon represents a filter-free revolution powered by social media algorithms.

"Foreign visitors no longer chase the scenic spots we assume they want to see; they dive into tangible and modern local life — wandering through wet markets, buying bubble tea with mobile QR codes and watching square dances in community parks," Deng said.

"China has transformed from an object to be interpreted by outsiders into a subject experienced, discussed and redefined through real personal encounters," he added.

When foreign tourists develop a favorable impression of China from simple experiences such as scanning QR codes to pay, sipping bubble tea or encountering small acts of kindness on the subway, this "grassroots soft power" proves to be far more persuasive than any official promotional video, he said.

Chen Hong, director of the Institute of Area Studies at East China Normal University's School of Foreign Languages, said that Western mainstream media and political elites monopolized narratives about China for a long time, reducing the country to one-dimensional labels such as "security threat" or "geopolitical rivalry".

Now, the trending hashtags center on China's daily routines, urban spaces, consumption habits and social dynamics rather than political headlines, Chen said. "While the 'China threat' narrative has not vanished, its once-exclusive interpretive power is being steadily diluted by authentic travel experiences."

He added that distrust of traditional mainstream media and discontent with their own societies' high living costs, social fragmentation and loneliness are fueling curiosity about China among Western members of Gen Z.

Peer-generated tourist content delivers powerful authenticity. Even occasional mild complaints from visitors make their positive observations far more persuasive, a unique advantage no official campaign can replicate, he said.

The most compelling China stories are those told by international visitors themselves after they experience immersive stays in the country, Chen added.

Gina Lynn Dijkstra, 19, a Leiden University undergraduate from the Netherlands, said Western propaganda had fostered in her some biased preconceptions before she arrived in Beijing in late July.

"Paradoxically, I felt more free in China than ever in Europe. Beijing ensured freedom to go out at night, and freedom to safely visit public places like lush parks and bustling spots in the city at all times," Dijkstra said.

She was deeply moved by the sincere kindness shown by strangers and volunteers, and quoted a line from *The Analects of Confucius* to sum up her journey: "Is it not a pleasure to have friends coming from afar?" Though unfamiliar with the Chinamaxxing online trend, she has nevertheless taken a new daily habit home: wandering city streets with bubble tea and snacks as a casual way to socialize.

Roxy Ye, 20, who is also from the Netherlands and has Chinese family roots, said she visited Beijing as a tourist for the first time earlier this month. She was stunned by the city's unmatched sense of security.

"I took a taxi alone at 1 am to Tian'anmen Square to see the flag-raising ceremony. I did not hesitate to get into a taxi by myself in the middle of the night. Looking back, I realized that I probably would not have done the same thing even in my hometown in the Netherlands," Ye said.

She has seen Chinamaxxing clips online, yet reminded audiences not to rely only on short-video snippets. "They often focus on certain aesthetic or trendy aspects of China, while there is obviously much more to the country than what can be shown in short social media videos," Ye added.

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Sharing cultures, building connections

Sister cities in China and Germany strive together to keep old houses alive and promote urban development

By **HOU CHENCHEN** in Beijing, **ZHANG ZHOUXIANG** in Stralsund, Germany and **ZHU LIXIN** in Huangshan, Anhui

In a traditional courtyard, sunlight streamed through carved wooden windows, falling onto a table covered with bamboo strips and colorful paper. The courtyard belongs to a workshop in Hongcun, a historic village at the foot of Huangshan Mountain in East China's Anhui province.

At the workshop for the intangible cultural heritage, where experts impart skills for making fish lanterns, a mayor from Germany carefully inserted the final bamboo frame into the lantern's body.

When the lantern was completed, its maker, Alexander Badrow, mayor of Stralsund, was expected to write his name on it. But he did not sign his own name. Instead, he wrote two letters: "HS", the abbreviation for Huangshan.

The fish lantern has become a symbol of a much larger connection: a mayor from a European city had linked his hometown with Huangshan through China's traditional cultural artifacts.

Behind those two letters was a decade-old friendship. In 2015, Stralsund and Huangshan established a sister-city relationship.

Huangshan is a mountain city; Stralsund is a coastal city, while both rose through trade and cross-regional exchanges.

Stralsund was a major Baltic trading hub in the Middle Ages, while Huizhou — a historical region that roughly corresponds to Huangshan today — stood as a commercial center of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties in ancient China, with its merchants playing a prominent role in commerce for more than three centuries.

Their commercial past has left both cities with remarkable cultural heritages. Huangshan Mountain was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1990, while Xidi and Hongcun, two ancient villages at the foot of Huangshan Mountain, were added in 2000 as cultural heritage sites. Stralsund's historic old town, with its brick Gothic architecture, joined the World Heritage list in 2002 as part of the "Historic Centers of Stralsund and Wismar".

For Badrow, who first visited Huangshan in 2015 and returned for his fourth visit in May, the two old cities are not merely preserved historical sites — they are living communities, where past and present coexist in everyday life.

"Brick Gothic architecture (in Germany) and traditional Chinese architecture may be very different, but both are magnificent testaments to the craftsmanship of earlier generations and to the care taken in their restoration today," Badrow said.

"I was particularly struck by the detailed restoration and preservation of the wonderful buildings in Huangshan — something we have also attempted in Stralsund. I was also deeply impressed by the fact that these are not museums; people actually live and sell goods there."

His impression is echoed by the people who make these old buildings their home. For the residents, heritage is not a relic behind glass.

Li Shengtao, who runs a homestay out of his ancestral house in Xidi, said: "Our houses, which are hundreds of years old, are alive here."

He said that every hall displays inscribed plaques and couplets, through which ancestors passed down their life wisdom.

Job creation

Wu Yuming, director of Xidi Intangible Cultural Heritage Experience Center, spent over two decades as a tour guide before taking on her current role.

After the villages were inscribed on the UNESCO list, residents developed a community agreement governing the renovation and maintenance of historic homes.

"If you need to repair any part of it, you must submit a proposal and apply for approval. Any interior decoration or beautification must be done without compromising the main structure," Wu said.



Alexander Badrow, mayor of Stralsund, Germany, takes a photo of a fish lantern in Huangshan in May. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

She said the revival of these ancient villages has created abundant local jobs — many villagers now run guesthouses, homestays, private kitchens or coffee shops right on their doorsteps.

"As we protect the old houses, it brings tangible economic benefits to villagers," she said. "We don't have to go out — we can earn a living right here. That gives us even more motivation to protect our ancestral homes."

He Yi, mayor of Huangshan, frames this approach in broader terms. "We cannot sidestep the new demands and challenges that modern life brings," he said.

"Instead, we must enable our historical buildings to actively embrace contemporary living. We want the original owners, the local villagers, to become the guardians, operators, and beneficiaries of these ancient structures.

"Only when those who protect the heritage truly benefit from it can preservation be sustained over the long run," He said.

"It is not easy to keep an old city vibrant while preserving its historical character," said Frank-Bertolt Raith, head of the Office for Planning and Construction of Stralsund, who visited Huangshan with Badrow in May. "I think Huangshan has done an excellent job."

He said the underlying philosophy — honoring the historical fabric while embedding modern urban functions — mirrors the approach taken in Germany.

For Olaf Fromme, chairman of the association "Save the Old Town of Stralsund", preservation is ultimately a dialogue between past and future. "The preservation needs a sensible, healthy balance between the past and the future. It makes little sense to reproduce a historic house unchanged if people cannot live in it properly."

Olaf said cooperation with Huangshan could help through an exchange of experience. Both cities have followed different paths, and each can learn from the methods the other has developed to protect historic buildings and keep its old town attractive and alive.

For Fromme's organization, that principle is translated into practical, sometimes small-scale action.

Heiko Werner, its treasurer, said the association encourages owners to retain and restore their properties, sometimes by supporting repairs to a door, a window or a small fresco.

For Dagmar Fromme, Olaf's wife and a local tour guide in Stralsund, such preservation is deeply personal. The historic center is not simply a collection of protected buildings, but the setting of memories that have shaped her own life.

"The Alter Markt (a historic square in Stralsund) is deeply personal to me. My grandmother lived nearby, and my husband and I met here more than 40 years ago.

"The square and surrounding buildings were once badly deteriorated, but over the past 30 years they have been restored with enormous effort. Today people can sit here, watch the world go by and enjoy the old town's special atmosphere," she said.

Citizen participation

Fang Qian, deputy director of the Huangshan Municipal People's Government's Office of Foreign Affairs, said Stralsund has done an excellent job in engaging its citizens. The city has a dedicated heritage institution which provides professional guidance for heritage protection decisions.

She highlighted the high level of citizen participation — residents weave their everyday lives into conservation efforts, achieving a seamless blend of preservation and development.

"This is something we can learn from," she said.

This kind of cross-border exchange is not new.

Decades before Stralsund and Huangshan became sister cities, a Huizhou-style garden had already taken root in Frankfurt, Germany.

Its chief designer was Cheng Jiyue, an expert in traditional Huizhou architecture from Huangshan.

In 1988, Cheng led the garden's design, refining every detail with his team. The design drew on the ancient villages of Huangshan, but had to be adapted to Frankfurt's soil, climate and locally available materials. As Cheng put it, the project was about "planting the soul of Huizhou in German soil".

Cheng remembered working alongside German stonemasons and carpenters, exchanging techniques and solving problems together. He said the garden has endured because its care has always been a shared responsibility.

Throughout decades, artisans from Huangshan brought the seeds of Huizhou culture to Germany. Those seeds have taken root and, with care from both sides, blossomed into new avenues of collaboration.

In May, the Huangshan Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism signed a memorandum of cooperation with the cultural heritage department of Stralsund during the Global Mayors Dialogue.

Looking ahead, the bureau said Huangshan plans to establish a cultural tourism promotion center in Germany.

It also intends to partner with Huangshan Vocational and Technical College to launch a training program for tour guides specializing in European languages.

Fang said that building on shared cultural heritage, the two sister cities aim to deepen collaboration in tourism, cultural exchanges, and economic and trade ties.

"Whether it is Huangshan or Stralsund, these are shared treasures of all humanity — we have a common duty to protect them, safeguard them, and pass them on," Fang said.

Xia Ji in Huangshan, Anhui, contributed to this story.

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Online
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From left: Participants enjoy a ride in a horse-drawn carriage during the Wallenstein Days in Stralsund, Germany, on July 24. People wear historical costumes during the festival, said to be one of the largest in northern Germany, on July 27. PHOTOS BY STEFAN SAUER / DPA PICTURE-ALLIANCE A folk performance at the Tangmo scenic area in Huangshan, East China's Anhui province, on July 25. XIAO BENXIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Mayors see a shared future harnessing technology to preserve heritage sites

By **HOU CHENCHEN** in Beijing, **XIA JI** in Huangshan, Anhui, and **ZHANG ZHOUXIANG** in Stralsund, Germany

The cities of Huangshan and Stralsund differ in size, geography and architectural style. Yet both face the same challenge: how to balance preservation and development as World Heritage Site cities.

At the 2026 Global Mayors Dialogue in Huangshan in May, the mayors of the two cities found common ground: technology can empower culture and urban development, bridging tradition and the future.

Their vision extended from nature and culture to daily life and urban governance.

Alexander Badrow, mayor of Stralsund, outlined three priorities: protecting the environment, safeguarding world heritage and diverse urban cultures, and integrating innovative technologies into urban construction to improve livelihoods.

"If we achieve these three goals," he said, "our cities will embrace sustainable and sound development."

During the visit, Badrow climbed Huangshan Mountain equipped with an exoskeleton. After fastening it to his legs, he stood up and took several steps, joking: "Now, I'm Iron Man."

For Badrow, the exoskeleton embodies a key idea: technology should help people interact better with nature. It allows climbing without creating more work — technology enabling, rather than disrupting.

He Yi, mayor of Huangshan, extended this thinking from nature to culture.

He said technology has the potential to preserve culture while revitalizing livelihoods.

"Culture is a slow variable that accumulates over time, while technology is a fast variable that drives rapid change. We have witnessed countless cases where technology activates, catalyzes and reinvents traditional culture, thereby promoting urban progress and social development."

He highlighted that frames for traditional fish lanterns are 3D-printed but continue to be painted and decorated by hand — preserving authenticity while enabling mass production.

Technology like this has boosted rural incomes. Since last November, villagers had gained an average of 5,000 yuan ($740) in just four months. With annual per capita income of about 25,000 yuan, this points to a potential 10,000 yuan yearly increase — a significant leap.

Badrow sees parallels. The old town of Stralsund, which dates back to the 13th century, is strained by the influx of visitors. He believes technology offers a way forward.

"We receive millions of tourists every year, and the surge of vehicles brings huge pressure on urban parking resources. We believe autonomous driving will be an effective solution to this dilemma in the future.

"We have experienced self-driving vehicles in trial operation for two days here in Huangshan. This innovative technology will completely reshape urban traffic patterns and solve the long-standing parking and travel problems in historic old towns."

At the conclusion of the dialogue, the mayors from around the world who attended the dialogue jointly endorsed the Huangshan Initiative: first, adhering to heritage protection to build a foundation for civilization; second, deepening cultural exchanges to promote symbiosis; third, strengthening technological empowerment to advance urban governance; and fourth, improving cooperation mechanisms to share responsibilities.

Looking ahead, Badrow said Huangshan and Stralsund will keep learning from each other about heritage preservation and urban governance.

"I am grateful for the friendship between our municipalities in China and Germany, and I am grateful that Stralsund is part of this."

Zhu Lixin in Huangshan, Anhui, contributed to this story.

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WORLD

Honoring liberation



French President Emmanuel Macron (second from right) marks the 82nd anniversary of Operation Dragoon — the World War II Allied landings in Provence — during a commemoration ceremony in Bormes-les-Mimosas, southeastern France, on Monday. MANON CRUZ VIA AP

Takaichi's words stir concerns

Japanese PM's shifting rhetoric on war history sparks fears of a militarist turn

By HOU JUNJIE in Tokyo
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The recent shifts in Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's wording on sensitive issues, including Japan's history of aggression and nuclear policy, have sparked domestic controversy.

Experts said the changes, coupled with moves by the ruling party over the Yasukuni war shrine and military expansion, reflect an increasingly overt militarist tendency in the Takaichi government.

They urged Tokyo to confront its history of aggression and improve ties with neighboring countries through diplomacy rather than military buildup.

On Saturday, the anniversary of Japan's unconditional surrender in World War II, Takaichi made a monetary offering to the infamous Yasukuni Shrine, which honors 14 convicted Class-A war criminals. Several senior officials and political figures also visited the shrine.

Atsushi Koketsu, professor emeritus at Yamaguchi University, said Japanese politicians had once exercised relative restraint in visiting the war shrine, but such visits have become increasingly frequent since Takaichi took office last year, reflecting Japan's growing tendency toward militarism.

Koketsu called Yasukuni an "aggression shrine", saying politicians' renewed visits not only reopen painful historical memories for countries that suffered Japanese aggression, but also risk putting Japan back on the path toward aggression.

In her speech at the annual memorial in Tokyo marking Japan's surrender at the end of World War II, Takaichi omitted references to "remorse" and a "pledge never to wage war". Her predecessor, Shigeru Ishiba, had revived the phrases a year earlier, marking the first such references in 13 years to Japan's responsibility as a war aggressor.

For many Japanese people, such a shift is deeply troubling, Koketsu said. The anniversary should be an occasion for Japan to reflect on its history of aggression and apologize to its Asian neighbors, including China, he said. Instead, Takaichi ignored such public sentiment and focused on her own position, he said.

Japanese media also noted Takaichi's choice of wording. She altered a phrase long used by previous prime ministers, changing "(Japan) must never repeat the horrors of war" to "the horrors of war must never be repeated".

Koji Nakakita, a professor of Japanese political history at Chuo University, told The Asahi Shimbun that "must never repeat" emphasizes Japan's resolve not to wage war again, while "must never be repeated" could suggest that wars were started by other countries.

The wording could even imply that World War II was not a "war of aggression" launched by Japan, but a "war of self-defense" that it was forced to fight, he said.

Hiroshi Shiratori, a professor at Hosei University, told China Daily that such negative wording on the issue of war could be seen as provocative by countries that suffered from Japan's wartime aggression.

Nuclear policy

The controversy over Takaichi's wording extends beyond wartime history.

Earlier this month, at the atomic bombing memorial ceremonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Takaichi said Japan "is upholding the Three Non-Nuclear Principles", but stopped short of explicitly pledging to continue doing so, a subtle change that has raised questions in Japan.

Tatsuo Sekiguchi, head of a civic group in Nagasaki, said the absence of a clear commitment to uphold the principles in the future suggests the Takaichi government may be considering a review of the long-standing policy.

As a Nagasaki resident, Sekiguchi said he strongly opposes such a move, citing the enormous loss of life and prolonged suffering caused by the atomic bombing. Any remarks that could undermine the principles are unacceptable, he said.

Shiratori said the ambiguity over whether Japan will continue to uphold the principles, coupled with rising defense spending, reflects the country's growing "Japan first" tendency.

A supplementary budget for fiscal 2025 allowed Japan to reach its target of raising defense spending to 2 percent of GDP two years ahead of schedule, and the increase has continued unabated.

With the initial defense budget for fiscal 2026 reaching a record high, Japan's defense budget request for fiscal 2027 is reportedly set to rise further.

Shiratori said rising defense spending, along with a lack of consideration for neighboring countries, could further fuel concerns about Japan's remilitarization.

Rather than reinforcing a "Japan first" approach through military expansion, Japan should strengthen diplomacy and deepen cooperation and friendly ties with other Asian countries, he said.

Tougher social media restrictions test digital protection



Xin Xin
Reporter's log

FIRST PERSON VIEW

About two years ago, when I first saw a short video on my phone about Australia's plan to ban children from using social media, my first thought was: Can a ban really protect children in the digital age?

For many families, social media is no longer separate from childhood. It is embedded in phones, games, chat groups and other forms of online communication. Even adults can struggle to know when to stop scrolling, what information to trust or how much personal information they have shared online. For children, the challenges can be even greater.

That is why Australia's social media minimum age law has drawn broad attention since it came into effect on Dec 10.

More than half a year after its implementation, the law is being strengthened further. In June, the Australian government said it was "doubling down on platforms that are not doing enough to keep under-16s off social media", doubling the maximum penalty for breaches to A$99 million ($70 million).

The new legislation will also strengthen the information-gathering powers of the eSafety Commissioner, making it easier for the independent regulator to request information and documents from social media companies to ensure compliance.

Since the law took effect, eSafety has considered services including Facebook, TikTok and YouTube as age-restricted platforms. They need to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 from having accounts.

In other words, the responsibility lies with the platforms, not children or their parents.

The Australian government said more than 5 million accounts belonging to under-16s have been removed, deactivated or restricted since the ban began.

Described by Australia as "world-leading", the law quickly drew international attention. The United Kingdom has announced plans to ban social media platforms from providing services to children under 16, with the measure expected to take effect next year. New Zealand, Norway and Turkiye are also considering similar restrictions.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said when announcing the stronger enforcement measures that he was heartened by the shift in public discussion and the global momentum since the country introduced the minimum age law. However, he said it was clear that big technology companies were not doing enough to comply, with too many children still accessing social media.

The changes reflected how seriously the government viewed any failure by social media companies to comply with the "world-leading" law, he said.

Doubling the fines can certainly put pressure on platforms. Tech giants have long profited from users' time, clicks, comments and traffic, giving them a greater responsibility to protect minors on their platforms.

However, as the debate around this law has spread from Australia to other countries, I feel the most important point is not the size of the fine, but the signal it sends: As children enter the digital world at increasingly young ages, their protection needs to be taken more seriously.

The law is not meant to punish children or blame parents. Rather, it serves as protective line before children enter the complex online world.

Still, the law can only do part of the job. The people who spend the most time with children every day are parents.

Closing an account or limiting an app does not make online risks disappear. Children can still connect with the outside world through games, chat groups, video platforms and other online spaces.

The ban is also a reminder for parents to pay closer attention to what their children see online, whom they talk to, and whether they know how to protect themselves.

The hardest and most important part is explaining to children why this is being done. If parents simply say, "You are not allowed to use it," children may see it only as control. But if they understand how certain content, interactions with strangers, online comments and algorithmic recommendations can affect their emotions, privacy and safety, they are more likely to accept the rules.

Today, digital life is already part of everyday life. Protecting children cannot simply mean pulling them away from screens. Parents also need to keep pace with the times and help children build stronger digital skills, enabling them to assess information, identify risks, protect their privacy and use technology responsibly.

In this sense, Australia's ban may also offer an important lesson for children before they truly step into the digital world.

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Germany demands Apple revise app consent prompts

By JONATHAN POWELL in London
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United States tech giant Apple is set to revise the policies that govern third-party developers' use of personal data for ad targeting on iPhones and iPads, Germany's competition watchdog said on Monday, concluding a multiyear probe.

Germany's Federal Cartel Office determined that Apple's App Tracking Transparency framework, or ATT, gave its own applications an unfair competitive advantage by using more favorable, less discouraging language and design than those required for third-party developers.

The FCO said these more favorable consent prompts potentially breached competition law.

Apple has four months from the date of the decision to roll out the changes, which will remain in effect for seven years under the oversight of an independent trustee, Reuters reported.

"Apple is allowed to provide for a level of protection for its users that exceeds the minimum legal requirements," Andreas Mundt, president of the FCO, said in a statement.

"However, if Apple sets up additional rules within its ecosystem for the use of data, these rules must, under Germany's special abuse provision for large digital companies, not treat its own offerings better than those of its competitors.

"This is precisely where our competition concerns arose," he said. "Apple will now align the consent requests much more closely and give third-party app providers more freedom to combine the necessary requests in a sensible way."

Under the commitments, third-party apps' consent pop-ups must be redesigned to remove discouraging wording and symbols and be presented in a visually and linguistically neutral form. The changes will apply in almost all European Union countries.

"While we believe the current ATT prompt provides a clear, easy-to-understand and effective way to keep users in control of their data — an opinion shared by the German data protection authorities — we have agreed to make changes to the text and formatting of the prompt at the FCO's request," Apple said in a statement.

"These commitments ensure we can continue to provide this important privacy tool in Europe, and keep users, not ad tech companies and data brokers, in control of their data," it said.

Initial fix rejected

Apple had previously proposed a fix that mostly amounted to tweaking the wording of the first-run warning prompts shown in third-party apps. Regulators rejected that proposal, but now the German authority said it has secured binding commitments from Apple and closed the case.

Third-party app developers, such as Facebook parent Meta Platforms, seek precise user data to display targeted ads, which typically yield higher returns than broad, untargeted campaigns.

Regulators in France and Italy have already penalized Apple for its ATT framework, issuing fines of 150 million and 98.6 million euros ($174 million and $114 million), respectively.

Gaza stalemate continues as Israel, Hamas hold firm

JERUSALEM — US President Donald Trump's envoy Jared Kushner left Jerusalem on Monday without a breakthrough after two days of talks with Israeli and Hamas leaders over a stalled plan to end the conflict in Gaza, with both sides standing firm on key demands.

Kushner met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a day after his meeting with the political leader of Hamas in a bid to revive the United States-backed plan. Israel has carried out airstrikes and seized more territory in Gaza despite an October ceasefire, while Hamas has insisted "there must first be Israeli approval of the road map".

Kushner described his nearly four-hour meeting with Netanyahu as "good". He added that Hamas representatives said "all the right things".

"We could be seeing progress in as little as 30 days, hopefully on starting to take some of the weapons out and hopefully filling in some of the tunnels as well in the next 60 to 90 days," Kushner told Fox News.

He also said that the United States is "not going to restrict Israel's right to defend itself if there are any imminent threats" in Gaza.

Last month, Trump announced that Hamas had agreed to lay down its arms in phases, under a 15-point road map put forward by the US-led "Board of Peace" to advance his plan, as Israel's military withdraws from Gaza. Hamas said it agreed to the road map but implementation depends on Israel first meeting its own commitments, including halting attacks and withdrawing.

On Tuesday, Hamas reiterated that it remained committed to the Gaza peace deal.

"Hamas is committed to this agreed-upon process," the group's spokesman Hazem Qassem told Agence France-Presse.

"It is clear that, so far, the Israeli side has not given the mediators clear approval of the road map," he said.

"There are timelines and procedural steps that need to be worked out in detail, but there must first be Israeli approval of the road map," he added.

Netanyahu, whose ruling coalition is trailing in opinion polls ahead of an October national election, rejected the deal earlier this month, insisting that Israel would not pull back until Hamas is completely disarmed.

An official with the "Board of Peace" said Israel would be able to "act accordingly" if Hamas "resorts to terror, violence or attempts to rearm". However, the official said Netanyahu was told that Hamas has committed to fully disarm and "cease immediately all military activity, including rearmament and tunnel digging".

Israeli operations have killed at least 1,265 Palestinians since a ceasefire came into effect on Oct 10, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, whose figures are considered reliable by the United Nations.

The Israeli army has reported five deaths in its ranks from Gaza operations over the same period.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Pentagon's scrutiny of normal research collaborations reeks of McCarthyism

Academic and research exchanges have been a vibrant and resilient bond in relations between China and the United States. For decades, universities and research institutions from both countries have collaborated closely in science and technology, yielding breakthroughs that benefited not only the two nations but the entire world.

Despite this, the US government has intensified its crackdown on Chinese scientists and researchers in recent years, baselessly alleging that they "threaten national security" by accessing sensitive research and advanced technology.

The so-called "China Initiative", launched by the US Department of Justice in 2018, sought to identify "Chinese spies" in US universities, leading to racial profiling. Though the program was terminated four years later because it was found to be harming the US' technological competitiveness, the US House Select Committee on China last year directed six universities to provide data on Chinese students, claiming that the admission of a large number of Chinese students into science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs might be "at the expense of qualified Americans".

Such discriminatory policies have prompted many US universities to "wind down" partnerships with Chinese universities and restrict the admission of students from China.

The US crackdown on academic exchanges with China is a critical front in its broader strategy to contain China. By severing research ties, Washington aims to stifle China's progress in high-tech fields such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors and biotechnology, where collaborative research has long driven innovation. This strategy is complemented by restricting supply chains and trade, creating an isolated ecosystem intended to limit Chinese access to Western knowledge and markets.

In the latest move, the Pentagon has asked 30 US universities to audit their foreign research partnerships, specifically targeting collaborations with Chinese institutions and entities linked to Confucius Institutes. These universities risk losing future federal research funding if they fail to comply.

In the past few years, the US government has already labeled Confucius Institutes in the country as "foreign missions", and implemented administrative and legislative measures that have effectively forced nearly all of them to close down. This latest round of scrutiny, once again justified as safeguarding "national security", raises concerns about its true purpose.

Instead of enhancing research security or promoting institutional accountability, this initiative is simply intellectual McCarthyism. By casting a wide net of suspicion over academic exchange programs, the Pentagon directive risks stifling the open exchange of ideas and undermining academic freedom. Washington should reflect on whether such measures truly serve the US' national interests, or merely fuel the atmosphere of fear and mistrust surrounding China.

The Pentagon claims it aims to protect research investments from "foreign exploitation", yet it has given the schools only two weeks to submit their findings and mitigation plans. The tight deadline makes the proposed scrutiny either perfunctory or impossible, raising doubts about the feasibility of meaningful results. As a consequence, the schools may feel compelled to end partnerships, disrupting ongoing projects and adversely affecting faculty and students involved in related research.

Moreover, the lack of transparency in selecting universities raises questions about the criteria and processes used to identify "entities of concern". Without clear guidelines, institutions may struggle to navigate this uncertain situation, potentially hindering their ability to engage in meaningful international collaborations and ultimately impacting their competitiveness in global research.

The Pentagon's coercive tactics of pressuring universities into self-audits and scaling back collaboration risk pushing the academic sector into geopolitical rivalry, ultimately harming academic freedom and exchanges in the US.

Scientific research transcends borders, and innovation thrives on cross-border exchanges and sharing of resources. Instead of imposing restrictive measures, the US government should respect the spirit of science, allowing academic institutions to address shared technological challenges and meet development needs to serve the interests of people in both countries and beyond.

Macao's high-quality development course set

Macao's development achievements and social stability since its return to the motherland in 1999 testify to the vitality of the "one country, two systems" framework. The special administrative region's Third Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development (2026-30), released on Tuesday, marks a new starting point for Macao to seize opportunities, address challenges and pursue high-quality development by turning its institutional advantages into development momentum and development gains into public well-being.

A notable feature of the plan is its emphasis on docking with national development. As Macao SAR Chief Executive Sam Hou-fai stressed, the plan is aligned with the national five-year plan for this period while taking into account Macao's own realities. By strengthening integration with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, deepening Macao-Hengqin cooperation and better leveraging Macao's international connections, the SAR can translate the advantages of national development into new opportunities for itself, while contributing its own strengths to the country's overall development.

The plan's formulation also shows that the SAR's development course is rooted in the aspirations of Macao residents. During the 40-day public consultation, 1,716 submissions containing 8,230 opinions were collected. The largest number of opinions concerned strengthening and optimizing people's livelihoods, followed by appropriate economic diversification and high-quality development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. The plan received positive feedback of 92.1 percent.

These figures demonstrate that the plan reflects extensive participation and broad consensus. The Macao SAR government has incorporated feasible suggestions that gained broad consensus into the final plan, while pledging to use other opinions as references for future policymaking. Measures on urban renewal, healthcare, social security and improvements to older districts directly respond to public concerns.

At the same time, the plan identifies appropriate economic diversification as essential for Macao's long-term prosperity and stability. With a target of raising the contribution of non-gaming sectors to around 60 percent of GDP by 2030, Macao is seeking to build a more balanced and resilient economic structure.

The "1+4" strategy, backed by major infrastructure projects and a government guidance fund, will promote industries, including high-tech, biomedicine and "big health", specialized finance, MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions), culture and sports, while consolidating integrated tourism and leisure. Preliminary estimates put total budgeted investment in major economic diversification projects during the plan period at about 130 billion patacas ($16.1 billion). Such substantial investment will help cultivate new growth engines and create opportunities for enterprises, talent and young people.

Hengqin is key to this transformation. Through deeper integration in rules, infrastructure, education, technology, finance and industries, "Macao + Hengqin" can combine Macao's international resources with Hengqin's development space and the vast mainland market. The two sides can jointly advance projects in education, technology, tourism, traditional Chinese medicine and finance, creating greater synergies and providing stronger foundations for Macao's economic diversification.

Macao's unique role extends beyond its economic functions. As an international city, Macao serves as a connector between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. Its distinctive cultural and international advantages give it an important role in the country's high-standard opening-up. By facilitating trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges, Macao can contribute more effectively to the country's overall development, while strengthening exchanges between different civilizations.

To those seeking to malign the "one country, two systems" framework, Macao's high-quality development and long-term stability offer an effective rebuttal. The SAR's new five-year blueprint, grounded in public aspirations, aligned with national development and focused on sustainable growth, points precisely in that direction. By implementing this plan, Macao can better achieve sustainable prosperity and lasting stability, further demonstrating the enduring vitality of the "one country, two systems" framework.

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Shi Yu



Opinion Line

Green code crucial framework for cleaner skies, clearer waters

When China's Ecological and Environmental Code came into force on Saturday, it heralded a new stage in China's environmental rule of law, as previously fragmented rules have been brought together to form a more coherent and enforceable legal framework.

With 1,242 articles in five chapters, the code brings together more than 30 existing laws, over 100 administrative regulations and more than 1,000 local laws and regulations. Its real significance lies in the logic behind it: environmental governance can no longer be treated as a collection of separate tasks. Pollution control, ecological protection, resource conservation, carbon reduction and the green transition are to be governed as one integrated system.

China's environmental legislation has developed for more than four decades, from early learning at the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, which was the first world conference to make the environment a major issue, to the adoption of the Environmental Protection Law of the People's Republic of China in 1989 and the goal of realizing an ecological civilization as a national strategy after 2012.

Over time, China has moved from borrowing international experience to building its own environmental governance model, with the Ecological and Environmental Code being the latest expression of that evolution.

What makes China's exploration distinctive is that it starts from China's own realities. China is a country with a huge population, relatively limited per capita resources and highly uneven ecological conditions. Its northern regions face water stress, its western regions include fragile ecosystems and its eastern coastal areas bear intense development pressure.

A development model that consumed resources first and repaired damage later is no longer sustainable. China has therefore had to answer a basic question: how can a large developing country pursue modernization without the environmental costs of the industrial age?

The answer, embedded in the code, is clear: environmental protection and development must reinforce one another. By dedicating an independent chapter to green and low-carbon development, the code makes a powerful institutional statement: climate response and the green transition are legal commitments.

In a world where many environmental laws still focus narrowly on pollution control, China has placed carbon peaking, carbon neutrality, the circular economy and the clean energy transition under the same legal roof as ecological protection. It moves beyond the old pattern of "one department handles pollution, another handles ecology, and yet another handles development". Instead, it aims to establish a holistic governance structure, one that supports coordinated progress in reducing pollution, cutting carbon emissions, expanding green development and growing the economy. This is a notable innovation, and is consistent with China's other innovations in recent years, including ecological red line protection, ecological compensation, environmental damage compensation, public interest litigation and the carbon emissions trading market.

The code also has a broader global significance. Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution do not respect administrative boundaries, national borders or institutional silos. By integrating pollution prevention, ecological protection and green, low-carbon development into one code, China is offering a legislative reference to other countries, especially developing countries.

This global relevance is reinforced by the code's explicit provisions on international cooperation. That means China is not only building a domestic legal framework; it is also translating global environmental commitments into domestic law.

China's green modernization is already generating experience that can be shared beyond its borders. Water-saving terraced farming introduced from China has been replicated in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. Chinese photovoltaic technology is helping support solar power development in countries such as Saudi Arabia.

But the code's enduring significance will depend on implementation. The law should become an evolving legal framework for cleaner skies, clearer waters, healthier ecosystems and a more sustainable development model.

— HOU LIQIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Plan aims to nurture zero-emission factories

Editor's note: *The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology has launched an initiative to develop national-level zero-carbon factories. Several experts, including He Kebin, dean of the Institute for Carbon Neutrality at Tsinghua University, and Chen Daji, deputy head of the China Electronics Standardization Institute, explained what zero-carbon factories are and the importance of the move. Below are excerpts of their comments as reported by Xinhua News Agency. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

A zero-carbon factory does not imply it emits absolutely no carbon dioxide. Instead, the term signifies efforts by the factory to implement systematic emissions reduction measures. These include technological innovation, structural adjustments and management optimization to fully tap into its emissions reduction potential. The goal is to minimize emissions as much as possible under current technical and economic conditions and to continuously improve operations so that the factory's carbon dioxide emissions are at the lowest possible level.

Under the initiative, there are three core indicators for a national-level zero-carbon factory: carbon emissions per unit of energy consumption, the proportion of nonfossil energy consumption, and the percentage of nonfossil power in the electricity used by the factory. These indicators provide measurable and verifiable criteria for defining a "national-level zero-carbon factory".

Carbon emissions per unit of energy consumption measure the amount of carbon dioxide emitted for each tonne of standard coal consumed. While different industries may adopt different development paths, the objective should be to steadily reduce emissions and move toward near-zero emissions.

The indicator of the share of nonfossil energy consumption will encourage enterprises to accelerate the green and low-carbon transition of their energy mix. The share of electricity consumption coming from nonfossil energy will encourage enterprises to increase the use of such electricity and enhance the supply, local utilization and physical traceability of nonfossil energy-based electricity.

One sector that has witnessed rapid growth in energy consumption in China is computing power infrastructure. In 2025, electricity consumed by such infrastructure accounted for approximately 1.6 percent of the total consumption in China.

Going forward, computing power infrastructure operators should strengthen collaboration among different sectors, including equipment procurement, project construction, energy supply, operation and maintenance, and the use of computing power to ensure the selection of low-carbon equipment, better utilization of green electricity and eco-friendly management of infrastructure.

Intelligent carbon control is crucial for establishing zero-carbon factories. Companies in the automobile industry should seize the opportunity of the country's zero-carbon factory initiative and enhance their digital capacity for energy and carbon management. They need to develop a data collection network which covers the whole factory to enable automatic aggregation and real-time transmission of energy consumption and carbon emissions data.

As the initiative progresses, China is expected to foster a number of national-level zero-carbon factories. These factories will play an important role in exploring practical ways for the green and low-carbon transition of the country's industrial sector, providing strong support to the country's green growth.

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VIEWS

Huang Rihan

Robots need open doors, not visas

Beijing's Yizhuang will become a global shop window for robots this August. At the 2026 World Robot Conference, a dedicated procurement day will bring buyers from Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Latin America looking for machines that can solve real-life problems. A Thai farmer may want a robot that can spray crops. A Saudi engineering contractor could size up robotic dogs for project inspections. A Latin American plantation owner may ask the price of a harvesting robot. The questions will be refreshingly practical: How can this machine make the job easier?

The United States, however, is asking a very different question. The US Federal Communications Commission has updated its "Covered List" of communications equipment and services that can threaten the "national security" of the country to include new Chinese-made humanoid and quadruped robots. While buyers are asking what robots can do, policymakers in Washington want to know where they come from.

Caution about new technology is understandable. When the power loom first appeared, textile workers feared the iron machine would devour their livelihoods and stormed factories to smash it. When cameras arrived, some people avoided the lens, worried that a flash might somehow steal their souls. Nearly every invention that changed the world has passed through a period of suspicion. Security concerns are real and deserve to be taken seriously.

But caution is not the same as closing the door. Robots have eyes, legs and internet connections. Smartphones, electric cars, and robot vacuums in millions of homes also use sensors and internet connections.

A better approach to new technology might look more like airport security: Every passenger is screened, but no one is denied boarding simply because of their nationality. Robots can be tested, certified and held to common standards, while their data and cybersecurity can be scrutinized. That is far more effective — and more reassuring — than simply turning them away at the gate.

The need for robots around the world may be greater than many realize. Populations across much of the world are aging, while the supply of young workers is shrinking. Factories in Vietnam struggle to fill vacancies. Construction sites in the Middle East can become dangerously hot in summer. Plantations in Latin America face labor shortages during the harvest season.

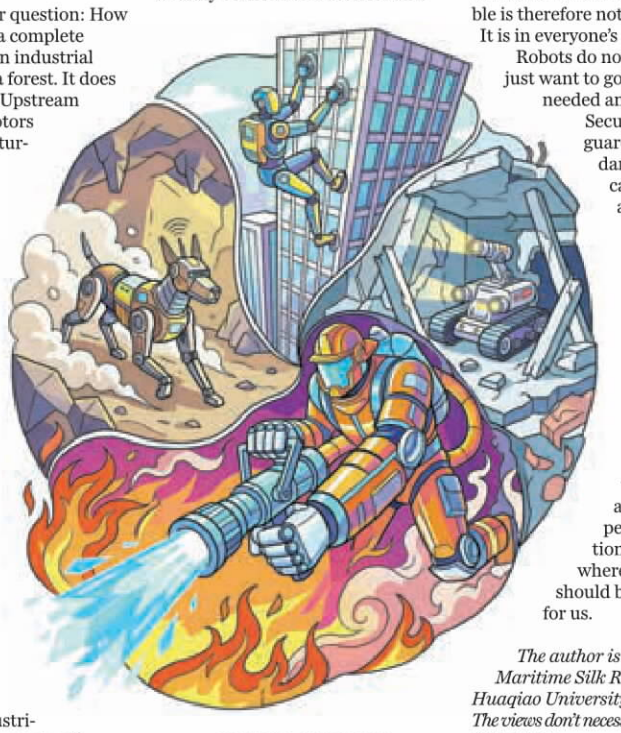
Robots are not necessarily here to take jobs. Often, they fill gaps where there are too few people willing — or able — to do the work. A robot sent down a mine can spare a human being from taking a potentially fatal risk. A machine working in a furnace room can take on work that the human body cannot safely endure.

This raises a larger question: How can a country build a complete robotics industry? An industrial supply chain is like a forest. It does not grow overnight. Upstream companies make motors and joints; manufacturers assemble complete machines; downstream users find tasks for them to perform. Along the way, an industry needs engineers, customers and a market large enough to allow companies to make mistakes and learn from them. Building all of this takes decades.

On the other hand, a wall can be built overnight. But no matter how high it is, a wall cannot grow a forest behind it. Forests need sunlight, rain and time. The same is true for industrial ecosystems, which need policy support, open markets and supply chain integration to grow and flourish.

China's experience illustrates the point. Its robotics industry was not built by shutting itself off from the world. It was built through openness. Over the decades, foreign companies have established factories in China, components from around the world have flowed into the country; and intense competition has forced Chinese companies to learn, step by step, how to make — and then improve — everything from robotic joints to intelligent control systems.

Chinese companies now account for more than half the humanoid robot models in the world, while roughly eight out of every 10 quadruped robots sold come from China. The cost of producing robots has fallen so sharply that automation is no longer a privilege reserved for wealthy economies. Factories and farms in developing countries can afford it too.



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Openness did not destroy China's industrial ecosystem. Instead, it helped nurture one of the world's most complete industrial ecosystems. China is now willing to share that experience — and those robots — with the rest of the world.

Ultimately, robotics is a global creation. Japan may provide precision joints; Europe may supply motors; the US may contribute chips; and China may produce complete machines and offer a vast range of application scenarios. Remove any one of these elements, and the system will not function as smoothly.

When a river is blocked, the water does not just stand there but finds another route. The detour costs more, and eventually someone has to pay for it. Preserving the networks that make cooperation possible is therefore not an act of charity. It is in everyone's interest.

Robots do not need visas. They just want to go where they are needed and get to work. Security can be safeguarded through standards. Competition can be settled by asking who can build a better, cheaper machine that solves a real-world problem. That kind of competition does not produce losers but can benefit the whole world.

So, the next time a robot arrives at the door, perhaps the question should not be where it came from. It should be what it can do for us.

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

Zhang Monan

Tussle between open and closed AI reshaping global order

The tussle between open-source and closed-source artificial intelligence models in China and the United States is more than a debate over technological paths. It reflects the broader China-US technological rivalry, influencing the underlying architectures, industrial control and global rule-making. The clash between these two approaches could profoundly reshape the landscape of the intelligent age and global technological competition.

In recent years, Silicon Valley giants such as OpenAI, Anthropic and Google have built towering technological advantages through closed-source business models, backed by massive capital investment and vast computing clusters. At the same time, the open-source camp — which includes Chinese technology companies Alibaba, DeepSeek and Zhipu AI and US players such as Meta — has risen rapidly, thanks to more efficient algorithms and open ecosystems.

Broadly speaking, the closed-source approach favored by leading US AI laboratories aligns with Washington's desire to maintain technological dominance and Silicon Valley's capital-intensive model, which hinges on massive computing power and premium pricing. US closed-source models, represented by OpenAI's latest reasoning model GPT-5.6 Sol, Anthropic's Claude Opus 5 and Google's Gemini 3.5 and 3.6 series, use top-end GPUs and sophisticated data engineering to build formidable computing barriers and seek a commanding position at the technological frontier.

By keeping model capabilities behind cloud-based application programming interfaces, US companies have created highly controlled commercial ecosystems. This model can also become a geopolitical instrument. By restricting access to advanced models in the name of "national security", Washington has developed a broader narrative: frontier AI may pose national security risks and therefore should remain concentrated in the hands of a select group of Western companies.

High API subscription fees and dependence on cloud services raise the financial barriers for small and medium-sized companies seeking access to advanced AI. They also leave countries without domestic computing capacity increasingly dependent on foreign digital infrastructure, creating strategic vulnerabilities.

Faced with US restrictions on advanced chips and computing power, Chinese tech companies are increasingly turning to open source as a strategic breakthrough, pursuing an asymmetric path based on extreme algorithmic efficiency and large-scale industrial deployment.

At the algorithmic level, DeepSeek demonstrates that performance comparable to leading Silicon Valley closed models can be achieved at significantly lower cost, challenging the assumption that breakthroughs necessarily require billions of dollars and ever-larger, energy-intensive computing clusters. At the ecosystem level, Alibaba's Qwen 2.5 and related models are among the world's most widely downloaded open-source models, serving as a popular foundation for developers.

A report by the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission highlights two key areas of Chinese advantage: a "digital loop" and a "physical loop". Open-source models lower the cost of AI deployment, allowing them to move rapidly into manufacturing, logistics, robotics and other sectors of the economy. The data and practical demands generated by these applications, in turn, feed back into model development.

This creates a virtuous cycle of efficient algorithms, open ecosystems and industrial validation. Together, these strengths give China's AI sector considerable resilience and the potential to catch up or even overtake competitors despite the constrained access to advanced computing resources.

The China-US contest between open-source and closed-source models is also accelerating a broader rebalancing of global technology, giving the Global South and other economies, including those in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Latin America, an opportunity to enhance technological sovereignty rather than remain caught between major powers.

Reuters reported on Aug 14 that the US was preparing to ask dozens of countries to choose between US- and China-led AI cooperation frameworks, with those joining Beijing's initiative potentially excluded from a US-led AI coalition. The move shows how competition over AI has extended beyond technology into the geopolitical arena.

For European and Middle Eastern countries, sending sensitive industrial or government data to cloud servers controlled by Silicon Valley giants poses unacceptable compliance and security risks. Yet developing a large foundation model from scratch requires enormous financial and computing resources.

In this context, high-performance open-source models such as Qwen, DeepSeek and Llama are emerging as digital infrastructure for countries seeking to build their own localized AI capabilities. By fine-tuning these models in local languages and deploying them on private infrastructure, institutions in countries such as France, Singapore and Saudi Arabia can develop more cost-effective and independently controlled AI systems. Open source is thus transforming AI from a strategic technology concentrated in the hands of a few countries into a global public infrastructure.

The divide between open and closed models is also a contest over competing approaches to AI safety, governance and regulation. The closed-source camp has long argued that keeping advanced models inside a "black box" is the best defense against misuse, including applications involving biological weapons or cyberattacks. This argument has also been used to justify technological restrictions and stricter administrative controls.

But as open-source models become increasingly capable, the idea that security can be achieved primarily through secrecy is facing growing scrutiny from academia and the international community. More standards bodies and regulatory institutions are recognizing that excessive restrictions on access can easily turn into barriers that reinforce geopolitical and commercial monopolies. From this perspective, governance built on transparency, auditability and multi-stakeholder participation offers another path toward trustworthy AI.

Looking ahead, the global AI landscape is unlikely to be defined by complete technological closure or the wholesale replacement of closed-source models with open-source ones. A dual-track competition is more likely.

Closed-source laboratories, particularly in the US, will continue to use their enormous advantages in capital and computing power to pursue high-risk exploration at the uncertain frontier toward artificial general intelligence. Open-source ecosystems, led primarily by China and the wider global developer community, will rely on lower costs, stronger adaptability to real-world applications and millions of developers to become a major engine bringing AI into industries across the economy.

In effect, the competition between open-source and closed-source AI models is breaking down barriers to technological monopoly and accelerating the wider diffusion of AI. As a result, a more multipolar, resilient and competitive global AI order is beginning to take shape.

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



Zhou Shuchun

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Navigating the new normal of public opinion society

Recent events, from the playful use of bamboo cicada toys as a metaphor for a tech giant to the posture of a hostess during an interview, epitomize a defining feature of contemporary Chinese society: the frequent emergence of public-opinion incidents. Every few days, a headline-making topic goes viral on social media, capturing widespread attention and triggering a cacophony of divergent views.

This phenomenon can rightly be termed a "public opinion society", though interpretations of individual incidents can vary wildly. For instance, when internet users mashed up the audio of a bamboo cicada toy with clips from a company's product launch to parody its promotional slogan, the creator's meme and the legal response by the company drew mixed reactions.

Similarly, when a hostess crouched to interview foreign creative team members seated on high stools at a film premiere, some praised it as a professional move to avoid blocking the camera, while others decried it as obsequious deference to foreigners.

As such incidents multiply, public opinion has become a complex social issue. While this is a norm of the digital era, the constant barrage of controversies undoubtedly fuels anxiety among officials, corporations, public figures, and even ordinary citizens.

Media outlets recommend overcoming what might be called public-opinion mysophobia — an excessive fear of negative publicity — by building psychological resilience and responding proactively. Influential commentators advocate establishing a mechanism to mitigate the negative fallout of viral incidents.

The digital public sphere is characterized by low barriers, widespread participation and rapid dissemination.

The sheer volume of grassroots voices highlights societal vitality, but it also breeds emotional manipulation, rampant rumors, and one-sided verdicts, leading some to view it as a monstrous threat.

Yet, the collision of diverse perspectives itself is a product of social transition. Compared to the information silos and limited channels of expression in the past, this change represents undeniable progress.

Over decades of reform and opening-up, China has undergone a profound transformation — from isolation to openness, scarcity to abundance and uniformity to diversity.

In terms of public discourse, citizens have moved beyond basic needs to pursue higher aspirations such as fairness, justice and transparency. Various demands regarding livelihoods and governance expectations are now the driving force of public expression.

At a deeper level, the growing awareness of civil rights sustains the vitality of this public opinion society.

The catalyst of this change is the widespread adoption of digital technology. With mobile internet — particularly social media — permeating daily life, everyone has become a broadcaster, capable of voicing opinions at any moment. This has shattered the old paradigm where a select few monopolized the discourse, revealing the pluralistic and often conflicting nature of a society in transition.

At a deeper level, the growing awareness of civil rights sustains the vitality of this public opinion society. Citizens have evolved from passive bystanders of public affairs into active participants in social governance, making the oversight of public power a social norm. More people are now emboldened to express themselves on various issues. The increasing complexity of voices in the internet age is both an objective trend beyond anyone's will and a hallmark of social progress.

To some extent, the frequent eruption of public opinion incidents is fostering a mechanism of societal self-correction. In recent decades, no incident that captured national attention ended merely in emotional venting. Instead, each became a milestone in addressing institutional flaws and social shortcomings. Many far-reaching social reforms were triggered by major public uproars.

One notable example is the death of Sun Zhigang in 2003, which led to the abolition of an outdated system. Sun, a young man from Hubei province, was detained in Guangzhou for not having a temporary residence permit and later died in custody. The case sparked a nationwide outcry, leading to scrutiny of the flaws in the custody and repatriation system. Three months later, the Measures for the Custody and Repatriation of Urban Vagrants and Beggars — in effect for over two decades — was repealed and replaced by a new assistance regulation that better protected the rights of the floating population.

Admittedly, the profusion of public opinion also carries risks that can't be ignored. Algorithms can amplify negative emotions rapidly, and the traffic-first logic of dissemination favors extreme content. Conflict, pathos, and labeling quickly attract eyeballs, inflaming netizens and allowing one-sided views to dominate while occasionally silencing objective voices. Unchecked public opinion can fracture social consensus, interfere with the rule of law, and magnify societal anxiety.

A tragic example is the case of Liu Xuezhou, a young man from Hebei province who eventually committed suicide because of online violence. Sent away at three months old, he found his biological parents through DNA matching when he was 17 in 2022.

However, a dispute over housing was exposed on the internet, where some accused him of demanding an apartment from his parents. A deluge of abusive comments led to Liu's breakdown, and he committed suicide. While long-standing psychological trauma was a factor, the online abuse was the final straw for the young man.

In this case, the influencers who fanned the flames were sued and a court found them guilty of fabricating facts and committing defamation. The ruling highlights the importance of tackling the challenges of public opinion.

Building a healthy online ecosystem requires guiding the public to respect facts, and avoid black-and-white thinking. Most importantly, under the supervision of regulators, platforms must shoulder their responsibilities — breaking the chain of misinformation and minimizing the space for extreme narratives.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

CHRISTOPH NEDOPIL

Shaping a clean and green future

China's renewable energy five-year plan charts a new chapter for high-quality development at home and abroad



As China enters its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, the nation's renewable energy landscape is undergoing a crucial transformation. Rather than simply chasing green energy installation speed, China's renewable energy five-year plan, issued by the National Energy Administration and the National Development and Reform Commission, focuses on quality development, system-wide reliability and decarbonization across both power and non-power sectors. This shift marks an important evolution in China's renewable energy ambitions, offering vital lessons for emerging economies and the wider international community.

A critical milestone underpinning this new plan is that China surpassed its previous 2030 target of 1,200 gigawatts of wind and solar capacity well ahead of schedule by September 2024. Building on this momentum, China aims for over 2,800 GW of wind and solar capacity by 2030. These new targets seem anchored in a realistic assessment of grid integration capabilities, economic shifts and technological readiness.

An important feature of this plan is its focus on energy regeneration and replenishment through dependable, firm renewables rather than expanding generation capacity. In the past, rapid capacity additions often outpaced grid flexibility. The new plan addresses this by prioritizing high-quality development through firming renewables. It mandates that newly built centralized wind and solar stations achieve a dependable capacity of no less than 10 percent, with high-performing projects encouraged to exceed 20 percent by 2030.

To achieve this level of system firmness, the plan stipulates massive expansion of energy storage assets over the next several years. As China balances hydropower development with ecological protection, flood control, water supply, irrigation and navigation, the country's conventional hydropower installed capacity is expected to reach about 410 million kilowatts by 2030.

By 2030, China is targeting 15 million kW of installed solar thermal power capacity, 400,000 kW of marine energy capacity and approximately 160 million kW of pumped storage power capacity, according to the National Energy Administration.

Combined with significant expansion of battery storage, advanced grid-forming inverters and source-side energy storage integration, these measures support the orderly substitution of fossil fuels in the country.

Renewable energy also plays a significant role in heavy industry upgrading, which requires retrofitting in hard-to-abate sectors such as steel and cement, alongside the physical relocation of energy-intensive industries to green-energy-rich regions.

At the community level, microgrids and rural development take center stage. Through initiatives such as the village-level micro-energy network pilots, China is pioneering decentralized off-grid and micro-grid solutions. These localized models offer invaluable lessons and practical blueprints for emerging economies across the Global South and Belt and Road countries seeking reliable, clean energy access in areas without grid connection.



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Crucially, the country is charting a new chapter in renewable energy deployment at scale, proving that high levels of variable renewable penetration can be managed safely and efficiently in the world's largest energy system. For the international community, the plan offers a clear message: China's energy transition has entered a new phase where innovation, quality, security and systemic integration pave the path to a global energy transformation.

China has already become the global technology leader in green energy, and to enable more innovations in renewable energy, China can strengthen deep research collaboration among Chinese institutions — bridging universities and industry leaders — to drive breakthroughs in next-generation climate prediction, advanced materials and artificial intelligence-empowered grid dispatch.

With China's green energy successes drawing significant global attention, China's leadership demonstrates that domestic success can be paired with open international cooperation. By sharing its high-quality, cost-effective green technologies with other countries, especially some Global South countries, China is helping other nations accelerate their own low-carbon transition. Through both large-scale projects and livelihood-oriented "small yet beautiful" initiatives, China contributes to global green supply chains and standard harmonization.

On a broader global outlook, the accelerated integration of renewable energy opens unprecedented avenues for nations across the world to harness cost-effective green energy to improve industrial competitiveness while relatively lowering energy-related emissions. At the same time, some developed and developing countries increasingly want to benefit from integrating into global green energy value chains. Realizing this potential requires recognizing that trust-based collaboration and knowledge sharing are more important than ever. In this context, it is remarkable to observe China's rapid transition from an absorber to a prominent contributor of technological knowledge, now well-positioned to take the lead in upgrading green industries.

In conclusion, China's renewable energy five-year plan is much more than an energy road map. Rather it highlights China's transformation from a historical energy importer into a dominant global energy power and producer. By harnessing vast domestic resources — particularly through the mega wind and solar bases in the Three-North area and the Gobi regions — China is endeavoring to secure its own energy independence while helping the global energy transition. Crucially, the country is charting a new chapter in renewable energy deployment at scale, proving that high levels of variable renewable penetration can be managed safely and efficiently in the world's largest energy system. For the international community, the plan offers a clear message: China's energy transition has entered a new phase where innovation, quality, security and systemic integration pave the path to a global energy transformation.

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WALDEMAR KARPA

Picture of health

China's growing contribution to pharmaceutical innovation heralds a new era for global industry



China's pharmaceutical industry, once primarily known for its role in producing affordable generics, has undergone a profound transformation, emerging as a leading force in global drug innovation. This evolution is not merely an industrial shift but a significant development poised to deliver new medicines to patients worldwide, presenting both opportunities and a call for enhanced international collaboration.

This pivotal moment was vividly illustrated at the 2024 World Conference on Lung Cancer, where Akeso, a biotech company from Zhongshan, Guangdong province, presented groundbreaking data. Its bispecific antibody, ivonescimab, demonstrated superior efficacy against Keytruda (pembrolizumab) in a head-to-head trial for non-small cell lung cancer. Keytruda, a cornerstone of global oncology, represents a multi-billion-dollar market. Akeso's achievement, often described as the industry's "DeepSeek moment", signals China's arrival as a frontrunner in developing novel therapies, challenging established paradigms and inspiring new possibilities for patient care.

This success is not an isolated incident but part of a broader trend. A decade ago, China accounted for less than 8 percent of global clinical trials. In 2020, it had surpassed both the United States and Europe in annual trial volume. In 2024, it initiated close to 5,000 trials. This growth is not just in quantity but in quality, with China's high-novelty trials growing significantly faster than the US benchmark. A Boston Consulting Group report earlier this year further notes that since 2021, China has outpaced the US in new molecular entities entering clinical development, contributing about 44 percent of the global total last year. Its share of potential first-in-class drugs rose from 16 percent in 2020 to 34 percent in 2025, nearing the US' 38 percent.

China's journey from a generics producer to an innovation leader is rooted in strategic policy reforms. The National Reimbursement Drug List reform, initiated around 2016, played a crucial role. By offering guaranteed, near-universal access in exchange for significant price reductions, the State effectively stimulated demand for innovative drugs. This policy led to a substantial increase in the utilization of covered drugs, with oncology volumes growing nearly tenfold, demonstrating that innovation flourishes where there is clear market demand and patient access. This approach has fostered a dynamic ecosystem where laboratories and research thrive.

This demand-driven innovation is supported by an efficient research and development ecosystem. The "decode, iterate, execute" flywheel, as described by the Boston Consulting Group, operates with remarkable cost-effectiveness. Drug discovery and preclinical work in China can be conducted at a fraction of the cost in the West. Contract research organizations, including WuXi AppTec, have built integrated platforms spanning drug discovery, preclinical testing and other stages of drug development, helping pharmaceutical companies reduce costs and accelerate development. This efficiency has allowed China to effectively counter "Eroom's law" — the observation that drug development costs double every nine years — by leveraging vast patient pools, rapid engineering iteration and streamlined regulatory processes. The result is a robust pipeline extending beyond oncology into respiratory, immunology and metabolic diseases, with Chinese companies now confidently designing Phase III trials head-to-head against global blockbusters.

The global pharmaceutical industry has recognized China's ascendance. Insiders such as Pfizer's CEO Albert Bourla have acknowledged China as a significant challenger to US strength in biotechnology. While some regions such as Europe have seen their share of global clinical trials decline, China's share has tripled, particularly in advanced fields such as cell and gene therapy. In 2024, China became the leading source of new active substances, contributing 35 percent globally.

Rather than viewing this as a zero-sum game, the industry is increasingly embracing collaboration. Facing patent expirations and seeking new growth avenues, Western pharmaceutical companies are actively investing in and partnering with Chinese biotechs. Cross-border out-licensing from China reached an estimated total potential value of $135.7 billion in 2025, with a significant surge in early 2026. Major deals, such as Pfizer's investment in 3SBio's bispecific and GSK's commitment to Hengrui, highlight a strategic "re-platforming" onto Chinese science. Beyond licensing, new strategies include "local for local" manufacturing, establishing R&D centers in China, and China-first drug launches, all aimed at fostering deeper integration and mutual benefit.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

While geopolitical complexities, including the BIOSECURE Act and designations affecting companies such as WuXi AppTec, present challenges, the intertwined nature of the global pharmaceutical ecosystem underscores the importance of open scientific exchange and collaboration. Protectionist measures risk hindering global health progress. The optimal path forward involves fostering an environment where competition drives innovation, and partnerships accelerate the delivery of life-saving medicines.

China's innovation strength, characterized by its engineering brilliance and focus on optimizing known targets, continues to grow. While its R&D spending is still a fraction of the US', and its venture capital ecosystem is still maturing, the impact of its contributions is undeniable. The notion that smaller economies should merely be "free riders" importing innovations no longer holds true. China has not only become a significant innovator but is actively shaping the future of global health.

This new reality is a call on the traditional leaders of the industry to adapt and engage with a rapidly evolving landscape. Embracing this shift through competition, partnership and domestic reform, rather than restrictive policies, is the most effective approach. For patients everywhere, it would mean access to better medicines, developed faster and more affordably. Denial of this transformation would be a disservice to global health and scientific progress.

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County-level consumption prioritized

Measures set to unlock potential of smaller-scale urban markets

By **ZHANG CHENXU**
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China has unveiled a package of measures to unlock the potential of lower-tier, smaller-scale urban markets, with a particular focus on county-level spending, as counties emerge as an increasingly important driver of consumption growth, officials and experts said.

The latest push is expected to tap a deeper reservoir of domestic demand and lend fresh impetus to the building of a strong domestic market, thereby reinforcing China's longer-term transition toward consumption-led growth, they added.

"County and township markets now hold the key to further consumption growth," Yuan Xiaoming, assistant minister of commerce, said at a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday, noting that county-level areas account for about 40 percent of China's economic output.

Their comments came after the Ministry of Commerce and eight other government departments released the guideline earlier that day, setting out 18 measures covering upgrades to retail infrastructure, business format innovation, the supply of goods and services, distribution networks and financial support.

Under the guideline, efforts will focus on improving the retail environment in county-level areas by upgrading existing commercial facilities and retail networks, strengthening support services and making better use of idle assets, the ministry said.

Dai Mingfeng, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said: "County-level consumption is undergoing a structural shift, with consumers increasingly trading up and devoting a growing share of their spending to services.

"Young people returning home are playing a dual role — starting businesses that broaden local supply while generating fresh demand as consumers," Dai said. "They are a small but pivotal force driving consumption growth in counties."

To better meet evolving demand, the measures will encourage chain operators to accelerate their expansion into county-level markets, help local brands blend heritage with innovation and support localities in developing new business formats suited to their own conditions, the ministry said.

Retailers are increasingly looking to counties for growth. Busy Ming Group Co, a snack and beverage retailer, said in its 2025 annual results announcement that around 60 percent of its 21,948 stores were located in counties and townships at the end of 2025. Its network reached 1,401 counties, or around 75 percent of the national total.

> "County-level consumption is undergoing a structural shift, with consumers increasingly trading up and devoting a growing share of their spending to services."
>
> **Dai Mingfeng,** a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation

The guideline also promotes emerging business formats tailored to local conditions and closer integration of commerce with agriculture, culture, tourism and sports, said the ministry.

New travel hot spots are emerging beyond major cities. China's "hidden-gem small cities" posted the strongest booking growth this summer, with hotel bookings in Zherong county, Fujian province — about a three-hour drive north of Fuzhou — surging more than tenfold from a year earlier, said online travel portal Qunar.

In addition, the measures call for stronger fiscal and financial support. Eligible personal loans for consumption and business loans in the services sector will qualify for interest subsidies, while retail businesses opening new chain stores in counties may apply for government-backed startup loans and receive interest subsidies, the guideline stated.

The measures come as lower-tier markets take up a growing share of consumer spending. Retail sales of consumer goods in county and township markets accounted for 39.1 percent of the national total in the first seven months, up 0.3 percentage point from a year earlier, according to estimates released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Monday.

Bai Wenxi, vice-chairman of the China Enterprise Capital Union, said China's consumption growth over the next decade will be driven largely by county-level markets.

"Supportive policies have already created favorable conditions, but the ultimate outcome will hinge on the quality of local implementation and whether businesses are prepared to make a long-term commitment to these markets," Bai said.

Briefly

Geely reports record H1 sales growth

Chinese automaker Geely Automobile Holdings Ltd reported record-high sales and revenue growth in the first half of the year, according to its interim report. The company announced record sales of more than 1.42 million vehicles, with revenue growing 15 percent year-on-year to 173.6 billion yuan ($25 billion) during the period. Marking its sixth consecutive year of positive first half revenue growth, the company also reported a 46 percent rise in core profit attributable to owners of the parent, reaching 9.68 billion yuan for the period.

Railway investment in Jan-July rises

China has made steady progress on a number of key railway projects as investment in railway construction continued to expand in 2026, generating a notable driving effect and injecting fresh momentum into regional economic and social development, the national railway operator said. Fixed-asset investment in the railway sector totaled 440.6 billion yuan ($64 billion) in the first seven months of the year, up 1.8 percent year-on-year, according to China State Railway Group Co Ltd.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY



View of SenseTime's booth during an expo in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

End-to-end solutions key to AI exports

By **MA SI**
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As the artificial intelligence industry rapidly evolves, a new frontier is emerging: the export of AI computing infrastructure. Chinese tech companies, once known primarily for hardware manufacturing and consumer app exports, are now taking their AI models, algorithms and computing infrastructure to overseas markets, corporate executives and experts said.

"China's AI-led expansion overseas is changing. It is moving beyond the export of stand-alone software and applications toward a more sophisticated offering of industry-specific solutions and digital infrastructure," said Jeff Shi, president of SenseTime's Asia-Pacific business, in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

That model draws on nearly the full breadth of China's AI ecosystem — from data centers and token plans to governance frameworks and talent development, Shi said.

SenseTime is at the forefront of this transformation, he said. Since its founding, the company has expanded into more than a dozen overseas markets, serving over 500 enterprise clients globally, with more than 430 in the Asia-Pacific region alone. From intelligent hardware and software licensing to industry solutions and cloud services, the company has built a comprehensive portfolio that spans the entire AI value chain.

The shift from exporting trained AI models to exporting computing infrastructure represents a strategic upgrade driven by fundamental changes in the industry. Shi explained that in the early stages of international expansion, SenseTime primarily delivered computer vision models trained in China, with computing needs met domestically. But the generative AI era has fundamentally altered the landscape.

"Customers no longer need just a single model — they need an end-to-end solution that integrates computing power, models and applications," Shi said. The surge in overseas demand for AI inference has created an urgent need for local computing infrastructure.

At the same time, the rise of "Chinovation" — a term coined in 2011 to describe Chinese innovation has taken on new meaning. It has changed from representing cost-effective alternatives, to being the flagship of high-tech original innovation.

"Overseas clients now come to China to find Chinese technology, Chinese applications, and Chinese opportunities," Shi noted. This shift reflects China's growing global competitiveness in technology — and explains why the world's best open-source large language models are emerging from China.

According to Shi, more foreign visitors are traveling to China to study AI firsthand. International business visitors to SenseTime's Executive Briefing Center in Shanghai have risen tenfold so far in 2026.

SenseTime's computing power export strategy took a major leap forward in 2025 with the successful deployment of China's first overseas domestic computing cluster in the Middle East. The company established a joint venture called SenseTime MEA with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, or PIF, and has been deeply engaged in the country's Vision 2030 transformation.

Hong Kong also plays a pivotal role in SenseTime's global computing strategy. In June, SenseTime partnered with Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corp to build the city's largest domestically developed AI data center, targeting over 40,000 petaFLOPS of computing capacity by 2030. The first phase, expected to be completed by the end of 2026, will deliver 3,000 petaFLOPS of computing power.

Shi described Hong Kong as an "AI-era entrepot trade center" with three unique advantages: dual-compliance capabilities bridging Chinese and international legal systems; superior international network connectivity; and its strategic location within the Greater Bay Area, backed by the Chinese mainland's vast talent pool.

"The project will significantly supplement SenseTime's own computing power supply while serving as a springboard to support the overseas deployment of integrated 'computing+model+application' capabilities," Shi explained.

The senior executive identified three key drivers for SenseTime's future growth: the unprecedented opportunity created by Chinovation; the maturation of the global computer vision market where SenseTime has achieved global leadership; and the trust and reputation built over eight years of overseas operations.

Industry observers are taking note of the broader implications. Li Shan, country head of NCS Greater China, highlighted two key characteristics of Chinovation: practicality and openness. "China can turn lab experiments into real industrial productivity in a very short period of time, and we also have a very fast turnaround time to improve technology," Li said.

Home prices see narrowed declines

China's 70 major cities generally saw narrowed year-on-year home price drops in July, adding to signs of stabilization of the property market, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Monday.

In the four first-tier cities of Guangzhou and Shenzhen in Guangdong province, Beijing and Shanghai, new home prices fell 1.1 percent year-on-year last month, compared with a 1.3-percent drop in June, while the decline in second-hand home prices narrowed from 4.9 percent to 3.7 percent in July.

In other cities, year-on-year declines of home prices also narrowed slightly in July, except new home prices in third-tier cities, where the decline was unchanged from June.

On a month-on-month basis, home prices in first-tier cities generally rose, while those in second- and third-tier cities went down. Across the 70 cities, 23 recorded increases or no change in new home prices, two more than in June, while the figure for second-hand homes was eight, two fewer than the previous month.

The NBS releases a monthly home price report tracking market changes in 70 major cities, including four first-tier cities, 31 second-tier cities and 35 third-tier cities.

More signs emerging this year suggest the property market has remained broadly stable with confidence and expectations gradually improving.

At a meeting on economic work held by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee at the end of last month, policymakers called for continued efforts to stabilize the property market.

Experts said the policy direction remains clear, with local governments expected to make better use of policy tools tailored to local conditions to meet housing demand.

Yu Xiaofen, a researcher at Zhejiang University of Technology in East China, called for faster progress in developing a new model for the property sector, as well as improving long-term mechanisms to promote the stable and healthy development of the market.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY



Visitors look at a demonstration apartment model of the Lakeside Mansion Project of China Railway 22nd Bureau Group, which aims to showcase its low-carbon technologies and ergonomic urban environment. The project has won multiple prestigious awards in utilizing advanced technologies in cutting-edge housing development. SU TIANJIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

APEC meeting spurring trade

By **ZHONG NAN** in Dalian, Liaoning
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With customs officials from Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation economies meeting in Dalian, Liaoning province, to advance trade facilitation across the region, trade experts and exporters said the talks will further boost China's trade with other APEC economies, underpinned by strong economic complementarity.

They said China's industrial upgrading and growing supply of high-tech and green products are helping developing APEC economies advance industrialization, as expanded trade and closer supply chain integration create new opportunities for regional economic cooperation.

Ahead of the meeting in Dalian, which starts on Wednesday, the General Administration of Customs said in a statement on Monday that it will work with other APEC economies to enhance regional trade security and facilitation, align customs rules and standards, and reduce institutional trade costs.

Ji Wenhua, a professor at the Academy of China Open Economy Studies — which is part of the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing — said that against the backdrop of a sluggish global economic recovery and rising geopolitical tensions, APEC has become an increasingly important platform for deeper economic integration across the region.

Zhang Yun, a professor at the School of International Studies at Nanjing University in Jiangsu province, said China's industrial upgrading and companies' growing global presence are creating new opportunities for developing APEC economies by bringing investment, advanced technologies and production capacity to local markets, strengthening their industrial capabilities and facilitating their integration into regional value chains.

Gu Yanping, customs affairs director at Zhejiang Sunny Optical Intelligence Technology Co Ltd — a manufacturer of optical imaging products based in Ningbo, Zhejiang province — said the company's Vietnam plant began operations in October, assembling China-sourced camera modules, vision modules and lens components into vision systems for smart robots, which are then sold globally.

"It has become a key overseas innovation and production base for the company, while also contributing to local employment and industrial development," said Gu.

Imports and exports with other APEC economies through Ningbo ports reached 747.96 billion yuan ($110.91 billion) in the first seven months, up 9.9 percent year-on-year, said Ningbo Customs.

Fujian Tide Power Technology Co Ltd, a power generation equipment manufacturer in Fuzhou, Fujian province, shipped 227 million yuan worth of products to other APEC markets between January and July, up 9.89 percent year-on-year, said Fuzhou Customs. Its exports included lighting towers, energy storage systems and gas and diesel generators, with diesel generator sets seeing particularly strong sales.

Cai Jinjin, the company's director of international sales, said demand for diesel generators remains strong across many APEC markets, particularly in developing economies where infrastructure construction and industrial expansion are boosting the need for reliable backup power.

China is hosting the third APEC Senior Officials' Meeting in Dalian from Monday through Aug 28, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

More than 2,300 representatives from APEC member economies and regional and international organizations will attend the meeting. The event will cover a wide range of fields, including trade, customs, transportation, food, science and technology, energy and health.

More broadly, Northeast China's two-way trade with other APEC economies reached 493 billion yuan during the January-July period, rising 8.1 percent year-on-year, said Shenyang Customs.

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BUSINESS

China-built water treatment plant hailed

Mongolian president calls it testament to bilateral strategic partnership

By **HAN JINGYAN**
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Staffers from China Railway No 4 Engineering Group check the operating status of equipment at the CREC4-built Ulaanbaatar Central Sewage Treatment Plant in Mongolia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Having been stationed in Mongolia for 11 years, Wang Jilin feels proud as he departs from a Mongolian airport after a local customs official gave him a hearty smile upon seeing that he's with China Railway No 4 Engineering Group.

"CREC4 has constructed a lot of projects in Mongolia and has become a well-known name to Mongolians," Wang said, adding that the warm smiles he receives make all the painstaking efforts worthwhile.

Since the 1950s, Chinese aid workers have come to Mongolia, helping construct over 850 projects, including highways, port facilities, shantytown renovation, urban infrastructure, as well as desertification prevention and control works.

On June 15, a central sewage treatment plant built by State-owned CREC4 officially began operating in Ulaanbaatar, the Mongolian capital, and on June 30, Mongolian President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh inspected the facility.

Spanning 178,000 square meters and comprising 55 individual buildings with a designed daily processing capacity of 250,000 cubic meters, it is the largest and most advanced sewage treatment facility in Mongolia, Wang said.

After examining the plant's major treatment units and receiving a detailed briefing, Khurelsukh highly praised the facility, calling it a symbol of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Mongolia and a testament to the friendship between the two peoples.

Wang said the plant can collect and treat domestic and industrial wastewater across Ulaanbaatar, serving nearly half of Mongolia's population of around 3.5 million, and significantly improving water quality in the capital.

"At busy times in our work, we could see some 400 Mongolian builders and 700 Chinese builders work side by side on the construction site. It was quite impressive," said Wang, who acts as Party chief for the CREC4 team that built the plant.



Staffers from Chinese State builder China Railway No 4 Engineering Group are hosted as guests at a home of a Mongolian employee. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Better livelihoods

The sewage treatment plant — a key Belt and Road undertaking — is only part of the many public works projects CREC4 has undertaken in Mongolia, said Wang from CREC4 First Engineering.

"But the plant carries vital importance," said Zhang Jiawei, chief engineer of the CREC4 team that built the plant.

In addition to serving nearly half of Mongolia's population, the country's most advanced sewage treatment facility ensures that water quality will be improved in the capital, as all treated sewage will finally enter the Selenge River, which eventually empties into Lake Baikal — the world's oldest and deepest freshwater lake.

Located in the southwestern part of Ulaanbaatar, in Songino Khairkhan district, the project includes pump houses in an old plant area, sewage pipelines into the plant, the new central sewage treatment plant and the tailwater discharge channels.

During its official inauguration on Feb 2, 2019, President Khurelsukh — who served as the nation's prime minister at the time — said many important projects in Ulaanbaatar were built with the help of Chinese friends.

Greatly elevating living conditions in Ulaanbaatar and improving public well-being, "it will become a model project of pragmatic cooperation between Mongolia and China", he said.

During a visit to the work site of the plant on Aug 17, 2021, Begzhavyn Monkhbaatar, then Mongolian minister for urban and construction development, applauded CREC4's efforts in building the facilities.

During construction work, CREC4 provided some 3,000 jobs for the locals.

Local resident Tsedev, who goes by one name only, said that at the guidance of Chinese colleagues, he learned to read Chinese project drawings and worked as a competent CREC4 builder.

"The salary here is higher than many others, and I can also learn many new skills," he said, adding that his hard work helped win recognition of CREC4, which awarded him a title of "Excellent Mongolian Worker" in 2021 as well as a bonus of 1,000 yuan ($148).

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, delivered a speech on June 15, as the sewage treatment plant launched operations.

China has always supported Mongolia in developing its economy and improving people's livelihoods, he said, adding that the cooperation always benefits the Mongolian people, with bilateral ties becoming a model of friendly coexistence, and common development and prosperity among neighboring countries.

Uyirs Tuguldur, director of the Presidential Office of Mongolia, hailed it as a major achievement of Mongolia-China cooperation, bringing tangible benefits to the Mongolian people.

He also expressed gratitude for China's support in Mongolia's socio-economic development.

Bonds of friendship

Earlier, CREC4 helped build the Development Center for Disabled Children in Mongolia, the No 2 Highway, and the country's first expressway leading to the new airport in Ulaanbaatar, which opened to traffic in late 2017, said Wang Jilin.

CREC4 is going all out to link the Belt and Road Initiative with Mongolia's Steppe Road Program, unveiled in November 2014, to reinvigorate its economy through transport and trade, he said.

Currently, CREC4 is still involved in projects in Mongolia, including the Qiaoba Mountain Highway Project in Eastern province; construction at Ulan Mine; and project management of a commercial/residential construction project in Ulaanbaatar, said Wu Yiyong, publicity chief of CREC4 First Engineering.

Back in July 2019, when the two-way six-lane expressway leading to the new airport in Ulaanbaatar was officially handed over to the Mongolian government, Khurelsukh said at the time that he believed "it can play a very good role", adding that "the quality is very good and it is of a very high standard".

Construction commenced on June 6, 2016, and the entire line was completed on Oct 12, 2018.

On Oct 19, 2023, Liu Bo, Party secretary and chairman of CREC4, also attended a signing ceremony in Beijing for CREC4's construction of a 6.96-kilometer railway line in Mongolia.

The signing ceremony between CREC4 and its Mongolian partners was for CREC4's general contracting of engineering project in building the Mongolian Xiberkulun Port Railway Engineering Project, another BRI undertaking.

The railway will start from the Sino-Mongolian cross-border point at the end of China's Linhe-Ceke Railway in Inner Mongolia, and extends northward for some 6.96 km. There will be a newly built facility — Xiberkulun Port Station. China's Ceke Port is situated along the China-Mongolia border.

Unseen contributions

Mao Mingliang, director of the engineering division of the CREC4 project department for building the Development Center for Disabled Children in Mongolia, said he had witnessed the hardship Chinese aid workers met in Mongolia.

The project site was located in the Tuul River Valley, with sandy and rocky geological conditions and extremely abundant groundwater — making building homes in the area akin to conducting construction on watery tofu, he said.

The foundation pit needed to be dug five meters below ground, with some sections reaching 6.5 meters. "During the trial excavation phase when the digging was less than one meter deep, numerous 'spring eyes' emerged at the bottom of the pit, bubbling up with water," recalled Yu Jin, the project's chief engineer.

The team ultimately adopted a "tube and well dewatering" solution — drilling three threaded steel pipes in the north and south outside the foundation-pit excavation line, allowing the groundwater to seep into the pipes and continuously pumping it out with high-pressure pumps.

The project was completed 10 days ahead of schedule, and in 2019, it won the "Best Architecture Award" for 2019 in Mongolia, Mao said.

The construction conditions were harsh, as Mongolia can have temperatures as low as -40 C, sandstorms and heavy snowfall were common, water shortages were constant and communications were underdeveloped, creating challenges for Chinese builders.

Wang Jilin recalled that in constructing the central sewage treatment plant in Ulaanbaatar, extreme cold temperatures were a big challenge.

"The project is located in a high-altitude region, with winter lasting for five months, and long-term very low temperatures can lead to unstable concrete performance, limiting construction processes," Wang said.

Meanwhile, the lack of supporting resources for large-scale sewage treatment projects in local regions also posed severe challenges throughout the project, he said.

"The construction team has optimized a special construction plan for extremely cold weather, and innovated low-temperature construction techniques, by adding insulation enclosure structures for biological treatment units, and customizing antifreeze protection devices for deep treatment equipment and pipelines," Wang recalled.

"Although the work was arduous, it was also a treasure in my work and in my life, as we had solidified our friendships among us, and it can last a lifetime," he said.

Wang said that he is immensely happy with his work, as it can help strengthen the friendship between the two peoples.

Construction projects strengthen bonds of Chinese-Mongolian friendships

By **HAN JINGYAN**

After finishing her studies at Beijing University of Technology, Otgonbaya Urna returned to Mongolia and joined China Railway No 4 Engineering Group in September 2016 as a project coordinator.

Though busy with her work building a Development Center for Disabled Children, she was also very proud to be helping the Chinese State builder with translations covering tax exemption for import and export materials, as well as with local procurement and archiving of project completion acceptance.

"She is very professional, conscientious and hard working, and has helped us a lot," said Lyu Haiyun, a CREC4 project leader in Ulaanbaatar, the Mongolian capital.

The bond of friendship between the Chinese and Mongolian peoples is rooted in fine traditions, mutual respect and shared visions. Since the 1950s, Chinese aid workers have been traveling to Mongolia to help construct over 850 projects, he said.

Lyu added that the projects adhered to a people-oriented approach, ensuring that the cooperation always benefits the Mongolian people.

While building the Development Center for Disabled Children in Mongolia, CREC4 provided over 1,000 jobs for locals, with the number of Mongolian employees reaching more than 70 percent, Lyu said.

Sohobater, 40, was one of the participants. Prior to this job, he primarily made a living by herding some 100 sheep, earning slightly over 20,000 yuan ($2,966) each year.

After joining the project in September 2016, he became a Mongolian employee of CREC4. "I was actually quite hesitant at first, worrying about poor living conditions, unfamiliar food, language barriers and communication difficulties," he said.

Understanding this, the project department built a Mongolian yurt for him, set up a Mongolian staff canteen and even sent gifts during festivals and holidays.

When teaching him how to tile, Chinese master colleague Zhang Ruimin demonstrated the process with great care, helping Sohobater grow into a team leader managing 24 Mongolian employees. Sohobater was awarded the title of "Excellent Mongolian Employee" every month.



Chinese and Mongolian project builders enjoy activities at a construction site in Mongolia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"My work here has changed my life completely and taught me skills. I love my Chinese colleagues and our relationship is like that of brothers and sisters," he said.

But the road to full cooperation was not smooth at first. CREC4 employee Wang Jilin, who has been stationed in Mongolia for 11 years, recalled the job of building the two-way six-lane expressway leading to the new airport in Ulaanbaatar between June 2016 and October 2018.

"When the construction work on this 32-kilometer highway officially commenced on June 6, 2016, we faced a big challenge — our Mongolian employees were not used to working overtime," he said. "Though we discussed this with them, they were still unwilling to do it."

"When the Chinese employees learned of the situation with the tight schedule, they all said: 'we can do it ourselves'. I was almost moved to tears," recalled Deng Erlong, the then CREC4 project manager.

Mongolian nights in September are bitterly cold, but the construction site was brightly lit and all the Chinese employees went outside to measure data and elevations, and took shovels to begin their work.

After the Mongolian builders visited the site at night, they changed their minds after seeing the busy scene and actively joined in the construction.

In 2020, the expressway project won the "Luban Award" as an overseas engineering undertaking for the National High Quality Project.

During the expressway's construction, CREC4 partnered with over 30 enterprises in Mongolia, creating over 1,000 local jobs and cultivating various professional talents and technical workers in highway construction.

When Mongolia's Badakh road and bridge company cooperated with CREC4 in 2017, it only had five engineers. Now, it has more than 20 engineers, over 100 technical workers and more than 60 types of construction machinery.

Its Deputy General Manager Sayinsur said: "From being able to build roads that are only seven or eight meters wide to now being proficient in building roads that are 14 meters wide, Chinese builders have generously passed their guidance on to us, greatly improving our technology. We thank them sincerely."

In building the central sewage treatment plant project in Ulaanbaatar, CREC4 hired over 600 local Mongolian laborers and trained more than 50 local technical professionals, Lyu said.

The bonds of friendship developed even further. Ganbgatu, from CREC4 International Business Department, went to work on the central sewage treatment plant project in Ulaanbaatar.

In 2022, he met local girl Eenhhosharura, and by gradually understanding and respecting each other's culture and values, they got married on May 20, 2024.

"In the future, we will contribute our own strength in helping bolster the high-quality development of CREC4," said Ganbgatu.

Sohobater noted: "China's aid to Mongolia is sincere, selfless, beneficial to people's livelihoods and of high quality and quantity. We appreciate it very much."

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CHINA

Plan to tailor new routes for road trips

Authorities target a 60,000-km-long natl network linking major attractions

By **LUO WANGSHU**
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China plans to develop about 60,000 kilometers of routes specifically tailored for road trips by 2030, linking some of the country's best-known landscapes and cultural sites while improving services for travelers, the Ministry of Transport announced on Monday.

The national network will largely make use of existing highways and connect major tourist attractions, cultural landmarks and scenic areas. At its core will be three loops, four east-west routes and five north-south routes.

The loops will consist of routes along China's border and coastal areas, one around the capital metropolitan region, and another through Qinghai and Gansu provinces.

The east-west routes will take in areas associated with the Great Wall, the Yellow and Yangtze rivers, as well as the high-altitude landscapes of western China. The north-south routes will feature the Grand Canal, world heritage sites in eastern China, mountain scenery in Central China, sites associated with the Long March and historic travel routes.

According to the ministry, the network will include long-distance routes crossing provincial boundaries, complemented by locally developed itineraries tailored to regional attractions and travel demand.

The plan goes beyond the roads themselves. It calls for better rest areas, viewing points and safety facilities, along with more charging stations, roadside repair services and car rental options at airports, railway stations and other transport hubs.

Local authorities are also encouraged to develop camping, educational trips, sporting events and other activities along the routes, making the journey itself a bigger part of the tourism experience.

The initiative comes as road trips account for a large share of domestic travel.

During this year's nine-day Spring Festival holiday in February, an average of nearly 270 million passenger trips were made by private vehicles each day, up 8.3 percent year-on-year and accounting for 86 percent of all passenger trips, according to the Ministry of Transport.

An average of about 650,000 small passenger vehicles were rented each day during the holiday period, up 15 percent from the previous year.



Visitors in self-drive vehicles stop at a viewing platform to admire a breathtaking sea of clouds in Longhui county, Hunan province, on Aug 5. ZENG YONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Vice-Minister of Transport Xu Chengguang said at a news conference in July that developing routes for road travelers and making car rentals more widely available would be among the ministry's priorities during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30).

The ministry will "develop routes for self-drive travel and expand the coverage of car rental services", Xu said. He added that more rental outlets would be established near airports and high-speed railway stations to enable travelers to arrive by air or rail and continue their journeys by car. The ministry is also encouraging cheaper or free one-way returns for rental vehicles.

Liu Dong, an official with the ministry's department of comprehensive planning, said at a policy briefing in February that road trips had emerged as a new source of tourism spending, with some highways becoming attractions in their own right.

He said the ministry planned to make greater use of national and provincial highways to develop longer routes spanning multiple regions, while improving connections between highways and tourist attractions and upgrading services along the way.

For some families, road trips have already become an annual tradition. A woman surnamed Pan from Northeast China said she travels by car with her family to different parts of the country every year, with her daughter or other family members taking turns behind the wheel.

"Traveling by car is very convenient now. The roads are good and the service areas are comfortable, which makes it a good option for families," she said.

Better charging infrastructure is also making long-distance road travel easier, particularly for electric vehicle owners.

An EV owner surnamed Xu said drivers now have less reason to worry about finding a place to recharge their vehicles than they did several years ago. Charging stations have become easier to locate and much more widely available along major roads.

"Now there's almost always a charging station nearby," he said.

By 2035, the ministry aims to have a more complete national network in place, with better services, stronger safety support and a wider range of tourism and leisure options for road travelers.

Single travel permit to push GBA integration

By **ZHENG CAIXIONG**
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Macao residents and Hong Kong permanent residents can now use a single document — the Mainland Travel Permit for Hong Kong and Macao Residents (including non-Chinese citizens) — to complete automated immigration clearance when both departing from and arriving at three ports linking Guangdong province and the Macao Special Administrative Region.

The new measures are a part of refinements to the "joint inspection, one-time release" model, which was officially implemented on Tuesday at three major land checkpoints — the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, Hengqin and Qingmao ports — between Guangdong and Macao.

Previously, Hong Kong and Macao residents were required to present different documents depending on the direction of their travel when using the joint-inspection automated channels. When traveling from Macao to the mainland, they had to present their Mainland Travel Permit for Hong Kong and Macao Residents. When returning to Macao from the mainland, they were required to present either a Macao resident identity card or a Hong Kong permanent identity card.

"In the past, I had to bring two types of documents when traveling, and sometimes I forgot to bring them. Now this method is flexible and convenient, so you don't have to worry about forgetting to bring your certificate, and you won't get confused when passing customs," said a Macao resident.

The measures, approved by the National Immigration Administration, aim to further enhance travelers' exit-entry clearance experience and facilitate the movement of people in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, according to a statement released on Monday by the Zhuhai general station of immigration inspection. They are expected to further accelerate integration between the three regions, the statement said.

At Qingmao Port, a frequent cross-border commuter between Zhuhai and Macao surnamed Lin praised the smooth process after experiencing the optimized joint-inspection and one-time-release immigration service on Tuesday.

Located south of Zhuhai Railway Station of the Guangzhou-Zhuhai Intercity Railway, Qingmao Port is a 24-hour passenger-only port for pedestrians.

Besides optimizing the submission and verification of documents for Hong Kong and Macao residents, the new measures also increase the number of people eligible to use the cooperative fast-inspection channel and the joint-inspection lane for vehicles entering and leaving Macao.

Under the new measures, eligible foreigners and Taiwan residents who have completed registration for expedited customs clearance with authorities in both the mainland and Macao can use the "One-stop Joint Services Lanes" at Hengqin Port.

"The measures represent not only an upgrade in inspection methods, but also a vivid practice of the Greater Bay Area's 'hard-connectivity' development," said He Caigen, director of the border inspection division of the Zhuhai general station of immigration inspection.

Real-time dynamic monitoring of lane operation data will be conducted to continuously optimize the systems and publicize user-friendly policies, while every effort will be made to ensure smooth port clearance in the weeks to come, He said.

"Under the premise of 'effective regulation', we will further deliver liberalized access and efficient clearance," he said.

The Zhuhai general station of immigration inspection first rolled out its "joint inspection, one-time release" model in 2018. The model has served as a national benchmark and represents a novel approach to immigration clearance under the "one country, two systems" framework. It has undergone continuous upgrades and expanded coverage in recent years.

According to a statement released on the official website of the Macao SAR government, the cumulative inbound and outbound passenger flow through the three cooperative inspection ports reached 42 million in the first half of this year, with an average daily passenger flow of 235,000, an increase of 12.8 percent compared with the same period in 2025. Macao residents accounted for 43.8 percent of the total, up 12.4 percent year-on-year, while Hong Kong residents accounted for 2.2 percent, up 12.2 percent year-on-year.



Milestone visitor

Zhang Zhiheng (second from left), a young visitor from Binzhou, Shandong province, views a robot model at the Shanghai Science & Technology Museum on Tuesday. Zhang was celebrated as the museum's 100 millionth visitor since its opening in 2001. TAO LEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

PLA Navy's first group of carrier-based female trainee pilots ready to take off

By **LI SHANGYI**
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> "The ship's pitching and rolling require more precise control for landing."
>
> **Wang Mengdi,** a female flight cadet from the PLA Naval Aviation University

The first group of female naval pilot trainees selected to train as carrier-based aircraft pilots recently passed their daytime individual landing assessments in the Bohai Bay in Shandong province, marking a significant step forward in the People's Liberation Army Navy's efforts to train female pilots for carrier-based aircraft.

The female flight cadets were enrolled at the PLA Naval Aviation University in 2023 and completed their maiden flights in April 2024, demonstrating their ability to independently pilot aircraft. Over the past three years, the group has progressed from theoretical study to aircraft type conversion training.

Wang Mengdi, a female flight cadet from the PLA Naval Aviation University, told China Central Television News that landing over the sea presents a psychological challenge because the landing platform is relatively small and is affected by waves and sea winds.

"The ship's pitching and rolling require more precise control for landing," she said.

During the assessment, a helicopter lifted off as Han Meng, another flight cadet, steadily raised the throttle. As strong winds over the sea caused the aircraft to shake, Han made subtle adjustments with her left hand on the collective — a lever that controls the pitch angle of the rotor blades — and gently worked the control stick with her right hand to keep the helicopter on course.

As she entered the landing phase, the ship swayed with the swells, leaving the deck unsteady. Han remained focused on changes in the ship's wake, carefully monitoring the aircraft's altitude and speed while sensing feedback from the control stick with her fingertips.

Upon receiving the landing guide's command, Han seized a brief moment of stability, decisively reduced the throttle and lowered the collective, guiding the helicopter to a smooth touchdown with virtually no impact.

The group of female flight cadets completed the assessment as multiple aircraft took off and landed in an orderly manner.

After completing the assessment, Han said, "It feels as if there's an invisible high wall in front of you during landing, and the psychological pressure suddenly increases."

According to training unit leaders, a progressive training model — moving from instructor-led flights to phased individual flying — has been adopted for the first group of female flight cadets.

The approach draws on the female cadets' calm, meticulous nature and gentle handling skills while strengthening areas in which they are less proficient, including attitude awareness, instrument interpretation and deviation correction, the leaders said.

Training plans were also tailored to each cadet and each training subject, covering ground simulation, in-flight execution, and post-flight review and evaluation, with strict oversight throughout the process.

After each landing, instructors led the cadets in reviewing flight data, replaying their control trajectories and analyzing deviations in their actions to identify their causes and develop improvement plans. This closed-loop training process helped the first group of female flight cadets improve their ability to coordinate and operate carrier-based aircraft.

Next, they will undergo training and assessments for more challenging subjects, such as formation flying and nighttime landings.

Father, son sentenced to prison for trafficking chemicals

By **CAO YIN**
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A Chinese court has sentenced a man and his son to prison and issued them fines for trafficking precursor chemicals abroad, amid strengthened anti-narcotics cooperation between China and the United States.

The Jiang'an District People's Court in Wuhan, capital of Hubei province, convicted the duo of illegal operations on Friday, Xinhua News Agency reported on Tuesday. The father was sentenced to six years in prison, while his son received a five-and-a-half-year prison sentence.

The court found that the two organized the sale of controlled stimulant substances in 123 transactions between November 2021 and July 2024, with a total value exceeding 1.69 million yuan ($250,000).

The case came to the attention of Chinese authorities after the US Drug Enforcement Administration reported a related incident involving the trafficking of sensitive chemicals to China's Ministry of Public Security in June 2023. The ministry promptly instructed police in Hubei to investigate.

1.69 million yuan
The total value of the sale of controlled stimulant substances in the case

The investigation identified a father-and-son team, surnamed Xia, as being suspected of trafficking large quantities of non-regulated precursor chemicals overseas. Since May 2021, the pair had registered multiple companies and hired people to advertise nonregulated chemicals on domestic and international websites, falsely claiming that they had the capabilities to produce, operate and transport such chemicals.

After receiving orders from overseas buyers, they sourced the chemicals domestically and shipped them abroad through international freight forwarders. Police later discovered that the chemicals they had trafficked included controlled stimulant substances.

In recent years, Chinese narcotics control authorities and the US DEA have intensified law enforcement cooperation, cracking down on cases involving drug smuggling and the transnational trafficking of new psychoactive substances.

In May, for example, Chinese police apprehended a suspect surnamed Gong in Tianjin after receiving information from the US in a jointly investigated cross-border drug trafficking case involving new psychoactive substances. US authorities had earlier arrested an American suspect involved in the same case in Georgia.

The two countries have also stepped up cooperation in areas including combating telecom fraud and repatriating fugitives.

In April, police from China, the US and the United Arab Emirates conducted a joint international law enforcement operation targeting telecom fraud syndicates operating in Dubai. The crackdown dismantled nine scam compounds and led to the capture of 276 suspects.

Also in April, US authorities repatriated a Chinese national suspected of drug smuggling and trafficking, marking the first drug-related fugitive handed over by the US to China in recent years.

China, for its part, apprehended a US citizen wanted through an Interpol Red Notice for serious violent crimes and handed the fugitive over to US law enforcement at Shanghai Pudong International Airport following an investigation in July.

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POLICY REVIEW

Factory floors produce visitor intrigue

Nation's assembly lines have grown into hot spots for culture, learning

By YANG FEIYUE
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SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

The repurposed giant steel furnaces of Beijing's Shougang Park no longer produce metal, but they have become a draw for tourists. In Wuhan's Optics Valley in Hubei province, visitors explore the technologies behind modern communications, while in Guangdong's smart factories, robotic production lines have become attractions in their own right. Together, they reflect the rapid rise of industrial tourism across China.

Long associated with smokestacks, assembly lines and production targets, factories are increasingly becoming destinations. Travelers are no longer content with simply viewing landscapes or historical monuments. Many, particularly younger visitors, want to understand how products are made, how technologies work and how China's industrial transformation has reshaped cities and communities.

Against this backdrop, in May, seven central government departments issued a directive aimed at accelerating the development of industrial tourism nationwide. The policy, jointly released by agencies including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, lays out eight key tasks covering heritage surveys, conservation, product development, cultural interpretation, educational integration, promotion and safety management.

The directive calls for nationwide surveys and documentation of industrial heritage resources, along with the establishment of graded and categorized databases to clarify the value and development potential of each site.

It emphasizes the principle of "protection first, rational utilization and minimal intervention", ensuring that core structures, spatial patterns and authentic industrial features are preserved. Rather than treating industrial heritage as static relics, the policy seeks to safeguard its historical integrity while allowing for appropriate reuse.

The directive also highlights the importance of interpreting industrial cultural values, including craftsmanship, entrepreneurship and innovation, through exhibitions, creative content and cultural products. It further encourages the development of branded cultural goods, including "*guochao*" (Chinachic) products, to bring industrial heritage into contemporary consumption spaces.

On the tourism side, the policy promotes diversified formats. These include heritage-based redevelopment projects that adapt old industrial sites through creative design and new business models; factory tours that open production lines for public viewing, hands-on participation and product customization; and smart tourism experiences powered by digital technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence and autonomous systems.

Service quality is another key focus. The directive calls for improved infrastructure, professional guide training, better integration with urban transport systems, and enhanced multilingual services and tax refund facilitation to support inbound tourism.

The document signals a shift in thinking that industrial tourism is no longer viewed as a niche form of factory sightseeing. Instead, policymakers increasingly see it as a platform for integrating culture, tourism and industry while showcasing the achievements of Chinese modernization.

According to Hou Yanquan, an associate researcher with the strategic planning institute at the Industrial Culture Development Center of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, China has more than 140 national-level industrial tourism demonstration bases. Industry forecasts suggest the sector could maintain annual growth of around 18 percent through 2029, with market value potentially exceeding 300 billion yuan ($44.5 billion).

Behind those figures lies a deeper change in consumer behavior.

Gong Jian, a professor at the College of Urban and Environmental Sciences at Central China Normal University, said that tourism was largely associated with mountains, ancient towns and scenic attractions in the past, but today's visitors increasingly seek knowledge and participation alongside leisure. Young travelers want to understand the technologies behind new energy vehicles, optical fibers, industrial robots and advanced manufacturing systems, Gong said.

The trend reflects a growing demand for authenticity in tourism experiences. Unlike purpose-built attractions, industrial tourism often takes place in real production environments. Visitors encounter working factories, preserved workshops, original machinery — and the people who operate them.

"What visitors see is not a replica or a staged performance. They see real production sites, real processes and real labor," Gong said.

The transformation of China's manufacturing sector has further expanded the appeal. Smart factories, automated workshops and digital production systems have replaced many traditional images of heavy industry, creating environments that combine technology, innovation and education.

Ma Xiaolong, a tourism professor at Nankai University, said projects that offer immersive and participatory experiences have performed particularly well.

He identified intelligent manufacturing facilities, traditional craft enterprises and revitalized industrial heritage sites as among the fastest-growing categories.

Broader vision

For years, many industrial tourism projects focused primarily on factory visits and product displays. The new framework places industrial culture at the center. The emphasis shifts from simply viewing equipment to understanding the broader stories behind industrialization, technological innovation, craftsmanship and social development.

Gong described this as a move from treating industrial tourism as a tourism product to viewing it as a form of cultural interpretation.

The challenge, however, is ensuring that development does not come at the expense of heritage value, experts cautioned.

Industrial sites often contain layers of historical, technological and social significance that extend far beyond their physical structures, they said.

Gong said that industrial heritage should be understood as an integrated cultural landscape rather than a collection of isolated buildings.

He pointed to Wuhan Iron and Steel Group as an illustration of this approach. The company remains in full operation today, with its active modern production lines running alongside carefully preserved industrial heritage, including a blast furnace museum and smart manufacturing demonstration lines. Together, the operational plant and heritage attractions host tens of thousands of visitors annually, local authorities reported.

This integration of active production, historical memory and urban development makes it a powerful example of how industrial sites can become meaningful cultural landscapes, Gong said.

New audiences

The policy arrives as the market for industrial tourism continues to diversify, said Zhang Zuqun, a staff member at the School of Arts and Design at Beijing Institute of Technology and an expert in industrial heritage evaluation.

Study tours have emerged as one of the most important growth segments. Educational reforms emphasizing labor education, practical learning and scientific literacy have increased demand for experiential learning opportunities outside traditional classrooms, Zhang said.

Industrial sites offer students direct exposure to manufacturing, engineering and technological innovation. Family travelers, photography enthusiasts, cultural tourists and corporate groups have also become important audiences, he said.

Zhang added that consumer demand has been increasingly centered on immersive experiences, knowledge acquisition and cultural engagement rather than simple sightseeing.

Yet meeting these rising expectations is no simple task.

The challenge, Gong said, is avoiding two extremes. One is turning industrial tourism into a technical lecture that overwhelms visitors with information. The other is reducing industrial heritage to generic commercial developments stripped of their historical character.

He said that successful projects must balance technology with storytelling, education with entertainment, and heritage with innovation.

Gong said that the policy's deeper significance lies in cultivating cultural confidence and industrial identity. By opening up production sites and preserving industrial memory, the policy will help people understand that Chinese-style modernization was created generation by generation by workers, engineers, entrepreneurs, researchers and urban residents.

Factories, mines and workshops, he said, are becoming places where the stories of industrial development and modern China itself can be experienced firsthand.

Professor Ma said the directive provides a crucial foundation for industrial tourism to move beyond novelty check-ins toward technological knowledge, cultural depth and emotional resonance. By encouraging branding, content development and diversified formats, the policy helps shift competition from resource advantages to IP and distinctiveness, he said.

Policy Digest

Unified national standard set for medical lab pricing

China's National Healthcare Security Administration has issued trial guidelines for medical laboratory service pricing. This release completes a comprehensive 40-batch rollout, marking the basic establishment of a unified, standardized nationwide system for healthcare billing.

The guidelines cover major areas including clinical testing, blood transfusion and blood typing, microbiology and parasitology, molecular diagnostics, biochemistry and immunology. They contain 662 primary items, 114 surcharge items and seven extension items.

Pricing focuses on service outcomes rather than testing methods to eliminate arbitrary price gaps. Billing units are unified for clearer, simpler charging.

An NHSA official said that nationwide standardization will drive high-quality development in laboratory medicine while facilitating the mutual recognition of test results across regions and healthcare providers.

Blueprint released for weather warning system

The China Meteorological Administration and the National Development and Reform Commission have issued a joint plan for the development of the national comprehensive meteorological observation system during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period.

The roadmap aims to modernize the country's meteorological science, technology and public services through integrated multi-domain coverage, broadened scope and utility, and enhanced resource coordination.

The plan stresses accelerating the development of a modern comprehensive meteorological observation system that integrates land, sea, air and space, promotes coordination across sectors, and operates intelligently, efficiently and precisely.

$200b target set for emergency equipment

China has unveiled a new five-year plan to rapidly modernize its safety and emergency equipment sector, aiming for output in key areas to hit 1.4 trillion yuan ($206 billion) by 2030. Jointly issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Ministry of Emergency Management, the strategy centers on cultivating market-leading enterprises to drive the nation's response capabilities.

The plan aims to significantly raise the industry's scale, technological capabilities, product quality and application levels over the next five years.

China's safety and emergency equipment industry has grown rapidly in recent years, with output in key areas surpassing 1 trillion yuan in 2025.

New technologies and equipment have been increasingly deployed in front-line rescue and relief operations. During this year's flood season, drones and satellite communications systems were used to detect risks at dams and ensure communications during emergencies, making flood control and disaster response more precise and efficient.

CHINA DAILY—XINHUA

Xiaomi puts smart manufacturing on public show

By YANG FEIYUE

When visitors step into Chinese tech company Xiaomi's electric vehicle factory in Beijing E-Town, the giant robotic arms swinging with precision never fail to take their breath away.

Autonomous robots glide silently across the floor carrying parts. A 9,100-metric-ton die-casting machine shapes molten metal into automotive components in just 100 seconds. Over 600 robots work in concert across the 718,000-square-meter facility, where every 76 seconds, a new electric vehicle rolls off the production line.

Since beginning public tours in March 2024 — and fully opening to individual visitors in November 2024 — the factory has welcomed more than a quarter of a million people, making it a popular destination to experience firsthand how electric vehicles are manufactured.

The factory's openness aligns with a directive issued in late May by seven central government departments — including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology — which encourages manufacturers in sectors such as automotive and robotics to open production lines to public viewing, offer hands-on experiences and develop educational study tours.

"We started by studying how to make it work," said Ma Lan, general manager of Xiaomi's Beijing E-Town campus, which encompasses the EV factory and research and development facilities. The challenge, she said, was to maintain production, ensure safety and keep the tour engaging.

"The factory produced 410,000 vehicles last year — all real production, not a set built for show," Ma said. "We needed to explore the integration of manufacturing and tourism while ensuring normal operations and product quality."

The solution involved scientifically designed tour routes, strategically scheduled visiting hours and strict safety protocols. Visitors enter production areas with full protective gear and remain in vehicles throughout the tour. Since opening, the factory has recorded zero safety incidents.

"We have visitors of all kinds," said Zhao Liangtao, director of the factory's comprehensive management department. "We tailor our explanations — technical depth for professionals, educational content for students, fun and engagement for families."

Since May, the factory has offered weekly English-language tours. Any visitor from any country can book through Xiaomi's mobile app using a passport. The factory also hosts a steady stream of international delegations — government officials, industry experts, business executives and university groups.

"Beyond the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, Xiaomi's EV factory gives international visitors a direct, in-depth look at China's smart manufacturing capabilities," Ma said.

The factory has made educational programming a strategic priority. In May this year, it launched the "Science Lecture Hall" project, signing agreements with 11 primary and secondary schools in the Beijing E-Town area.

The program offers a two-hour experience: a one-hour customized factory tour and an hour of interactive classroom learning. Two courses are currently available, focusing on exploring the relationship between car design and aerodynamic drag, and green development in the industry, with two more in development.

"Children's experience at the factory is completely different from learning from textbooks," Zhao said. "They can see with their own eyes how cars move along the production line and how robots automatically transport materials. These real front-line scenes stimulate imagination, leave a deeper impression and bring more inspiration."

The program is expected to offer more than 300 sessions this year, reaching over 10,000 students.

The factory's appeal extends beyond the assembly line. A go-kart track opened on site in March, featuring a 580-meter circuit that uses only electric karts. The track has attracted nearly 9,000 visitors since its debut.

The factory canteen opened in March 2025, and a cultural and creative products store opened in April 2025. Both have become hits among visitors.

"We want the factory to be more than a place where cars are made," Zhao said. "We want it to become a window showcasing China's manufacturing innovation, a key vehicle for spreading industrial culture and a new landmark for industrial tourism with international influence."

For Ma, the factory's deeper value lies in what it reveals about industrial culture. She described two core principles that define Xiaomi's approach.

"The first is engineering culture — a commitment to relentlessly pursuing perfection, to sparing no effort in mastering every detail, to solving technical challenges with focus and precision," she said.

"The second is entrepreneurial culture. The project has carried forward the spirit of hard work and determination," she added.

The Xiaomi EV factory has set its sights on becoming a national industrial tourism demonstration base and is pursuing 4A-level scenic spot certification. But its immediate goal for this year is to welcome 200,000 visitors.

"We hope that through industrial tourism and educational study tours, more members of the public will visit the factory, learn about manufacturing and experience the charm of China's automotive industry innovation," Ma said. The May directive, she added, gives the factory a clear direction as it pursues its goal.

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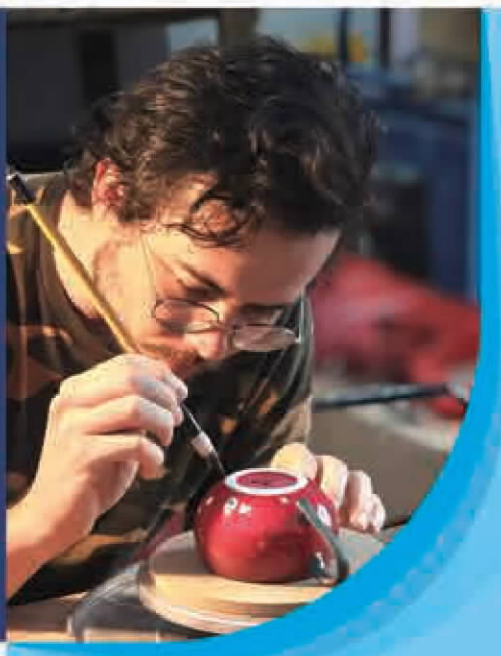
All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY



Jingdezhen fires global imagination

Once carried overseas, Jingdezhen porcelain now draws international artists to its source, creating new exchanges between cultures and creative traditions.

Above: Yann Colleu paints on a red-clay teapot with a calligraphy brush at his studio in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province. **Bottom:** Denis Naymark carves decorative textures into a white porcelain teapot in Jingdezhen. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By **GUO JIATONG**
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When French artist Yann Colleu first encountered porcelain in 2014 as a contemporary art student in France, he had little idea that the material would eventually become central to his life.

At the time, he worked across a range of media, from wood and oil painting to performance and music, with porcelain just one material among many.

That began to change in 2017, when he traveled to Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, for a three-month academic exchange at Jingdezhen Ceramic University.

Colleu said his time in Jingdezhen opened his eyes to how expressive porcelain could be on its own. "I want to explore every aspect of porcelain that can emulate thought and convey emotion."

Back in France, he could not stop thinking about Jingdezhen and soon found himself longing to return. Over the following years, he traveled back and forth between the two countries. In 2024, when Colleu was 32, he and his family decided to settle in Jingdezhen.

Colleu is one of many international artists drawn to the city, some for short stays and others who eventually choose to put down roots.

Their presence has taken on added significance since the Jingdezhen Handicraft Porcelain Industry Sites were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in July.

For centuries, Jingdezhen porcelain traveled overseas along ancient maritime trade routes, carrying Chinese craftsmanship and aesthetics to distant markets. Today, artists from around the world are making the journey in the opposite direction, learning from the city's ceramic traditions while bringing artistic languages of their own.

Colleu has witnessed the city's creative scene become increasingly international and diverse.

What was once centered on technical mastery and material quality, he said, has grown to embrace contemporary art, performance, experimental music, digital modeling and 3D printing. "Some artists who left for larger cities in search of opportunities are also beginning to return."

Colleu himself went on to study *qinghua*, or blue-and-white porcelain, and *youzhong wucai*, an in-glaze polychrome decoration technique, working with local craftspeople to learn from and experiment with these traditional methods.

The longer Colleu worked with porcelain, however, the more he came to understand how much of the process lay beyond the maker's control. Moisture, drying, shrinkage and firing can all affect the final results, and even a carefully made piece can crack or deform in the kiln.

> "If used well, livestreaming can help the industry grow, but when everyone is chasing traffic and quick profits, prices can become distorted, and craftspeople devoted to traditional techniques may be left wondering where the industry is headed."
>
> **BangCho (pseudonym),** a South Korean entrepreneur

He compares the process to a human relationship.

"You cannot force a relationship and expect positive results," he said. "You have to observe, you have to listen, and you have to adapt."

That dialogue between maker and material has also fascinated Denis Naymark, a sculptor from the United States.

Naymark began working with ceramics at around the age of 8, in a studio at a university in New York where his father taught. After his father's lectures, he recalled, he would run to the studio and shape clay into faces, dragons, horses, teapots and bowls.

"The possibilities were always endless," he said.

He later studied ceramic sculpture and traveled to Jingdezhen in 2013, at age 22, to deepen his knowledge of advanced porcelain techniques and traditional Chinese ceramic materials.

Naymark said the city gave him the space to weave his fascination with nature into his work.

"Growing up near the ocean in New York, I developed an enduring interest in aquatic life," he said. "The hills and forests around Jingdezhen offered me further inspiration."

That influence can be seen in his teapot designs, which draw inspiration from seashells, coral, and other marine life. Rounded bodies, shell-like ridges, dotted textures and glossy blue, white and pink glazes give them the feel of an underwater world.

Though the compositions may appear spontaneous, every shell, form and color is carefully placed.

For Naymark, experimentation does not mean breaking with tradition. "You need both traditional techniques and modern, new ideas," he said.

Beyond aesthetics

South Korean entrepreneur BangCho (pseudonym), who came to Jingdezhen in 2019, found his own path into the city's porcelain legacy through tea. "To him, porcelain is particularly well suited to bringing out the character of tea.

"Jingdezhen is one of China's major production centers for everyday tea-ware, with kilns capable of consistently firing porcelain at temperatures above 1,300 degrees Celsius," he said. "At such temperatures, the glaze forms a smooth, glasslike surface with very low water absorption, helping preserve the tea's original aroma and flavor."

That understanding shapes his designs. For BangCho, function comes before decoration.

When designing a *gaiwan*, or lidded tea bowl, he considers factors such as its thickness and diameter, pouring speed and heat retention — all of which influence the experience of drinking tea.

Beyond his own designs, BangCho sees porcelain not only as an art form, but as a craft that has supported the city's economy for generations.

"There is hardly another city anywhere in the world that has sustained itself on a single ceramics industry for a thousand years," he said.

Over the years, he has also watched the city and its ceramic economy evolve.

"Years ago, young people were far less visible in the city center," he recalled. Today, he said, they fill its streets and markets, while contemporary ceramics, from coffee cups to plates and bowls with modern designs, have grown in popularity alongside traditional wares.

Livestreaming and e-commerce have further expanded the market, extending the reach of Jingdezhen ceramics beyond the city.

But BangCho sees that growth as a double-edged sword.

"If used well, livestreaming can help the industry grow, but when everyone is chasing traffic and quick profits, prices can become distorted, and craftspeople devoted to traditional techniques may be left wondering where the industry is headed," he said.

He believes preserving the knowledge behind the craft is just as important as expanding the market and has called for publicly supported training programs to provide craftspeople with the resources and opportunities needed to pass their skills on to younger generations.

Looking ahead, BangCho hopes to develop products that bring Chinese and South Korean aesthetics into dialogue while introducing ceramic works from both countries to wider audiences.

The paths taken by Colleu, Naymark and BangCho are different, but what connects them is Jingdezhen itself — a place whose centuries-old ceramic traditions continue to attract people from beyond China, not simply to observe them, but to learn from them and become part of their continuing evolution.

For Colleu, that pull has become inseparable from a feeling of home.

"Once you experience that environment, it becomes very difficult not to feel that you belong here," he said.



Social Media Digest

Steel the fun

Think regular DIY isn't cool — or hard-core — enough? Young Chinese people are finding their next craft obsession in an unlikely place: the hardware store.

Metal elbows, faucet fittings, valves, pipes and all kinds of steel odds and ends can be picked up for just a few yuan. Add a little imagination, and plumbing supplies suddenly become Thor's hammer, a steampunk wine dispenser or something even harder to explain.

Snap a photo, post it online, and these creations can quickly go viral on social media under the tag "hardware store Lego".

It might sound like a fleeting fad. But the trend says something interesting about how young people are redefining fun.

Not long ago, getting into crafts often meant signing up for pottery, tufting or another carefully curated studio experience. Now, young people are looking for something that costs less, feels more personal, and leaves much more room for creativity — walking into a hardware shop, buying a handful of ordinary parts and figuring out what they could become.

Behind those neighborhood shops sits China's enormous manufacturing ecosystem, producing an extraordinary variety of metal fittings, tools and components at low prices. Parts designed for plumbing, construction and repair are abundant and easy to find.

With such a ready supply of cheap parts to play with, who says Lego has to be plastic?



A new generation of DIY enthusiasts is turning hardware stores into unlikely creative playgrounds. VCG

Picture imperfect

Tired of seeing picture-perfect lives all over social media? Apparently, so is everyone else. TikTok's "Yes, but" trend is giving those flawless posts a reality check.

The format is simple: two photos, two very different versions of the same moment. The top image is the polished "Yes"; the bottom is the decidedly less glamorous "but".

Picture this: "Yes" — you're posing effortlessly on the beach, sunglasses on, sunset glowing behind you. "But" — seconds later, a wave knocks you off balance and sends you scrambling through the sand. One frame belongs on your feed. The other shows what actually happened.

That contrast is exactly what makes the trend work — perfection on top, reality underneath.

And there's a refreshing honesty in putting both versions on display. For years, social media has rewarded the highlight reel: the best angles, the best outfits, the best moments. "Yes, but" allows the outtakes to crash the party. It's a reminder that behind every polished shot, there may be an awkward pose, a failed attempt or something gloriously unphotogenic.

Posting that second photo takes a little nerve, too. Showing the mess behind the magic feels like a small act of rebellion. The message is simple: I'm not perfect, but that's totally fine.

LI YUCHE



A growing social media trend is challenging the pressure to present only polished, picture-perfect versions of everyday life. VCG

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Young footsteps echo the Long March

A journey through historic sites helps students connect textbook history with the lives of those who endured the Long March.



Students from Jinggangshan University renew their oath as members of the Communist Youth League of China at a study and education base dedicated to the Young Communist International Division in Ningdu county, Jiangxi province, on July 2. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By MENG WENJIE
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Standing before a display case at a museum in Yudu county, Jiangxi province, 23-year-old Zeng Yan read a letter written by a Red Army soldier nearly a century ago.

The letter's writer, Liu Xingfa, was just 19. In the letter, he repeatedly reassured his family that he was safe and well, concealing the hardships he was enduring amid the fighting at the time.

After reading it, Zeng wrote a reply from the perspective of a young person today. She told Liu that China had changed profoundly, that people now lived in peace and that his sacrifice had not been forgotten.

"The letter was not only meant to comfort a fallen soldier," Zeng said. "It also reminded me that I cannot simply be moved by his story and leave it at that."

The exchange across time was part of a five-day journey undertaken by 11 students from the School of Marxism at Jinggangshan University. From July 2 to 6, they traveled through Ningdu, Yudu, Shicheng and Guangchang in Jiangxi province, as well as Jianning in Fujian province, retracing the footsteps of young Red Army soldiers before and during the Long March (1934-36).

According to Li Qiong, the team's instructor and a teacher at the university, the journey was intended to create a dialogue between young people from two different eras.

"The young soldiers were about the same age as my students," Li said.

"I hoped the students could experience history in a more personal way by reflecting on their own choices and responsibilities," she added.

The year 2026 marks the 90th anniversary of the victory of the Long March. In October 1934, the Central Red Army began a strategic transfer to break through Kuomintang's encirclement.

The university program focused on the Young Communist International Division, a special Red Army unit established in Bosheng county (present-day Ningdu county) in 1933. Composed mainly of young soldiers, the division had an average age of just 18.

During the Long March, it carried out missions including protecting the main force and serving as the rear guard. The unit suffered heavy casualties during the Battle of the Xiangjiang River in Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region in 1934, and its remaining troops were later incorporated into other Red Army units.

He Xin, 24, who led the student team, was born in Ningdu but had never visited the historical sites associated with the division.

Standing on a former racecourse where the unit was established, she found herself looking back 93 years.

"Many people that age today are sitting in classrooms, while those young soldiers had to take up arms to defend their homeland," He said.

"We share the same youth. Standing there, I suddenly felt that the distance between history and the present had disappeared," she continued.

Walking into history

As the journey continued, history gradually moved beyond textbooks and became something the students could see, touch and feel.

That sense of connection deepened as He encountered the ordinary objects that had accompanied the soldiers on their journey.

One object seen repeatedly in museums and at historical sites offered her a glimpse into the hardships of the march: straw sandals.

Made from rice straw, the footwear accompanied countless soldiers along the route.

In Yudu, He met an 80-year-old veteran from Guangdong province, who told her that making a pair of straw sandals took two days, yet they could wear out in as little as 15 days.

"Comparing them with today's leather combat boots gave me a much clearer understanding of the shortage of supplies and the hardships the soldiers endured," He said.





Above: Students from Jinggangshan University recite excerpts from *The Long March Suite* at a Long March ferry crossing in Yudu county, Jiangxi province, on July 3. **Bottom:** He Xin (right) interviews a veteran from Guangdong province at a memorial hall marking the departure of the Long March by the Central Red Army in Yudu county, Jiangxi province, on July 3. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "We share the same youth. Standing there, I suddenly felt that the distance between history and the present had disappeared."
>
> **He Xin,** leader of the student team that retraced the route of the Long March

> "History lives through a wall, a stroke of writing and the people who protect it."
>
> **Zeng Yan,** a student at Jinggangshan University

While such objects helped He imagine the soldiers' daily struggles, walking part of the route gave Zheng Ting a more immediate sense of the dangers they had faced.

At a battle memorial in Guangchang, the 24-year-old stood in silence and felt what she described as "history coming toward me".

She compared learning about the Long March from a textbook to viewing a river from above: readers may know where it begins and ends, but they cannot experience every bend along the way.

By walking the route, feeling the mud beneath her feet and enduring the July heat of southern Jiangxi, Zheng gained a deeper understanding of the uncertainty faced by the young soldiers.

"They did not know how much farther they had to go or whether they would live to see New China," she said. "What sustained them was the belief that they could not accept oppression or lose their homeland."

Carrying memory forward

Those encounters did more than make the past feel real. They prompted the students to consider what their own generation should do with that history.

For Zeng, the answer begins in the classroom. After graduation, she hopes to become a politics teacher and introduce students to the Long March through the lives of real people and their individual stories.

"I want to bring these stories into the classroom in a warmer and more personal way, so students can understand how history continues to unfold through time," she said.

For others, the answer lies in protecting the physical traces that allow such stories to be told.

One of He's most memorable moments came at a memorial hall in Ningdu, where the deputy director explained how memories of the Long March had been preserved across generations.

The woman's father began collecting historical materials related to the Red Army in 1969. She has continued his work by visiting villages across Ningdu, collecting objects from descendants of Red Army soldiers and preserving them in archives.

The conversation helped He understand that without people collecting letters, protecting former sites and recording family memories, many individual stories could disappear.

Preserving these materials, she realized, allows young people to examine the choices made by those who came before them and reflect on their own responsibilities.

Similar efforts can be seen in Danxi village in Shicheng, where residents have preserved former Red Army sites and maintained slogans painted on village walls more than 90 years ago.

"The person who wrote those words left no name, but his spirit has endured," Zeng said. "History lives through a wall, a stroke of writing and the people who protect it."

After returning to campus, the students began exploring their own ways of carrying those memories forward.

They drew a replica of the Young Communist International Division's armband by hand and created digital maps, magnets and badges inspired by the relics, documents and stories they encountered during the journey.

Through these creative forms, they hope to make the history of the Long March more accessible to young people who may never have the opportunity to visit the sites themselves.

He also plans to draw on what she learned in her future academic research.

"Ninety years ago, young people defended their homeland with their lives," she said. "Today, young people are using their knowledge to build the country. Times have changed, but the courage and determination of youth remain unchanged."

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When age opens doors

For young followers anxious about falling behind, Suzi de Givenchy's journey offers proof that life does not unfold on a fixed timetable.

By GUI QIAN
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During the 79th Festival de Cannes, Suzi de Givenchy (Chinese name Huang Xianxi) joined a forum organized by The One International Women's Film Festival on narratives by Asian women in cinema. Around her were directors, writers and journalists. Suzi, however, was a fashion model.

At first, she wondered why she had been invited.

"I'm not an actress. I'm not really from that field," she recalled. But as the discussion unfolded, she began to understand what she brought to the conversation. "I think I represented the spectator — the person who goes to the cinema, the person who loves films."

For Suzi, finding herself in an unfamiliar room was nothing new. Her life has been shaped by unexpected turns.

Born in Hong Kong, Suzi moved to New York with her single mother at the age of 4. As the eldest child, she began taking part-time jobs at 14 to help support the family. At 20, she traveled to Paris to celebrate her birthday, where she met a nephew of the French designer Hubert de Givenchy. The two married, raised three sons and settled in the French countryside.

For decades, Suzi's world revolved around her children, her husband and their life together. Then, in 2016, her husband died suddenly of a heart attack.

Writing became one way through her grief. She began keeping a journal, a practice she later described as therapeutic, saying it helped her process the loss and put it into perspective.

Three years later, her life took another unexpected turn. At a gathering, a casting director noticed her and encouraged her to pursue modeling professionally.

She was 52.

In an industry long defined by youth, Suzi stood out precisely because she did not fit the conventional mold. Her wrinkles, high cheekbones, freckles and gray hair were not hidden — they became part of her visual identity. She went on to work with fashion houses including Balenciaga, Lemaire and Off-White, and appeared on the cover of Vogue.

The sudden visibility made her biography easy to package as an inspirational transformation. But Suzi is wary of that framing.

"At times, my story can be perceived like a fairy tale, like a movie story," she said. But she believes many lives contain remarkable turns. What makes a story seem extraordinary is often not the life itself, but the attention it receives.

That may be why the film forum felt less like a detour than another extension of her story. Rather than seeing herself as someone deliberately crossing industries, Suzi says she simply follows her curiosity wherever it leads.

"My life has been about getting outside of a box," she said.

More important, perhaps, is how she approaches what comes next: with humility.

She assumes others may have studied longer and know more, so she listens, asks questions and tries to set aside her preconceptions. Rather than needing to arrive as an expert, she is comfortable starting from a place of not knowing.

"I always try to go into a space as a student," she said.

This willingness to begin again has shaped a life trajectory that runs against the fear that every important choice must be made early — and may also help explain her appeal to younger followers.

Yet her advice to them is grounded in practical realities rather than simply telling them to "follow your passion".

"Everyone has to pay their bills. Everyone has to eat," she said. Instead of waiting for a single, perfect calling, she suggests finding something they are good at and enjoy, then building their skills in it — even if it cannot immediately become a career.

"Things are meant to happen when they're supposed to happen," she added.

Owning her place

Suzi's years across Hong Kong, New York and France have also shaped how she thinks about identity. For much of her life, she tried to work out where she belonged. Over time, she realized the search was not about finding a country or a place to call home.

"What I was looking for was myself," she said. "I feel most at peace with myself."

That answer may resonate with young people facing anxieties about identity, appearance and age, but Suzi does not pretend that self-acceptance, once found, comes effortlessly or lasts forever. Some days are less peaceful than others. Her message to her 20-year-old self — and to young women now — is simple: trust yourself, ask questions, be kinder to yourself and surround yourself with people who appreciate you.

That self-acceptance matters especially in an industry built around appearance. Even as an established older model, Suzi describes holding her ground as a continuing battle: asserting that she has a place and deserves it.

Her next chapter may return to the medium that helped her through grief: writing. She has taken a workshop and is interested in exploring this further, drawn to the introspective nature it offers.

"Writing is a very interesting process because you do learn a lot about yourself," she said.

At Cannes, Suzi arrived as neither a filmmaker nor an industry expert. She came as a model, reader, cinema lover, mother, widow, grandmother and a woman who remains curious about what might come next.

That may be the clearest thread running through her life. Beginning again, for Suzi, is not about erasing what came before or pretending age does not matter. It is about refusing to see age as the end of possibility — and being willing to enter the next unfamiliar room as a student.



Suzi de Givenchy walks the runway for Oude Waag, a Shanghai-based Chinese fashion label.



Suzi de Givenchy attends a forum organized by The One International Women's Film Festival in Cannes, France, in May 2026.



Suzi de Givenchy takes photographs on the street.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Seeds of curiosity grow beneath giant telescope

By MENG WENJIE
mengwenjie@i21st.cn

In early August, 20-year-old Liu Chang stood at the front of a classroom, feeling slightly nervous. It was her first experience as a volunteer teacher.

Facing her were students from Kedu Experimental Primary School in Pingtang county, Guizhou province. Pingtang is home to the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope, or FAST, the world's largest single-dish radio telescope.

A student in the department of engineering physics at Tsinghua University, Liu was among 14 members of the university's Cyrus Tang Love and Care Society who traveled to the county for a two-week summer camp from July 27 to Aug 10.

Huang Zijun, 22, the team leader, said the camp aimed to combine local characteristics with children's personal growth.

"FAST is of great significance to national security and scientific development," he said. "Drawing on the region's astronomy culture and the children's interests, we created courses that brought together scientific exploration, sports, artistic expression and life education."



A Tsinghua University student volunteer teaches children Latin dance during a two-week summer camp at Kedu Experimental Primary School in Pingtang county, Guizhou province, on Aug 3, 2026. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

To make the science behind FAST more accessible, Liu designed a course in which students built their own telescope models to explore its structure and working principles.

The lesson drew an enthusiastic response. One student, usually energetic and easily distracted, worked on the model in her spare time and finished it ahead of schedule. She then picked up Liu's camera and filmed a short vlog, introducing each part of her model and explaining how it related to the real telescope.

In another class, Li Yiheng, 21, a student at Tsinghua University's School of Aerospace Engineering, taught the children how to make water rockets.

Rather than giving them answers directly, Li asked the students to experiment with different amounts of water and launch angles to see which combinations could make their rockets fly farther.

"When they found the answers themselves, my explanations became much more meaningful," Li said.

The emphasis on experience extended beyond science: the volunteers also sought to support the personal growth of rural girls.

Du Xuanye, 21, a philosophy student at Tsinghua University's Rixin College, helped design sports activities that, rather than emphasizing competition, aimed to build girls' "body confidence".

"Many girls worry about being judged for their appearance when taking part in sports, which can affect their focus and enjoyment," Du explained. " So, we encouraged them to pay more attention to how they feel and build a stronger connection with their bodies."

As a member of Tsinghua's drama club, Du also brought theater exercises into the classroom. For example, she guided the children to use body movements to "write" their names and make funny expressions to relax their facial muscles. She also introduced exercises to help improve their concentration and self-awareness.

To Du's surprise, the children soon required less guidance than she had expected. During a flag football activity, one girl wearing a skirt and sandals threw herself into the game without hesitation.

"She did not spend time worrying about whether her clothes were suitable for sports," Du said. "She simply focused on running and carrying the ball toward the end zone."

For the volunteers, these small changes were encouraging. But they also raised a more difficult question: How much could a two-week program truly achieve?

"There were so many things we wanted to do together, but we could not get to them all," Liu said. "After seeing the challenges the children face in their daily lives, we realized there was only so much we could do."

According to Huang, university volunteer teaching programs are sometimes criticized as being "brief and superficial". As a result, the team took steps before the camp to make their work more sustained and responsive to the children's needs. They exchanged letters with the children before arriving to better understand their expectations and interests.

After returning to Beijing, they plan to keep in touch with the children through letters.

For Liu, the value of the experience may ultimately lie not in how much the volunteers were able to change in two weeks, but in what the children take away from their time together. "At least they may remember the happiness of those two weeks and that someone took the time to listen to their stories, interests and worries like an adult friend," she said.

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SPORTS

SOCCER



Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta is thrown into the air by his players while celebrating their Premier League title win in London on May 24. AP

New faces, old heads and a whole lot of uncertainty

The Premier League is back, and nobody really knows what to expect from the post-Guardiola era



The post-Pep Guardiola era is already underway in English soccer amid uncertainty and upheaval, not just at Manchester City, but across the whole of the Premier League.

Heading into the new top-flight season, which begins Friday, nine clubs have new permanent managers — an unprecedented number at the start of an English top-flight campaign.

At age 33, Fabian Hurzeler is the fifth longest-serving coach in the Premier League — and he has only been at Brighton for two years.

The biggest vacuum needing to be filled is at City, following the departure of Guardiola after 10 record-breaking years in charge. Good luck following that, Enzo Maresca — especially after the team's lamentable performance in its Community Shield loss to Arsenal on Sunday.

Among the other top clubs with new coaches are Liverpool (Andoni Iraola), Chelsea (Xabi Alonso) and Newcastle (Matthias Jaissle) — all of which competed in the Champions League last season.

Heck, it makes Roberto De Zerbi — appointed by Tottenham on March 31 to escape relegation — and Michael Carrick — installed as interim manager at Manchester United for the second half of last season before impressing and getting the permanent job — seem like veritable veterans.

It also makes Arsenal, the reigning champion, appear a haven of stability as Mikel Arteta goes into his seventh full season at the helm as by far the league's longest-serving manager.

Yet, there's a big question mark hanging over the Gunners, too: Will there be a hangover after winning the league for the first time in 22 years?

We're about to find out, though Arsenal's display in the Community Shield provided early encouragement for its fans.

The nonstop roller coaster that is the Premier League begins in earnest on Friday, when Arsenal hosts newly promoted Coventry, which has a compelling backstory of its own after being out of the big time for 25 years.

Here are some other storylines providing a backdrop to the new season:

A lack of star power?

The Cristiano Ronaldo circus left town in 2022. Harry Kane moved away in 2023. Kevin De Bruyne departed in 2025. Mohamed Salah quit for Turkiye this summer and Rodri has started packing his bags for Barcelona.

It begs the question: Is the biggest league in the world lacking the biggest players in the world?

OK, City still has prolific striker Erling Haaland, whose brand has never been higher after wowing American fans during last month's World Cup.

But soccer superstars like Kylian Mbappe, Ousmane Dembele, Vinicius Junior, Lamine Yamal and even England's own two top players, Kane and Jude Bellingham, play in other countries.

All-time greats of this century — think Lionel Messi, Ronaldinho, Zinedine Zidane — never played in England, either.

The big blockbuster deal of the offseason could have been Vinicius joining Arsenal, but he chose to stay at Real Madrid.

The Premier League has recently prided itself in having the world's top coaches, yet Guardiola and Jurgen Klopp are no longer around.

The competition might have to settle, then, for having the greatest strength in depth, with the mid-level clubs having arguably never been better owing to the league's huge broadcasting deals.

Arsenal the favorite

Amid so much turbulence among its rivals, Arsenal has a great opportunity to retain the title and is the favorite with British oddsmakers.

Brazil midfielder Bruno Guimaraes has joined from Newcastle to bolster an already-strong midfield, left-winger Christos Tzolis signed from Club Brugge to replace the departed Leandro Trossard, and there is strength in depth in every position.

Counting against Arsenal, however, is an injury to defensive mainstay William Saliba that will rule out the France centerback for the first few months.

Also, there's an intangible: Will there be a drop-off in intensity or motivation after finally winning the league?

Arteta is determined that won't be the case.

High-profile returnees

Welcome back, Marcus Rashford. The England winger has rejoined Manchester United after a title-winning loan spell at Barcelona. Whether he wants to be at Old Trafford, though, remains to be seen.

Hello, again, to Frank Lampard, a title-winning great for Chelsea who has led Coventry back to the Premier League promised land as manager.

Coventry, a founding member of the Premier League, was relegated in 2001 and plunged into such financial chaos that the club lost its home and went on to drop into the fourth tier.

The Sky Blues' rise is one of English soccer's feel-good stories and they will be joined by fellow returnees Ipswich and Hull.

$3 billion and counting

England is in a league of its own when it comes to spending power, and Premier League clubs' outlay on new players in this transfer window is already approaching $3 billion.

The biggest signings so far have all been midfielders: Morgan Rogers to Chelsea for $156 million; Elliot Anderson to City for $155 million; Sandro Tonali to Tottenham for $133 million; and Guimaraes to Arsenal for $100 million.

Chelsea's net spend is almost $300 million, as Alonso reshapes the squad. Tottenham has also spent around $300 million on new players, in a reversal in policy following back-to-back 17th-place finishes.

The window remains open for two more weeks.

A set-piece-heavy style?

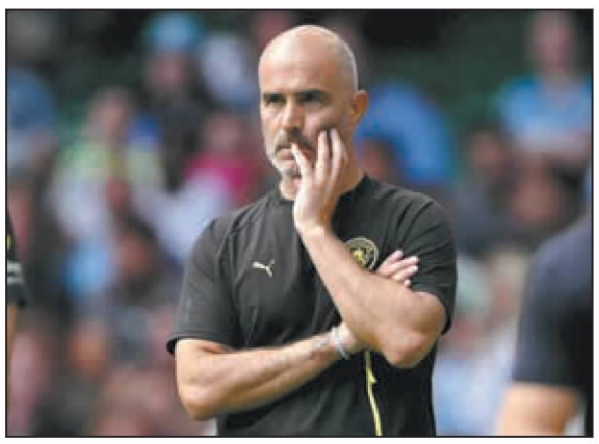
A significant change in English soccer last season was a reversion to old-school tactics, such as long throws into the area, a reliance on set-pieces and long clearances by goalkeepers, in a perceived snub to the Guardiola-influenced style of play where possession of the ball was king.

With Guardiola now out of the picture, will this trend increase further? Marco Rose at Bournemouth, Pierre Sage at Crystal Palace, Alvaro Arbeloa at Fulham and Alonso at Chelsea are all coaching in the Premier League for the first time.

Will this wave of new managers establish another different approach?

AP





Left: Liverpool coach Andoni Iraola walks off the pitch following a preseason club friendly win over Sunderland on July 25 in Nashville, Tennessee. **Right:** New Manchester City manager Enzo Maresca, pictured during Sunday's 3-0 Community Shield defeat to Arsenal in Cardiff, faces the daunting prospect of filling Pep Guardiola's shoes. So far, he seems to have nailed the look, but not the results. AP

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Grassroots bonds

Nairobi community carnival fosters Sino-African ties

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Quake relief

Rescuers search for survivors as death toll reaches 53 in Indonesia

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日報 MONDAY, AUGUST 17, 2026

XI'S VISION | MANUFACTURING MODERNIZATION

Long-term view, innovation fuel industrial power

Government guidance, market demand driving nation's manufacturing upgrade

By **ZHAO JIA** in Luoyang, Henan
zhaojia@chinadaily.com.cn

During a visit to LYC Bearing Corp in Central China's Henan province on May 19, 2025, President Xi Jinping put China's industrial transformation into historical perspective.

"China has always adhered to the path of developing the real economy. From the past reliance on imported matches, soap and iron, to now becoming the world's largest manufacturing country with the most complete industrial categories, we have taken the right path," Xi told workers.

Among those listening on the factory floor was Song Huahua, deputy director of the company's technology center. More than a year later, she said Xi's words still ring in her ears.

"Whether or not they were there that day, everyone at the company felt a deep sense of pride," Song said. "If General Secretary Xi cares this much about something as small as a bearing, what reason could we possibly have not to make it well?"

Bearings are small enough to disappear inside a machine, yet they are often described as the "joints of industry". As Song put it, "Wherever something turns, you need one."

Over her 16 years at the company, the things that turn — and the demands placed on them — have kept changing. From aerospace and wind power to new energy vehicles, robots and drones, each industrial advance brings new requirements for precision, durability and reliability.

During the visit, Xi emphasized that "modern manufacturing relies on sci-tech empowerment", calling for greater efforts to achieve core technological breakthroughs and pursue independent innovation.

For Song, that call is reflected in the daily work of identifying new problems and developing new products.

"Independent innovation has become part of who we are," she said, adding that innovation at the company is driven by both the market and national priorities.

"Customers keep raising the bar, and that is a constant source of momentum for innovation," she said. "At the same time, taking on major national projects requires us to keep pushing beyond our own limits."

Song cited new energy vehicles as an example. Because they operate differently from gasoline-powered cars, they need purpose-designed bearings, she said, noting that engineers first study a vehicle's operating conditions and customer requirements before developing and testing a new product.

See ***Upgrade,*** *page 3*



Japanese citizens hold up protest signs and take part in a rally against the Yasukuni Shrine, which honors 14 convicted Class-A Japanese war criminals, in Tokyo, Japan, on Saturday. The day marked the 81st anniversary of Japan's unconditional surrender in World War II.
JIA HAOCHENG / XINHUA

China slams Japanese politicians' Yasukuni moves

By **ZHAO JIA** in Beijing, **HOU JUNJIE** in Tokyo and **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong

China strongly deplored the latest negative moves by Japanese political leaders involving the Yasukuni war shrine on Saturday, the 81st anniversary of the country's unconditional surrender in World War II, saying the actions sought to whitewash Japan's wartime crimes and pave the way for accelerated remilitarization.

"We urge the Japanese side to do serious soul-searching on its history of aggression, make a clean break with militarism, and earn the trust of its Asian neighbors and the rest of the world with concrete actions," a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi made a monetary offering, while four of her Cabinet colleagues, including Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi, and several senior ruling Liberal Democratic Party officials visited the shrine, which honors, among others, 14 convicted Class-A war criminals.

Beijing has lodged serious protests with Tokyo, the spokesperson said, describing the Yasukuni war shrine as "a spiritual tool and symbol of Japanese militarism".

"No pretext whatsoever can hide the Japanese politicians' true intention, which is to change the verdict on the war criminals, cover up Japan's war crimes, distort the historical facts and pave the way for accelerating remilitarization," the spokesperson said.

Noting that this year marks the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Tokyo Trials, the spokesperson said that viewing and treating history correctly was an important prerequisite for Japan's postwar return to the international community, the political foundation of its relations with neighboring countries and a key measure of its commitment to peaceful development.

This emphasis on historical reflection is also embedded in the political documents underpinning China-Japan relations. The China-Japan joint communique in 1972 says the Japanese side was "keenly conscious of the responsibility for the serious damage that Japan caused in the past to the Chinese people through war, and deeply reproaches itself". That position was reaffirmed in subsequent political documents between the two countries.

Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Jiang Bin denounced the hypocrisy of Japanese politicians who profess to pursue peace while paying homage to the architects of wartime aggression, saying that it exposed the Japanese right wing's deeply distorted view of history and dangerous attempt to revive militarism.

He warned that Japan would face "the judgment of justice and a historical reckoning" if it persisted in pursuing "neo-militarism" and became a threat to regional peace.

Since Takaichi took office last October, her government has accelerated Japan's military buildup and pushed ahead with a broad overhaul of its security policy.

It has allowed exports of lethal weapons in principle, begun revising three key security documents, set the fiscal 2026 defense budget at a record high, deployed long-range missiles capable of striking enemy bases and renewed its push for constitutional revision.

Xiang Haoyu, a research fellow at the China Institute of International Studies, said that Japanese politicians' provocations over Yasukuni were inseparable from Japan's remilitarization.

He said honoring Class-A war criminals reflected a revisionist view that denied responsibility for Japan's war of aggression and sought to loosen postwar constraints on its military ambitions. Such views were dangerous because they would inevitably shape policy, he added.

Xiang said the convergence of historical revisionism and military expansion would erode trust between Japan and its Asian neighbors, making it difficult for them to regard its military buildup as purely defensive. Japan should pursue reconciliation through credible, institutionalized action and should neither exaggerate external threats nor pursue defense policy changes at its neighbors' expense, he said.

Criticism also came from within Japan. On Saturday afternoon, protesters marched in the rain, chanting "Yasukuni Shrine is a symbol of Japan's war of aggression" and "No shrine that glorifies war", while holding placards reading "Takaichi step down" and "Dismantle Yasukuni Shrine".

Yoichi Komori, a professor at the University of Tokyo and secretary-general of the Article 9 Association, a civic group advocating Japan's pacifist Constitution, told China Daily that the collective visit by senior LDP officials raises serious constitutional concerns and is politically unacceptable, noting that the Yasukuni Shrine once served as a key ideological base of Japanese militarism in waging its wars of aggression.

Hiroshi Shiratori, a professor of political science at Hosei University in Tokyo, said the visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by senior LDP officials and Cabinet ministers have further fueled concerns over a regression in Japan's understanding of its wartime history.

Shiratori said that Aug 15 should be an important occasion for Japan to confront its wartime history, reflect on the devastation caused by the war and show consideration for Asian countries and others that suffered from Japan's wartime actions.

However, Takaichi's remarks expressed neither remorse toward other countries nor a firm resolve to uphold peace, he said.

Outside Japan, the Republic of Korea's Foreign Ministry deplored what it described as "anachronistic acts", urging Japanese leaders to squarely face up to history and demonstrate through action humble reflection on and sincere remorse for the past.

Contact the writers at zhaojia@chinadaily.com.cn

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A 4,000-kilometer off-road driving trip kicks off in Alshaa League, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, on Aug 8. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ROUTES OFFER MORE THAN DESERT VIEWS

Tourists can explore Inner Mongolia's vast landscape through long drives or off-road thrills

By **CHEN NAN** in Beijing and **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot

By the time the sun slipped below the dunes, the desert had gone quiet.

Then the stars appeared.

For Li Xue, 28, an independent designer from Hebei province, who spends much of her life amid cities and the flat landscapes of northern China, the night sky over Alshaa League, a vast desert region in North China's Inner Mongolian autonomous region, was perhaps the most unforgettable part of a journey built around speed and adventure.

"We rarely get to see a sky this pure, without light pollution," she said.

Standing in midst of the deep desert, with the horizon stretching unobstructed in every direction, she felt the noise of city life fall away. "I suddenly feel relaxed. It is healing and breathtaking — something you simply cannot experience in a city."

She came to Alshaa League as both a tourist and one of the designers of a new tourism route, which stretches 4,000 kilometers through the region. Along the way, she experienced its deserts and diverse surrounding landscapes.

Li's journey, which ran from Aug 8 to Sunday, took her across vast dunes, past desert lakes and through poplar forests.

See ***Desert,*** *page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Growth driver shifts from bricks to bits

WORLD WATCH
By Amarjargal Rinchinnyam

If you want to understand where the world is heading, stop looking at the skyscraper cranes in Beijing and start looking at the 5G base stations in the countryside.

For decades, the story of China was the story of "hard infrastructure" — concrete, steel and a property market that seemed like it would never stop climbing. But something fundamental has changed.

While the world was busy watching China's real estate sector contract by 0.2 percent and its construction industry dip by 4 percent in the first half of 2026, the country was quietly finishing a massive rewiring of its entire economic base.

China's GDP still grew by a steady 4.7 percent to reach 69.57 trillion yuan ($10.31 trillion) in the first half of 2026, but the engines driving that growth weren't bulldozers — they were algorithms.

China is building a new kind of "central nervous system" for its society.

By July 2026, the country had installed 5.1 million 5G base stations. That's not just a statistic; it's a platform. It has applied 5G and gigabit optical networks across 94 major categories of the national economy.

And it isn't stopping there. It has already made significant strides in verifying 6G system architecture. When you have that kind of wiring, science stops being something you do in a lab and starts being a direct productive force that automates the basics of life.

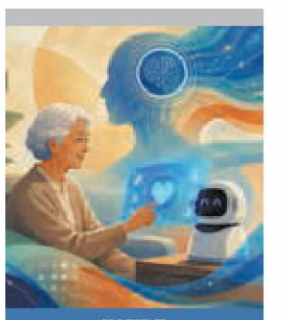
The second layer of this rewiring is energy.

China didn't just meet its 2030 wind and solar power targets — it crushed them six years early in 2024.

By the end of July 2026, its solar capacity hit a staggering 1,274 gigawatts.

This isn't just about environmental concerns, it's about a strategic pivot to energy abundance. When your nonfossil energy consumption exceeds crude oil for the first time in history — as China did in 2024 — you are no longer just an oil importer; you are an exporter of the future.

See ***Economy,*** *page 3*



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INDEPTH

Retired school principal saves tiny zoo from extinction

'Grandpa Feng's' dedication to caring for animals wins online fame, aids its survival

By **LIU BOQIAN** in Kaili, Guizhou
liuboqian@chinadaily.com.cn



Feng Yuanyong (third from left) poses for a photo with a volunteer and sanitation workers in the zoo in Kaili, Guizhou province, on July 31. PHOTOS BY LIU BOQIAN / CHINA DAILY

At 5 am, Feng Yuanyong was already making his rounds in the semi-darkness with a flashlight in hand, checking the animal enclosures one by one.

The 71-year-old spent decades as a school principal and education official. Now, his mornings begin with touching the noses of tigers at a privately-run mini zoo in Kaili, a city in southwest China's Guizhou province.

After retirement, Feng became the facility's zookeeper, repairman and even an unofficial "veterinarian", devoting himself to caring for more than 20 species of animals.

The morning routine is a ritual Feng has repeated for the past decade. He touches the tigers' noses to see whether they are moist — a simple method he developed after years of observing and caring for animals. He said small details like this one can reveal whether an animal is in good health. "People can tell you when they feel sick, animals can't," he said.

Time has left its marks on Feng's face. His gaze is steady and focused, but whenever he talks about the animals, he breaks into his trademark warm smile.

Built on a hillside, a 10-minute drive from downtown Kaili, the Kaili Zoo covers about 0.35 hectares.

Unlike most other zoos, it has no sprawling grounds or a large number of staff. For years, visitors were few, and the revenue was barely enough to cover daily expenses, but he stayed on.

On-the-job training

Feng never planned to become a zoo director, instead choosing a career in the education sector.

In 1977, the year China reinstated the *gaokao* national college entrance examination, Feng was admitted to a teachers' college. After graduation, he started teaching in a rural area and later rose to the position of school principal before joining the education department as a physics education researcher.

In 2016, his younger brother asked him to help at Kaili Zoo, which was struggling financially and needed someone to manage it. What was meant to be a temporary arrangement became a permanent commitment. "Once I came, I never left," Feng said.

Many of the zoo animals were rescued or donated. Feng said he came to see each one as part of his family.

"They are just like my own children," he said, explaining every animal had its own story and refusing to say which one he loved the most.

Before becoming a viral attraction, Kaili Zoo endured long periods of hardship. For years, it survived not because it was profitable, but because of Feng's persistence.

The zoo originally operated alongside an amusement park. But when the park went into decline and closed, the zoo lost its main source of visitors.

During the hardest period, nearby construction work cut off the road near the zoo, leaving visitors unable to reach it.

At one stage, even feeding the animals became a challenge. Feng began growing vegetables to cut costs. "I thought about giving up. But what would happen to these animals?" he said.

Using a hoe, Feng cleared mountain paths and made directional signs to help visitors find their way. One read: "The zoo is 150 meters ahead along the mountain path. Brave children will receive a free portion of food to feed the animals."

Kaili Zoo began attracting wider attention almost by accident.

A visitor came to the zoo one day and saw Feng preparing food for the animals. She asked whether she could film him caring for them.

Feng agreed and told her that if she helped promote the zoo, she could feed the animals.

Soon, more visitors began sharing their experiences online. One tourist from Shanghai suggested that Feng try promoting the zoo on Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, a popular Chinese lifestyle-sharing platform. Feng had never heard of the platform and thought it was the name of a book.

There was no marketing team and no commercial strategy. His only form of promotion was letting visitors see how he cared for the animals every day.

That authenticity eventually won people over.

Since October last year, short videos have turned Kaili Zoo into an internet sensation. At its peak, more than 10,000 visitors went to the tiny zoo in a single day.

For an attraction that once struggled with only a handful of visitors, the sudden surge in popularity became a major challenge. Lines stretched from the zoo entrance all the way down the hillside.

"How could a zoo this small handle more than 10,000 people? Where could they even stand?" Feng recalled.

For years, he had worried about having too few visitors. Then suddenly, he had to worry about having too many.

After the zoo went viral, local authorities helped improve roads, manage crowds and upgrade basic facilities.

Previously, the narrow mountain road leading to the zoo was difficult to access. Local urban management officials worked around the clock for two days to build a safer hillside path.

"At that time, there were simply too many people. The first priority was safety, and the second was making sure visitors had a better experience," said Yang Guanglei, an official with the local urban management department.

Sanitation workers also joined the effort.

"We sent more workers to help clean the zoo in the mornings," Yang said. "It would have been too difficult for Feng to handle everything alone. We also help maintain the landscaping and greenery."

Almost every morning around 7 am, three or four sanitation workers arrive at the zoo to clear fallen leaves and trash.

Over time, they have become familiar faces at the zoo.

Feng often jokes: "Whenever there is a problem, just find Yang. He always knows what to do."

10-minute visit

Compared with many large zoos across China, Kaili Zoo is very modest.

After entering through the gate, visitors find the predator exhibition area on the left and the monkey and herbivore enclosures on the right. A complete visit can take less than 10 minutes.

Yet its intimacy and smallness make it a children's favorite. Some young visitors said it feels different from more famous venues like Chimelong Safari Park in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

"You see that lion? It is darting back and forth. I have never seen a lion this lively before," said Lin Duo, a girl from Hunan province who visited the zoo with her father.

When the lion suddenly jumped, she stepped back in surprise, but her curiosity quickly overcame her surprise.

"My daughter has visited many zoos, but she feels this place is different," her father, Lin Siju, said. "There is no sense of distance between people and animals."

Whenever Feng sees children visiting from other places, he often walks over to greet them and sometimes gives them animal feed as a gift. "You came all this way, and grandpa is very happy. This is grandpa's gift for you," he told one child during China Daily's visit to the zoo.

This warmth and intimacy has become one of the reasons the zoo has become so popular. For many visitors, meeting famous "Grandpa Feng" and taking a photo with him has become the highlight of their trip.

Many are drawn by his sincere care for the animals. They come to see whether the animals are well cared for and whether the welcoming atmosphere shown online truly exists.







Top left: Feng transports freshly cut grass to feed herbivorous animals in the zoo.
Top right: Feng introduces the animals' stories and habits to children.
Above: Visitors walk out of Kaili Zoo on July 31.

Yang Changwang came to work at the zoo as a helper a decade ago. "At first, I did odd jobs. Later, I started cooking for everyone," she said, affectionately calling Feng "boss".

Yang, 58, is a member of the Miao ethnic group, one of the largest ethnic communities in Guizhou. She wears her hair in a traditional high bun decorated with flowers, a style often seen during Miao festivals.

For a time, the struggling zoo could no longer afford to pay her wages. But as visitor numbers increased, Yang returned to work alongside Feng and now earns nearly 2,000 yuan ($296) a month.

Every morning, she rides an electric scooter to the zoo to clean. At noon, she prepares lunch for the seven or eight people working there. After feeding the animals in the afternoon, she picks up her three grandchildren from school.

The flexible schedule allows her to balance work and family life.

"My family's financial situation is not very good. I raised my grandchildren by myself," Yang said. "Working here means I can take care of my family while also earning an income."

At lunchtime, the zoo workers sit beside the animal enclosures, sharing simple homemade meals. "We have always eaten like this, watching the animals eat too," Feng said.

New responsibilities

As attention to the zoo has grown, so have questions over whether such a small facility can properly care for its animals. It is now home to dozens of animals including a lion, bears, tigers, leopards, vultures and monkeys as well as rabbits and ducks.

Feng acknowledges the challenge. "The zoo is too small. There is only so much I can do," he said.

Unlike large zoos, Kaili Zoo has no professional veterinary team or management system. Much of Feng's animal care relies on years of observation and experience. During feeding, he watches closely for any changes in the animals' behavior or condition.

But for protected species, responsibility extends beyond daily care. The zoo must submit regular reports to forestry authorities, and trained veterinarians must be called in when animals are ill.

"I'm not perfect. I worry that one day I might make a mistake and be overwhelmed by the attention brought by online popularity," Feng said. "A small mistake could lead to serious consequences, which is why I am always cautious."

However, the attention has also brought positive changes. With tickets priced at 20 yuan, the zoo now receives 100 to 200 visitors on weekdays and more on weekends, providing a stable source of revenue.

The animals are now better fed, with carnivores receiving chicken or beef daily and herbivores receiving additional food from visitors.

Kaili's tourism authorities have begun promoting the zoo as one of the city's tourism attractions.

"We have arranged dedicated tourism routes and bus services connecting the zoo with the city center and transportation hubs," said Yang Xiaokang from the local tourism department. "In the future, we hope educational programs for students can also be introduced here."

Despite the newfound popularity, Feng has no plans for large-scale commercial expansion. He said he does not want the zoo to become overly commercialized.

His Douyin account now has more than 140,000 followers and has generated about 16,000 yuan in revenue. He said he has never withdrawn the money.

"This is not income that belongs to me. It belongs to everyone who has worked here together," he said, adding that he hopes to use it to reward volunteers and others who have helped promote the zoo.

As visitor numbers have stabilized, Feng has returned to his quiet routine that kept the zoo going long before it became an internet sensation.

"I am extremely happy with the number of visitors we have now. A year ago, I could never have imagined this," he said. "Now I can say there is not much left to worry about."

Online
See more by scanning the code.





Left: Feng talks to fans of the zoo via a video call. **Right:** Tourists feed monkeys in the zoo on July 31.

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TOP NEWS

Coal industry optimization to happen by 2030

Cleaner and smarter production to reshape sector, ensure energy buffer

By ZHENG XIN
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China is set to optimize its coal industry by 2030, focusing on cleaner and more efficient production to safeguard its baseload energy supply, a newly released government road map stated.

According to the "15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for Coal Industry Development" document, jointly issued by the National Development and Reform Commission and the National Energy Administration, the country will continuously advance the construction of coal supply guarantee bases and refine cross-regional coal transport patterns.

To achieve this, regulators will raise industry entry barriers, weed out outdated mines and prioritize high-efficiency operations, while ensuring a gradual plateau in domestic coal consumption.

By 2030, the plan aims to cement coal's position as a critical energy buffer while making sure that modern and high-efficiency facilities dominate production.

Nationwide, large-scale modern mines will account for 87 percent of total capacity, and the share of capacity from automated and "smart" mines will jump to 75 percent. Additionally, coalbed methane output is projected to hit 26 billion cubic meters in the final framework. The development and utilization of coalbed methane offer multiple benefits, including enhancing mine safety.

The road map comes at a time when China is accelerating toward a greener economy, making unprecedented investment in clean energy infrastructure to meet its ambitious dual carbon goals of peaking emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060.

China's energy sector crossed a historic threshold recently, with coal-fired power generation accounting for less than 50 percent of the nation's total electricity output for the first time, according to official data.

Xing Yiteng, deputy director-general of the National Energy Administration's development planning department, said that coal power generation stood at 2.5 trillion kilowatt-hours in the first six months of the year, bringing its share down to 49.7 percent.

"Coal power's share falling below 50 percent of total power generation for the first time is a landmark achievement in China's long-term push for renewable energy alternatives, signaling a new breakthrough in the country's green and low-carbon transition," Xing said.

Lin Boqiang, head of Xiamen University's China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy, said the 2026-30 window is a critical transition period as coal use nears its peak.

The sector's focus, he said, will pivot from sheer volume expansion to supply optimization and grid stability.

"The plan moves away from the old logic of simply digging for more coal, toward a balance between energy security and green transition," Lin said.

He added that market regulation will transition from ad hoc administrative interventions to long-term structural changes, heavily relying on intelligent mining upgrades and the integration of coal power with renewables.

Demand patterns are also expected to diverge over the next five years. Coal consumption in the construction materials and metallurgy sectors will shrink, while power sector demand will plateau and begin to decline. Chemical sector usage, however, will see a slight uptick.

Meanwhile, automation will no longer be optional. Hitting the 75-percent smart-mine target by 2030 — up from roughly 65 percent in 2025 — will force companies to invest heavily in digitization.

The plan mandates integration of artificial intelligence in the areas of exploration, production and safety monitoring, with a specific push to replace dangerous manual labor with robotics in disaster-prone mines.

Smaller operators lacking the capital for these technological upgrades will face severe consolidation pressure, Lin said, noting that well-capitalized industry leaders are poised to capture more market share.

Breakfast meeting



Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic (second from right) has breakfast with Serbian and Chinese construction workers in Belgrade, Serbia, on Friday. He inspected the construction site of the Serbia Exhibition Center, a venue for Expo 2027 Belgrade, being built by a Chinese company. WANG WEI / XINHUA

Upgrade: Manufacturing scale highlighted

From page 1

LYC Bearing Corp was one of 156 key projects developed during China's First Five-Year Plan (1953-57) period. From making basic bearings largely by hand to seeing high-end bearings account for 70 percent of its total output value in 2025, the company has filled domestic gaps in a range of fields and helped underpin China's bearing industry.

Its seven-decade transformation mirrors the broader rise and upgrading of Chinese manufacturing. China has ranked first globally in manufacturing scale for 15 consecutive years. The country has 41 major industrial categories, 207 intermediate categories and 666 subcategories, making it the only country in the world with industries across all categories listed in the United Nations' industrial classification, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

That same shift — from filling gaps to raising standards — can be seen in the tractors that Zhao Xu works on every day. Zhao is deputy head of the product research and development department at YTO Group Corp, a leading agricultural and construction machinery manufacturer.

During an inspection tour of Henan in April 2009, Xi, then China's vice-president, visited two manufacturers, including YTO Group Corp, where he learned about independent research and development, production and operations, and encouraged efforts to develop new products in response to market demand.

According to the company, digital and intelligent upgrades allow different models to be assembled on the same line, with one tractor rolling off every three minutes on average and overall efficiency up more than 20 percent.

"A tractor can no longer merely get the job done," Zhao said. "It must help farmers work more efficiently and comfortably."

The company has launched, or is developing, tractors with power-shift and continuously variable transmissions, and hybrid and battery-electric power trains. Autonomous and driverless models have also entered commercial use, Zhao said.

"Our goal is to advance agricultural machinery technology and strengthen our ability to develop high-end products of our own," he said.

"The longer I worked, and the more I understood the market and the realities of Chinese agriculture, the more I felt a responsibility to make better products that could serve more users."

"Now, it is about using better technology and moving in the right direction."

New strengths

Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said that as China's industrial system became more complete and competition intensified, older industrial enterprises had to find new strengths through innovation.

In his view, the shift of both LYC Bearing Corp and YTO Group Corp toward higher-end, smarter and greener production reflects the combined influence of government guidance, market demand and competition.

"New technologies can raise productivity and make products more competitive, creating higher returns," he said. "That, in turn, draws more companies into innovation and creates a combined force for industrial upgrading."

Lan Qingxin, director of the BRICS Research Center at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, attributed the continuity between the major industrial projects under China's First Five-Year Plan and the focus on advanced manufacturing in the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) to sustained long-term planning under the leadership of the Communist Party of China.

"What has remained unchanged is the long-term goal of industrialization and modernization," Lan said. "What has changed is the path and the methods used to achieve it."

In the new era, he said, the emphasis is on innovation-driven, high-quality development, with China working to maintain a reasonable share of manufacturing in the economy and to vigorously develop advanced manufacturing.

Lan said this evolution also reshaped the relationship between government and the market. The state concentrated resources on basic industries at the early stage, while market competition later pushed enterprises to become the main drivers of innovation.

China has continued to learn from advanced technologies and management practices abroad while strengthening independent innovation and pursuing breakthroughs in core technologies, he added.

"Independent innovation does not mean shutting the door," he said. "It means strengthening your own capabilities through openness and cooperation."

In Lan's view, the five-year planning system has helped combine an efficient market with a well-functioning government, and self-reliance with opening-up, translating long-term goals into innovation at the enterprise level and greater national industrial strength.

Economy: Global playing field being rewired

From page 1

Just look at the numbers: In May 2026, it is reported that China's electric vehicle exports hit a record $9.2 billion, a 49 percent leap from the year before. It isn't just selling cars; it is selling the "New Three" clean-tech categories that are redefining global trade.

But here is where it gets really interesting. On July 17, 2026, President Xi Jinping stood up at the World AI Conference in Shanghai and essentially offered to share the "operating system" of this new era with the rest of the world. He called AI a "symphony of international cooperation" rather than a solo act.

Think about what he offered to the Global South over the next five years: 5,000 training opportunities in AI for developing nations; international AI application centers for groupings such as ASEAN, BRICS and the African Union; and the MAZU AI early-warning system to 30 countries to fight climate disasters.

That's not just building a coalition; that's building the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization, headquartered in Shanghai with 29 founding members. While some are trying to build an "AI Iron Curtain", China is pitching an open-source model where intelligence is a public good, not a private commodity.

The core conclusion is this: China is betting that if you automate the basics, you change the "superstructure" of society itself.

With per capita GDP hitting 99,665 yuan and labor productivity rising by 6.1 percent in 2025, the material conditions for a totally new kind of society are being laid. As the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) ended and the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) began, China is moving toward a future of technological abundance.

The global playing field is no longer just leveling; it is being rewired into a "symphony of international cooperation" where open-source AI and green energy abundance are the primary engines fast-tracking a new economic era designed to solve foundational human needs.

The only question left is: Who else is ready to play in the orchestra?

The author is a former prime minister of Mongolia. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Desert: Plan an effort to promote more tourism

From page 1

She attended a concert in the wilderness and experienced a desert rally, soaking in the stark contrasts of the landscape.

The route cuts through a striking succession of landscapes — the Gobi Desert, salt lakes, poplar forests and canyons — with an added adrenaline kick: off-road driving.

Travelers can self-drive the full route at their own pace or, for a more intense experience, hire a professional driver to navigate terrain reminiscent of a World Rally Championship stage.

One moment she was absorbing a vast, silent landscape; the next, gripping the wheel to power across the dunes.

On Aug 8, Nayantai, a 46-year-old racing driver from Inner Mongolia, was among the elite drivers invited to pilot an 800-km section of the route during a one-off promotional race.

Engine roaring, his vehicle clawed its way uphill, spraying sand from beneath its tires. At the dune's crest, he paused. In every direction, the desert stretched to the horizon.

For Nayantai, crossing the finish line was about more than speed. He described the experience of tackling a route that cut through his hometown as more of a homecoming than a competition — a sentiment he hopes visitors will share as the new routes launch.

The racers screeched off toward Bilutu Peak, which is one of the signature landmarks of the Badain Jaran Desert, renowned for its high dunes, which served as the centerpiece of the day's racing.

"It is not just about the fastest time; it feels like I am reconnecting with the place where I grew up," Nayantai said.

His words capture the idea behind the new professionally driven dune-bashing tours, which invite travelers to immerse themselves in Inner Mongolia's vast landscapes, communities and traditions, all the while enjoying a thrilling motorsport experience.

The route is part of a broader effort to transform Alshaa League's deserts from a destination for fleeting off-road events into a year-round tourism experience, said Zhao Chengnan, head of the league's tourism development and operation department.

For decades, the region has drawn off-road enthusiasts with its steep dunes and difficult terrain, regularly hosting events.

But the new approach targets a wider group of travelers, including families, recreational drivers and visitors who may have little interest in competitive racing, while also catering to competitors.

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New container ship route to Europe halves transit time

By CHEN YE in Ningbo, Zhejiang
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The container ship *Dubai Tower* is loaded on Saturday at the Ningbo-Zhoushan Port in East China's Zhejiang province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The China-Europe Arctic container express route officially entered regular weekly operations on Saturday, opening a faster, more efficient and resilient northbound logistics corridor between China and Europe.

The container ship *Dubai Tower* departed from Ningbo-Zhoushan Port in East China's Zhejiang province, announcing the start of the route's regular seasonal service, which takes about 20 days, halving the transit time of traditional routes to Europe.

Fang Yi, CEO of the Sea Legend Line, which operates the route, told China Daily that after leaving China, the vessel would call at key ports in Northern Europe and the Baltic region, including Felixstowe in the United Kingdom, Rotterdam in the Netherlands, Hamburg in Germany and Gdynia in Poland.

The route thus establishes a logistics network linking China's coastal manufacturing hubs directly with major European ports.

The Sea Legend Line has already drawn up a liner schedule for this year's navigation season, with more than eight voyages planned from mid-August through late September or early October.

Such a schedule would have been difficult to imagine just a year ago.

On Sept 22, 2025, the container ship *Istanbul Bridge* departed from Ningbo-Zhoushan Port and finished the first full trial.

The route follows the Northeast Passage along the Arctic coast, connecting the Bering Strait with the Barents Sea. At about 5,000 kilometers, it is the shortest maritime route between Northeast Asia and Western Europe.

For decades, maritime trade between Asia and Europe went along southern routes through the Strait of Malacca, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal.

"The trial took 20 days from China to Europe, compared with 40 days via the Suez Canal and 50 days traveling around the Cape of Good Hope. The Arctic route also avoids congestion and potential geopolitical disruptions," Fang said.

However, it only has a short summer navigation window, as ice and weather are difficult to predict.

Some industry insiders said that the Arctic route, which is navigable from late July to October, remains constrained by ice conditions, and therefore cannot replace the traditional routes soon.

Li Xiaobin, chief operating officer of Sea Legend Line, said that with advances in icebreaking and energy propulsion technologies, the navigation period could potentially be extended to eight to 10 months in the next three to five years.

In addition, the Arctic's cold environment functions as a natural cold chain, with temperatures along the route generally ranging from minus 3 C to 10 C, which is suitable for temperature-sensitive cargo such as energy-storage cabinets and power batteries.

Products loaded for Saturday's voyage were of this type, with cargo mainly sourced from manufacturing clusters in the Yangtze River Delta, including Ningbo and Yiwu in Zhejiang province, and tailored to meet peak-season delivery demand in European markets.

After the trial, several partner ports in Europe expressed strong interest in regular operations on the route.

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WORLD IN FOCUS



Teams compete during the annual soccer tournament at the Mathare Carnival in Nairobi's Mathare informal settlement in Kenya on Aug 8. PHOTOS BY WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY



Children dance to the 2010 FIFA World Cup song "Waka Waka (This Time for Africa)" at the Mathare Carnival in Nairobi on Aug 8.



Children look at a poster featuring photos of previous soccer matches at the Mathare Carnival in Nairobi on Aug 8.



Chinese volunteers and diplomats dance with children at the Mathare Carnival in Nairobi on Aug 8.

SOCCER, DUST, DREAMS

A festival of feats in the heart of the Kenyan slums

By WU XIAOHUI in Nairobi, Kenya
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Dust rose from the red-earth field as players sprinted for the ball. Children sat along the walls surrounding the field, while others climbed higher for a better view. Each goal was met with cheers from the crowd and blasts from plastic vuvuzela horns.

There was no grass-covered stadium at the "Slum World Cup", part of the Mathare Carnival, which concluded on Aug 8. The soccer field was marked with temporary white lines, some of which were already covered with dust by the end of the matches.

The annual "Slum World Cup" brought together more than 500 young players from 42 teams representing 22 community schools in Mathare, Nairobi's second-largest informal settlement.

Among the players was 11-year-old Fabian Adrian, who was lifted onto the shoulders of his teacher and teammates after scoring a goal. His worn soccer cleats had visibly damaged soles.

For Adrian's teacher, Linter Adhiambo, this was the third time she had brought students to the tournament. Her 12-member boys' team won first place in the junior category.

"I am so proud. We are just praying that Chinese volunteers can continue organizing this soccer tournament," Adhiambo said.

The soccer tournament is one of the main activities of the Mathare Carnival, which was launched in 2016 by the Dream Building Service Association, or DBSA, a nonprofit organization founded in Africa in 2014 by Chinese university students.

Its founder, Yin Binbin, said he first came to Mathare in 2014 as an international volunteer to teach at a local school. The school was built largely from old sheet metal, prompting him to raise funds online to help rebuild it. That project became the starting point for DBSA.

Over the past decade, the organization has carried out projects in six African countries, with more than 500 international volunteers participating in programs ranging from arts education and talent shows to soccer tournaments, Yin said.

Beyond the field, the carnival also featured "Talent Chap Chap!", a talent show where students took to the stage to showcase their singing, dancing and other skills. An art program under the theme "Born to Shine" brought together students from 15 community schools, who created more than 300 artworks.

The second China-Africa People-to-People Public Welfare Exchange Forum was held in Nairobi on Aug 7 as part of the carnival series.

Representatives from Chinese and African government departments, NGOs and youth groups discussed cooperation in areas such as education, health, women and children, and youth development.

At the forum, Chinese Ambassador to Kenya Guo Haiyan said that grassroots organizations and groups focused on empowering women and youth can reach communities more directly and respond flexibly to local needs, complementing government-to-government cooperation.

Anne Wang'ombe, principal secretary for the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action in Kenya's Ministry of Gender, Culture and Children Services, said the carnival is an example of how China-Africa people-to-people exchanges can create tangible benefits for communities. She called for such partnerships to be further developed through long-term community initiatives.

"Our progress is measured by the quality of life of the most vulnerable," said Rael Mutai, regional technical adviser at the United Nations Population Fund. Mutai called for partnerships that can bridge the gap between policies and the realities faced by vulnerable communities, reaching those "down to the last mile".



Children look at artworks created by students from community schools during the Mathare Carnival in Nairobi on Aug 8.



Fabian Adrian, 11, celebrates with the crowd after scoring a goal during the annual soccer tournament at the Mathare Carnival on Aug 8.



Students perform a traditional dance during the "Talent Chap Chap!" talent show at the Mathare Carnival in Nairobi on Aug 8.

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WORLD



Patients receive treatment at a makeshift tent outside a hospital following an earthquake in Labuan Bajo, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia, on Saturday. FIRDIA LISNAWATI / AP

53 dead in Indonesia quake as rescue efforts continue

By **LEONARDUS JEGHO** in Jakarta
For China Daily

The death toll from a powerful earthquake that struck Indonesia's eastern islands has risen to 53, authorities said on Sunday, as rescuers searched for survivors trapped beneath landslides and collapsed buildings.

The magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck East Nusa Tenggara Province on Saturday, followed by more than 300 aftershocks. At least 64 people were injured, according to the National Search and Rescue Agency, making the disaster the country's deadliest earthquake since a 2022 tremor in West Java Province killed hundreds of people.

Most of the deaths and injuries were reported on Flores, one of Indonesia's major islands, where the northern parts of five districts were hardest hit. The rescue agency said 24 fatalities were in Manggarai district and 20 in neighboring East Manggarai.

East Nusa Tenggara Governor Emanuel Melkiades Laka Lena said the damage was particularly severe in northern Flores. Many residents had remained outdoors for fear of returning to damaged homes and were in urgent need of tents, food and other essential supplies, he said.

The provincial government declared a state of emergency on Saturday as emergency crews continued rescue and relief operations across the quake-hit areas.

The earthquake's epicenter was offshore, about 30 kilometers northeast of central Flores, at a depth of 15 kilometers.

Mohammad Syafii, head of the National Search and Rescue Agency, said rescue operations were continuing despite difficult conditions, including landslides and disruptions to telecommunications and electricity in some areas, particularly in East Manggarai and Nagekeo.

Rescue teams were using helicopters to evacuate victims and deliver relief supplies to the affected areas, he said.

He urged local residents to report anyone in need of assistance or evacuation so rescue teams could reach them promptly.

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto has ordered ministers and other relevant officials to accelerate relief efforts by sending dozens of tons of supplies to Flores and deploying joint national teams to the disaster zone.

He also sent food packages to earthquake-affected communities. The supplies arrived on Sunday in Maumere, East Nusa Tenggara Province, according to Indonesia's national news agency Antara.

Berton SP Panjaitan, acting head of the Data, Information and Disaster Communication Center at the National Disaster Management Agency, said a military aircraft had transported the first batch of emergency relief supplies ordered by Prabowo.

A total of 1,725 basic food packages were distributed to affected areas in Sikka and Ende districts.

On Saturday, another 3,200 packages were delivered to Labuan Bajo, a town on Flores Island.

Prime Sarmiento in Hong Kong contributed to this story.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

5 years after return, Taliban faces hard task of rebuilding

KABUL — White Taliban flags emblazoned with black script lined major streets across Kabul on Saturday as the Taliban celebrated the fifth anniversary of its return to power with a large-scale ceremony.

Five years on, war-torn Afghanistan has largely moved from conflict to reconstruction. Overall security has improved, but creating jobs, absorbing returning refugees and reviving the economy remain formidable challenges.

Since returning to power in August 2021, the Taliban has repeatedly pledged that Afghan territory would not be used by terrorist groups to threaten other countries. It has launched sustained operations against extremist groups, contributing to a marked decline in both the frequency and scale of terrorist attacks.

Security risks, however, have not disappeared.

Several major attacks hit Kabul in recent years, including the assassination of acting minister for refugees Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani in a suicide bombing in December 2024, and an attack on a Chinese restaurant in January this year that killed seven people.

Meanwhile, military tensions with Pakistan have periodically flared over border disputes and cross-border militant activities. From late 2025 to the spring of 2026, the confrontation escalated beyond frontier areas, with Pakistani officials calling the situation an "open war".

The fighting gradually subsided after the two sides returned to dialogue through international mediation.

For many Afghans, daily life has become safer, but making a living remains difficult.

In an interview with Xinhua News Agency, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the Afghan currency had stabilized at around 66 to 70 afghanis per dollar, compared with a low of around 130 after the Taliban returned to power, indicating that inflation had been brought under control.

Bread prices have also remained stable. A piece of naan, Afghanistan's staple food, has long cost around 10 afghanis, prompting some economists to describe the phenomenon as the country's unique "naan economy".

Yet, stable prices have not eased livelihood pressures.

Safra, a single mother living in Kabul, supports two sons, one of whom is bedridden. The family's only income comes from occasional labor by her younger son, allowing them to afford little more than naan and potatoes each day.

In eastern Khost Province, farmer Shafiq told Xinhua that his family of nine survives on 2,000 square meters of farmland and temporary jobs. "At least everyone can have naan every day," he said.

Higher unemployment

Abdul Rahman, spokesman for Afghanistan's Ministry of Economy, said people of working age account for about 49 percent of the country's population, while roughly 26 percent are unemployed.

The end of many international aid programs and development projects has pushed unemployment even higher.

Rebuilding the economy remains one of Afghanistan's biggest challenges.

According to the National Procurement Commission, the government approved 562 development and infrastructure projects worth about $2 billion last year. Since August 2021, more than 1,200 major development projects have been launched nationwide.

Spokesman Mujahid acknowledged that outdated regulations have slowed reconstruction.

"In the past, obtaining a construction permit required approvals from dozens of departments. We are simplifying administrative procedures, although we have not yet reached our goal," he said.

Long-standing financial sanctions by the United States remain another major obstacle, discouraging international investment, particularly private capital.

Five years after the war largely came to an end, Afghanistan is discovering that the challenge today goes beyond ending the fighting; it also involves building a future.

XINHUA

Tehran rejects Trump's claim over Hormuz

Maritime tensions keep shipping on edge as Iran vows to keep control of waterway

TEHRAN — Iran on Saturday fired back at US President Donald Trump's claim that he would soon declare the Strait of Hormuz part of US territory, saying the crucial waterway "will remain Iranian".

Trump has repeatedly insisted that the strait is under the United States' control despite traffic remaining throttled.

"The Strait of Hormuz has been Iranian, is Iranian, and will remain Iranian," Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said on X. "This strait will only be closed and opened under Iran's command."

Trump told a political rally in New York state on Friday that after the US defeats Iran, "pretty soon I'll be declaring the Hormuz Strait a territory of the United States".

"It's true," he added.

An unnamed White House official later clarified that Trump was joking, The Wall Street Journal reported.

Earlier this month, a top Iranian official set out a list of conditions for reopening the strait, including an end to the "war and aggression against Iran and its allies in Lebanon, Palestine, Yemen and Iraq".

Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr, chief of the Supreme National Security Council, also demanded an end to the crippling sanctions, the release of frozen assets and compensation for wartime damage.

As diplomacy stalls between the US and Iran, attacks in the Strait of Hormuz have continued, highlighting the risks to regional shipping.

The United Arab Emirates' state-owned oil company ADNOC said on Saturday that one of its vessels came under attack the night before.

The country's foreign ministry later blamed Tehran, and said that Iran's Revolutionary Guards were engaged in "acts of piracy" in the strait.

On Friday, the Gulf nation blamed Iran for other attacks on two vessels linked to ADNOC as they passed through the waterway.

Before the war, the strait carried around one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas exports, and prices have repeatedly surged since the dispute over the waterway erupted, piling economic and political pressure on Washington.

The closure of the strait has driven up prices for US voters, creating a political headache for Trump as November's midterm elections near.

At the Friday rally, Trump said paying "a tiny little bit more for your gasoline" is worth the cost of ensuring "a very evil country" could not have a nuclear weapon, one of his stated rationales for the war.

In a trend that has sparked inflation and disappointed voters, the average US price of a gallon of gasoline was about $4.08 on Friday ($1.08 per liter), up 29 percent from a year earlier, according to the American Automobile Association.

US Vice-President JD Vance said last week that Washington's top priority during the Iran war was to keep the energy prices low for US consumers, while preventing Tehran from acquiring a nuclear weapon ranked second.

Tehran signaled last week that it had agreed with Oman on a route for ships to transit the Strait of Hormuz and was finalizing arrangements to jointly manage the waterway.

Situation in Lebanon

In another development, an Israeli airstrike killed a senior commander in Hezbollah's Badr regional division in southern Lebanon, the Israeli military said on Sunday.

Lebanese media reported that at least four people were killed in the attack.

The Israeli military said that Abu Hassan Alaa was killed late on Saturday in the strike on Deir al-Zahrani. It described the attack as a response to an earlier Hezbollah drone strike targeting Israeli troops in southern Lebanon that wounded three soldiers.

Lebanon's National News Agency reported that Israeli warplanes struck a two-story building, killing at least four people and wounding five.

Also on Saturday, seven people were killed in heavy Israeli airstrikes in the southern village of Ansar, one of the deadliest attacks since a ceasefire was reached in 2024.

Israeli attacks have killed at least 4,300 people in Lebanon since the latest round of fighting began on March 2.

AGENCIES — XINHUA



Traffic backs up along roads in Sidon, southern Lebanon, on Saturday as families flee their homes amid continued Israeli military strikes. MOHAMMAD ABUSHAMA VIA GETTY IMAGES

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Briefly

ZIMBABWE

Death toll in ferry accident rises to 80

Authorities retrieved 34 bodies from Zimbabwe's Lake Kariba over the weekend, taking the death toll from a ferry capsizing to 80, police said, as the search continued for victims. The overloaded passenger ferry run by the government's Rural Infrastructure Development Agency overturned in choppy waters on Tuesday in a rare accident on the vast lake on the border with Zambia. At least 18 children were among the dead, police said on Saturday after rescuers recovered 26 more bodies. "Meanwhile, the identification of the bodies recovered today is in progress," the police said in a statement. On Sunday, the national police service said in a post on X that eight more bodies were found. Officials say the boat was authorized to carry 90 people but was packed with 114 adults, five crew members and an unspecified number of children.

DPRK

Top leader 'proud' of better Russia relations

Kim Jong-un, president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, told Russian President Vladimir Putin that he is "proud to be able to expect a more excellent future of the bilateral relations", the Korean Central News Agency reported on Sunday. Kim made the remarks in a reply message on Saturday, thanking Putin for sending a message of greetings on the occasion of the 81st anniversary of Liberation Day, the report said. The DPRK celebrates its Liberation Day on Aug 15 in commemoration of the liberation of the Korean Peninsula from Japan's colonial rule on Aug 15, 1945.

UNITED STATES

Teen arrested over ties to university shooting

Police arrested a 19-year-old found hiding in a dormitory closet at Virginia State University on Saturday in connection with an overnight shooting on campus that left five people wounded, including one with critical injuries. Camron Harris of Henrico, Virginia, is not a student on campus nor are four of the people injured, Chesterfield County Police said in a statement. They ranged in age from 17 to 23. One of the injured, a 20-year-old, is a student and has now been released from the hospital, authorities said. The victims' names have not been released. Authorities have given no information about a possible motive. The university said earlier that authorities were searching for multiple suspects, but police provided no additional information on Saturday evening about the search.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Washington should stop creating division by coercing other nations to take sides in AI

In a move that seeks to engineer confrontation among nations on the technology front, the United States is reportedly ready to demand that dozens of countries pick sides in the artificial intelligence race with China — warning that they will be excluded from a US-led AI coalition if they also sign up for China's "competing framework".

The draft letter, prepared by the US State Department, is said to be addressed to the 35 signatories of a US "AI Opportunity Statement" signed in June. Washington obviously hopes to form a technology bloc to deny China access to the resources vital for building state-of-the-art AI.

Such a strategy will undoubtedly do damage to the development of AI as it will fragment the global supply chains and erode multilateral cooperation. It will also disrupt the positive feedback loop between technological innovation, market development and real-world application, ultimately hindering the growth and sustainability of the AI ecosystem itself. This reflects Washington's zero-sum game mindset — if the US cannot lead, it seeks to block others from making headway.

The Chinese embassy in the US expressed firm opposition to the US politicizing trade and technology issues. "Such actions will only stifle global AI advances and serve no one's interests," an embassy spokesperson said.

By drawing red lines for cooperation through exclusionary clauses and forcing other countries to pick sides, the US is weaponizing technological competition, while seeking to preserve its dominant position in the field of AI through alliance-based barriers. The US' hegemonic approach not only harms others but will ultimately undermine its own long-term development as well.

Now that AI is becoming a key technology driving the new round of scientific and technological revolution, it is all the more important for nations to accelerate open exchanges in this field for the common good of all.

For those in the US seeking to erect walls, they should understand that holding innovation hostage to geopolitics goes against the rationale of science and technology as well as the trend of the times. They should respect normal international technological cooperation and the right of countries to independently choose their cooperation partners. The US will only alienate itself from other countries if it denies nations the right to engage with their partners based on their own development needs, and coerces them into making an either-or choice.

The US has gone to extraordinary lengths to press countries to take sides in virtually every field it deems vital to maintain its hegemony, including critical minerals, trade and supply chains. This cannot but raise fears that the world is poised to revert to a lose-lose situation for all nations.

Faced with the opportunities and challenges brought by AI, what the world needs is an inclusive and consultative governance system, not divisive and fragmented technological barriers.

China promotes global AI governance by championing an open, inclusive, and multilateral approach to make AI a global public good. It advocates "humanity-centered" and "AI-for-good" development, supporting the United Nations' central role in establishing international governance mechanisms. Through initiatives such as open-source models, capacity-building training for developing nations and the creation of the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization, the country actively works to bridge the global digital divide and ensure that AI benefits all of humanity.

Bloc confrontation cannot solve technological challenges, nor can exclusionary alliances advance human scientific progress. If the US continues to build technological barriers, it will lose the innovative vitality that is inseparable from global technology cooperation and find itself in the predicament of closed-door development.

A 'lighthouse' pointing toward peril

It is absurd that Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi spoke of Japan becoming an "Indo-Pacific lighthouse" on Saturday, the 81st anniversary of Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allied Powers that ended World War II. The country has not even earned the trust of its neighbors — countries that still remember what happened the last time Tokyo cast itself as a regional "architect" of the infamous "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere".

The notorious Yasukuni Shrine, to which Takaichi performed a remote act of worship and sent a ritual offering that day, makes that absurdity impossible to miss. The shrine enshrines 14 Class-A war criminals from WWII. Before taking office last October, Takaichi had visited the shrine more than 10 times over the course of her political career.

On Saturday, she stood across the road, went through the motions — two bows, two claps, one bow — just near enough to appease her nationalist supporting base, but far enough, as she wished, to sidestep a harsh international outcry. In truth, however, it was nothing but a grotesque flirtation with the convicted war criminals.

Several of her Cabinet members, including Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi, went further and visited the shrine in person.

The ceremony thus raises an unavoidable question: Is Japan commemorating its "war victims", or glorifying those who orchestrated a war of aggression?

Imagine a European government openly paying tribute to senior Nazi war criminals and then explaining it was merely honoring "war victims". The world would immediately grasp how grotesque that argument sounds. Germany learned that reconciliation demands confronting the harm it inflicted on others. Japan, by contrast, has not even shown a willingness to begin that journey.

In its word game, the Takaichi government increasingly presents Japan as a regional "model" to build a "free and open Indo-Pacific". Yet this vocabulary risks becoming a linguistic escape hatch from history. The more Japan talks about its fictional "role", the less its leaders seem willing to talk about the uncomfortable truths of the past.

Takaichi's omission was therefore as significant as her words. She mourned Japanese "victims" and spoke of Japan's postwar "contribution" to "peace". But there was no acknowledgment of the sufferings inflicted on other nations, no apology and no remorse for Japan's responsibility.

It is hypocritical to preach "peace" while bowing before the "chief culprits of war", as China's Ministry of National Defense said in response to Tokyo's Saturday farce.

Japan's historical militarists were experts at feigning innocence and victimhood while committing aggression, pillage and killing. Today's neo-militarists have shown they are just as good at playing innocent. Whether they will be allowed to also follow the same path of aggression, plunder and slaughter is the test the international community cannot afford to fail.

In less than a year, the Takaichi government has systematically accelerated Japan's remilitarization from policy to capacity. Its recent handling of the yen, however, has laid bare the economic burden that rhetoric alone cannot conceal.

A weak yen boosts exporters, but it also raises the cost of energy, food and military equipment, squeezing households while making Japan's expanding military budget more expensive. Tokyo is now caught in an uncomfortable triangle: a stronger yen, fiscal expansion and rapid military buildup cannot be pursued indefinitely without trade-offs.

Washington wants Japan to increase its military spending and become a military pillar of the "Indo-Pacific" strategy, but it also has little appetite for a persistently undervalued yen that aggravates trade tensions and financial instability.

So the currency collusion between Tokyo and Washington over the past weeks is not simply about exchange rates or interest rates; it reflects the deeper economic needs of their geopolitical calculations.

Japan is trying to build itself into a war machine again while its economic foundations remain fragile. The currency manipulation may ultimately prove that it is the Japanese people that will have to pay the bill for the rise of neo-militarism.

Takaichi therefore has little choice but to talk emptily about "peace" and the country being a "lighthouse", while saying nothing about Japan's war crimes, responsibility and other nations' sufferings. Only by creating an atmosphere bordering on political indoctrination can she better numb the Japanese public into accepting — and paying for — the country's neo-militarism.

The nations that once fell victim to Japanese aggression have an obligation to keep the historical record straight — especially when Japan persists in its unrepentant stance — to ensure the international community, including the Japanese people themselves, remains vigilant against the dangerous direction in which the "lighthouse" peddled by Takaichi is pointing.

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Shi Yu



Opinion Line

Teodoro shows how low he can stoop as a marionette

Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr has baselessly accused China of "extortion and blackmail" over immigration enforcement, denounced Chinese officials for "disinformation", and branded Chinese steelworkers "criminals". But the more he talks about "law", "sovereignty" and "national security", the more an awkward question arises: Is he acting increasingly as a proxy for external forces seeking to push Manila to the front line of confrontation with China?

In May, Teodoro instructed the Armed Forces of the Philippines to join an operation at Sanjia Steel Corp and arrest unarmed Chinese workers. Is a defense secretary also a police chief? If the plant was violating environmental or other laws, why not arrest those responsible for running it? Why were Chinese workers detained while Filipino workers were released on the spot? And why were the Chinese "detainees" transported to Manila aboard a military aircraft?

Then came the curious personal protective equipment or PPE episode. According to the Chinese workers, they normally wore regular clothing. Yet on the day of the raid, law enforcement personnel reportedly made three Chinese workers put on PPE and pose for photographs, which were subsequently publicized as evidence that only Chinese workers wore such equipment. Was this law enforcement — or a fishing expedition designed to create "incriminating" images?

The 70 detained Chinese workers were reportedly crammed into cells measuring about 5 square meters. They said the Philippine side failed to make the required consular notification or arrange consular visits in accordance with the bilateral consular agreement.

The workers remained in detention for as long as 32 days even after the Chinese embassy provided Philippine authorities with copies of the workers' passports and valid work visas or permits. Teodoro says the workers not carrying the documents themselves was a "telltale sign of human trafficking". So, are foreign workers required to carry their passports while working in Philippine factories? And does the absence of documentation at the time of arrest constitute "human trafficking" under Philippine law?

More fundamentally, who determines whether Philippine law has been violated — the defense secretary or the judicial authorities?

These are precisely the questions that a spokesperson for China's embassy in the Philippines raised on Sunday in response to Teodoro's ugly theatrics.

On May 28, Philippine prosecutors ordered the release of the Chinese workers unless they were being held on other legal grounds. Yet Teodoro continued to accuse them of "illegal activity".

The episode raises a larger question about Teodoro's role in the Ferdinand Marcos Jr government. He increasingly appears intent on shaping Manila's foreign policy around confrontation with China while aligning the Philippines ever more tightly with Washington and its strategic partners.

His groundless accusation that Chinese embassy officials "intervened" in Philippine law enforcement is equally revealing. Protecting the legitimate rights and interests of nationals abroad is a fundamental job of any embassy; it certainly does not constitute "meddling".

Teodoro's actions appear less focused on resolving disputes than on keeping tensions alive. Look at the South China Sea. Washington has repeatedly backed Manila's claims and invoked the unlawful 2016 "arbitral award" against China. Australia has joined the Philippines in wrongly criticizing Chinese actions at Ren'ai Reef, which is actually China's territory. Neither the US nor Australia is a claimant in the dispute, yet both are trying to be embedded in it.

For Washington, the Philippines is a crucial node in its "Indo-Pacific" strategy, astride important sea lanes and close to China's Taiwan island. But for the Philippines, becoming the forward position in someone else's strategic competition carries risks far beyond the ambitions of any defense secretary.

Teodoro wrongly invokes Philippine "sovereignty" while encouraging policies that make Manila dependent on an external security architecture. He invokes the "rule of law" while appearing unwilling to accept a prosecutorial decision that cleared the detained Chinese workers.

China has never invaded or colonized the Philippines. Yet Manila is being misled to see China not as a neighbor with whom it has disputes that must be managed, but as a rival. That may serve Washington's calculations. It may serve Teodoro's personal political ambitions. But it does not necessarily serve Filipino interests.

The question is whether Teodoro is still acting for Manila — or increasingly performing a role written somewhere else.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Environmental protection made more coherent

Editor's note: *Effective since Saturday, the Ecological and Environmental Code is China's second statutory code after the Civil Code. Zhu Xiao, a professor at the Law School of Renmin University of China, spoke to China Central Television about the significance of the code. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Issues concerning ecological and environmental protection are of profound importance as they have a bearing on the sustainable development of the country.

China has drawn on years of environmental protection practices to build a solid foundation for advancing the construction of an ecological civilization, and these experiences are worthy of being summarized, refined and inculcated into legal provisions.

The country has more than 30 specific laws on environmental protection, over 100 administrative regulations, more than 1,000 local regulations, and more than 10 intra-Party regulations on ecological and environmental work. To tackle fragmentation, inconsistencies and repetition, a systematic legislative approach was indispensable and codification was the optimal option.

The Ecological and Environmental Code addresses the fragmentation inherent in traditional legislation to build a more coherent legal system.

Among the contents of the code are three major parts, which focus on pollution prevention and control, ecological conservation, and green and low-carbon development. This will help achieve sustainability in three aspects.

The part on pollution prevention and control aims to achieve the sustainable development of people. When the sustainable development of people is achieved, the following part, which is on ecological conservation, seeks to achieve the sustainable development of the natural environment. Then it is necessary to have sustainable energy to support sustainable economic and social development.

The part on green and low-carbon development will serve as an institutional framework for promoting low-carbon growth. For example, various laws and regulations could be formulated under this framework to help achieve the "dual carbon" goals, mitigate climate change and adapt to it.

The code has a special chapter on ecological restoration. The chapter helps establish coordinated and centralized provisions that cover the whole process and various subjects. Whole-process coverage means it regulates all six stages of ecological restoration projects, which are planning, assessment, monitoring, implementation, acceptance inspection and follow-up management. In addition, the chapter prescribes measures for restoring forests, grasslands and wetlands, and advances coordinated land and marine environmental governance by setting out special provisions on marine ecological restoration.

A prominent feature of the code is its focus on environmental issues that affect people's daily lives. For example, when it comes to addressing cooking fumes, the code asks local governments to ensure relevant companies design, build and locate their business venues according to requirements in the first place. Another example is light pollution. The code explicitly defines light pollution, calls for limits on light sources, and lays out clear requirements for billboards, neon lights and other scenarios.

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VIEWS

Hu Guangyu and Hu Xueju

CPC's self-reform reflects wisdom of governance

The rise and fall of political powers has been a recurring pattern throughout human history. Breaking this historical cycle has therefore remained one of the most enduring challenges for political leaders and scholars alike.

Through decades of exploration and practice, the Communist Party of China has identified two approaches to addressing this conundrum: people's oversight and self-reform.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, self-reform has evolved into a systematic approach to Party governance that not only strengthens governance in China but also offers valuable insights into modern political administration.

A defining feature of the CPC's self-reform is its commitment to putting the public interest above everything else. This approach stems from the very nature and purpose of the Party.

As the vanguard of both the people and the Chinese nation, the CPC is dedicated to wholeheartedly serving the people.

With no special interests of its own apart from those of the people and not driven by private gain, the Party is better positioned to confront its own shortcomings and undertake genuine self-reform.

By contrast, most political parties across the world primarily represent the interests of particular social groups or political constituencies.

Under many Western multiparty systems, political competition is often shaped by competing interest groups, making it difficult for governing parties to pursue reforms that may undermine entrenched interests.

The CPC's self-reform is based on a different logic. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC has advanced anti-corruption efforts. Through coordinated campaigns targeting both senior and grassroots officials, as well as fugitives overseas, China has secured an overwhelming victory in the fight against corruption.

Those gains have been further consolidated by addressing potential risks within the Party, the State and the military.

This determination to address deep-rooted problems from within the Party itself has few parallels in modern political history. It demonstrates that when a governing party places public interest above private gain, it can overcome vested interests and resolve its problems through internal reform.

Equally important is the CPC's emphasis on systemic checks. Political determination alone cannot sustain self-reform. Lasting results require institutional guarantees.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC has progressively established a comprehensive framework for supervising the authorization, exercise and oversight of power. By improving transparency and accountability while plugging the institutional loopholes exposed during anti-corruption efforts, the Party has strengthened institutional safeguards.

The objective is to curb opportunities for rent-seeking at their source and ensure that public authority operates within clearly defined rules rather than personal discretion.

Just as importantly, these rules are enforced with consistency. No individual is permitted to stand above Party discipline, and institutional authority is upheld through strict implementation rather than symbolic regulation.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

This determination to address deep-rooted problems from within the Party itself has few parallels in modern political history.

Although many Western political systems have sophisticated legal and institutional frameworks, they continue to grapple with problems such as the influence of money in politics and the capture of public power by vested interests.

For many developing countries facing persistent governance challenges, China's experience suggests that effective oversight does not depend on replicating the Western multiparty political model. Instead, institutions can be strengthened according to national conditions to improve accountability, curb the abuse of power and foster a healthier political environment.

Another distinctive feature of the CPC's self-reform is its emphasis on improving Party conduct. The implementation of the central Party leadership's eight-point decision on improving Party and government conduct demonstrates the CPC's determination to enforce discipline through concrete action. By translating commitments into visible improvements, this approach has won the public's trust and support. It offers important lessons on governance for other countries as well.

Corruption doesn't happen suddenly. It often begins with the erosion of everyday discipline. In many countries, anti-corruption efforts focus primarily on high-profile cases while neglecting routine misconduct, allowing small problems to turn into systemic ones.

The CPC has adopted a different approach by addressing problems early and persistently. Beginning with issues that ordinary people encounter in daily life, such as extravagant banquets funded by public money, excessive gift-giving during holidays and the misuse of official vehicles, the Party gradually advanced disciplinary reform.

Instead of one-off campaigns, it has maintained sustained pressure and gradually institutionalized improvements in official conduct.

These sustained efforts have strengthened public confidence by demonstrating that commitments to clean governance are backed by visible action and measurable results.

At a time when corruption remains a shared challenge for countries around the world, China's practice of self-reform provides a useful point of reference for political parties across the world. Its experience underscores three essential principles of effective governance: commitment to self-reform, systemic checks on power and translating words into concrete action.

Hu Guangyu is a teacher at the School of Marxism at Sichuan Tourism University and Hu Xueju is the former vice-president of the Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Daniel Barenblatt

The United States at 250: signal flares of a showboat parade

Among the many events surrounding the United States' 250th birthday, perhaps the most eye-catching was New York City's "tall ships" parade, past the Statue of Liberty and then proceeding up the Hudson River.

Aside from conjuring the New York Harbor scenery of 1776, this international fleet of rigged mast ships sought to replicate the tall ships flotilla of the "Operation Sail" event staged for the 200th anniversary of the United States on July 4, 1976 — a bicentennial parade that I attended in person as a 10-year-old Manhattanite, standing with my father near a West Side pier, snapping photographs of the white sail wonders with our trusty Kodak Instamatic.

The recurrence of the antique ships, with their attendant round number anniversaries, provokes meditations on the US ship of state — what are the headwinds, and what future is it sailing toward?

The US of 1976 certainly had its share of societal problems, notably a struggling economy beset with high inflation and job layoffs. Yet that inflation crisis pales in comparison to the travails of 2026 and the past 10 years.

The prices of necessary goods, rents and mortgages have been rising even more steeply now than in the 1970s.

And back then, average wages were increasing, unlike today.

That more tolerable cost of living was in part effectuated by the bargaining power of labor unions, which were stronger in the '70s than in all the decades that followed.

The bicentennial was also a time of peace: it was the era of detente, a welcome thaw in relations with both the Soviet Union and China.

The military draft and war with Southeast Asia were seemingly in the past. The monumental Watergate scandal of 1973 and first-ever resignation of a US president had also faded from media discourse and dinner table conversation.

For all the socioeconomic problems still facing the nation, there lingered a residual optimism that the middle class and blue-collar workers would regain their footing, that upward mobility was not just possible, but probable.

Civil liberties and public policy were still overshadowed by the unaccountable deep state and military-industrial complex, as was made apparent by the Congressional hearings led by Senator Frank Church on CIA domestic abuses.

But public awareness had been stirred, and at least some of the checks and balances against state and corporate abuse seemed to be in place and functioning, however tenuously.

Prior to its list of specific grievances against the British crown, the Declaration of Independence famously intones a set of three basic rights — "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" — London's denial of which underpinned the need for a new nation, freed from colonial tyranny by force of arms and revolution.

Of those three founding principles, the first and most basic — that of "life" — bears particular scrutiny in the year 2026. The right of all men and women to a decent existence, to keep on living. Where does it stand today, 250 years on?

In current times, when such essentials as food, housing, fuel and medicine have become unaffordable for the average US citizen, and with extreme levels of student and household debt further weighing down families, "life" itself has become quite fraught.

That inscribed right of any and all humans to exist may itself be in its death throes.

The increase in the cost of living, in turn, undermines the concerned citizen's ability to safeguard liberty, or to faithfully pursue that elusive condition known as happiness.

Global Lens

The right of all men and women to a decent existence, to keep on living. Where does it stand today, 250 years on?

It's tough to attain a family-sustaining level of income, or to muster the time and energy required to verify the integrity of computer vote counts, when you are mired in a daily struggle just to acquire enough food to eat, or pay for sorely needed medical treatment.

US citizens are learning the hard way that liberty and the pursuit of happiness are predicated upon the simple, self-evident fact of a person's right to exist.

What would I suggest to remedy this epic crisis?

To begin with, the immediate enactment of federal wage and price controls, the way the Nixon administration did in 1971, and which worked quite well to keep inflation down and workers' salaries up — until heavy pressure from powerful corporations forced a stop to the policy within, whereupon the inflation crisis resumed.

I also recommend a national framework for an emergency rent freeze and rent rollback measures, the expansion of Medicare to cover all US residents in a single-payer system, wide-ranging grants to small businesses, forgiveness of student loan debt with federal compensation to lenders, mandatory tuition fee reductions, and substantive increases in Social Security and food stamp benefits, and in the federal minimum wage.

Institute all of these suggestions and I would say the general population in the US might at least have somewhat of a fair chance at digging their way out of this economic catastrophe, the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Realistically, do I expect any of the above to become law anytime soon? Absolutely not.

And that would be despite the popular preference for each of them shown in survey after survey.

Their rejection by the powers that be does not really concern how spending more would exacerbate the national budget deficit either, as Congress has made it clear that when it comes to taxpayer money spent on the military, endless wars, and "national security", the sky is the limit.

US policymakers and lawmakers, and their guiding hands within the unelected, elite strata of the super-rich and the deep state hierarchy, have no intention of changing course on this one-way track toward the utter immiseration of the domestic population.

Which brings me back to the summer of 1976, specifically to the monthslong buildup to the July 4 sailing regatta, fireworks displays and whatever else was being done, when my 10-year-old self read with keen interest the posters stuck to walls by left-wing activists in my neighborhood urging people to protest the looming presence of one of the Operation Sail vessels, the *Esmeralda* of Chile, which represented the US-backed, brutal military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet.

That regime had covertly been installed by the CIA and US executive branch in a bloody coup on Sept 11, 1973, which overthrew and assassinated the elected, leftist president, Salvador Allende, and destroyed Chilean democracy. So much for the state of US adherence to that "liberty" word in the founding fathers' Declaration.

Soon after the coup, many thousands of political prisoners were rounded up, tortured and murdered in detention centers created by Pinochet, who also harbored fugitive Nazi war criminals.

One of those centers had been the *Esmeralda* ship itself, which was transformed from a Navy training vessel into an anchored dungeon of horrors. According to survivors' testimonies, dissident men and women were killed, tortured and raped inside the ship.

The *Esmeralda* sailed up the Hudson that festive bicentennial day unimpeded, alongside the other tall ships with sails of purest white.

There were two other ships in that bicentennial parade that I now recognize should have drawn objections from advocates for democracy and justice, but as far as I can tell stirred no controversy.

One was the *Nippon Maru* of Japan. Built in 1930 as a training vessel for Japan's merchant marine cadets, it was later requisitioned by the Imperial Japanese Navy during World War II (from 1943 onward). In that capacity, it served primarily as a transport ship for military supplies and personnel, and also provided training for naval recruits.

Another was the tall ship from Italy, the *Amerigo Vespucci*, which, in its little-known, dark past, had been a training vessel for dictator Benito Mussolini's navy and his Axis Italy wars of conquest.

Those fascist Italian forces, like the Japanese, had fought and killed US troops, and together with Hitler's Germany aimed to extinguish the very ideals of democracy, equality and freedom worldwide.

Flash forward to July 4, 2026, and a further problem emerges in the form of one glaring difference between the bicentennial tall ships and the new regatta cruising New York waterways, one that evinces how US national priorities have sunk ever lower over the past 50 years.

The symbolic, white-sails parade has now become extensively militarized; a festive paean to overseas war that would have greatly dismayed those brave anti-imperialist men who gathered in Philadelphia to sign and adopt the Declaration of Independence.

The show was named "Sail4th 250", and the official website proudly states: "This isn't just a handful of boats sailing around, it's a display of 48 historic tall ships from 20 different countries in honor of the US' Semiquincentennial.

Plus, it features an International Naval Review with 50 US and allied warships anchored in the Hudson and an International Aerial Review where the Navy's Blue Angels will lead a flyover of more than 100 aircraft."

And in procession with the many gray-hulled military vessels, those unsolicited new fleet mates to the tall ships, the old *Esmeralda*, that notorious Chilean ship of neo-fascist atrocities, floated once more upon the Hudson, and apparently did so to no visible objections this time around.

May we divine from this portentous maritime spectacle a future for US citizens that is bright with the promise of liberty, peace and prosperity, to be realized soon, and enduring happily for the decades to come?

The leading indicators, both material and symbolic, suggest not, I am sorry to report.

That ship has sailed.

The author is an independent historian specializing in Northeast Asia and author of A Plague Upon Humanity: The Secret Genocide of Axis Japan's Germ Warfare Operation.
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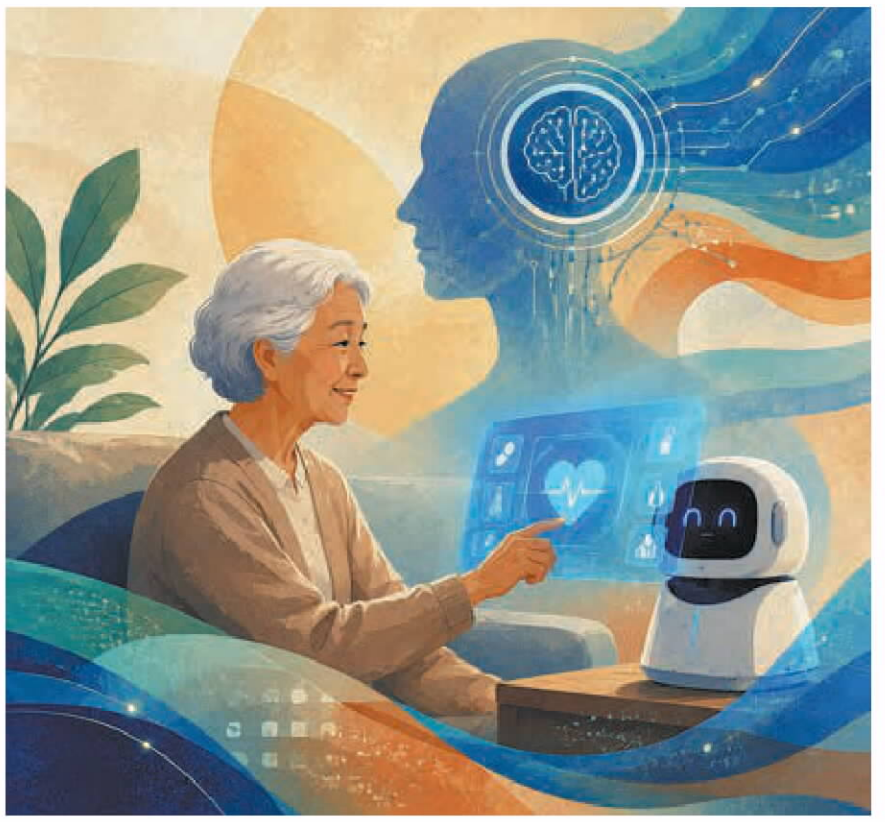
GLOBAL VIEWS



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

NISIT PANTHAMIT AND SUN YANGYANG

Handling aging together

Demographic differences create new sources of regional comparative advantage

For much of the past 35 years, cooperation between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has evolved by responding to changing economic realities. It began with trade liberalization and expanded through investment and regional production networks. More recently, digital connectivity and technological innovation have become new engines of cooperation.



Nisit Panthamit



Sun Yangyang

Perhaps the next chapter will be written not by markets alone, but by demographics.

Population aging rarely dominates discussions on regional economic cooperation. It is usually treated as a domestic issue, associated with pension reform, healthcare costs and shrinking labor forces. Yet China and ASEAN have reached a stage where demographic change can no longer be read only in the context of national borders. The region has become too economically integrated for that.

China has entered a moderately aging society. According to the 2025 National Report on the Development of Aging, jointly released by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the China National Committee on Aging, China's population aged 60 and above reached 323.38 million by the end of 2025, accounting for 23 percent of the country's total population. Across ASEAN, the transition is unfolding at different speeds. Thailand and Singapore have already become aged societies, while Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia, despite having different demographic clocks, are moving in the same direction.

That timing matters.

Economists have long explained regional integration through comparative advantage. Countries trade because they possess different combinations of labor, capital, natural resources or technology. These differences create mutual gains from exchange.

Demographic transition suggests another source of comparative advantage.

The demographic challenges that China is confronting today are those that several ASEAN economies are likely to face over the next one or two decades. Rather than seeing this difference as a divide, it can be viewed as an opportunity. Experience acquired today in one country becomes useful knowledge for another tomorrow. Policy innovation, healthcare reform, workforce adaptation and technological solutions become resources that can be shared.

Comparative advantage, in other words, may increasingly arise not only from differences in economic resources, but also from differences in where countries stand along the same demographic journey.

This idea deserves greater attention because demographic transition is reshaping almost every part of the economy.

Healthcare is perhaps the most visible example. Aging populations require more continuous care, better management of chronic diseases and greater access to medical services outside major cities. Artificial intelligence is often discussed as a technology that replaces workers. In aging societies, however, it can play a major part by helping a limited number of healthcare professionals serve a much larger population through better diagnostics, medical imaging and telemedicine.

The same logic applies to the labor market. Longer life expectancy also means longer careers. Workers entering their sixties today are often healthier, better educated and more capable of remaining economically active than previous generations. The challenge is no longer whether they can continue working, but whether they can continue learning. AI-supported education platforms make lifelong learning more flexible and affordable, allowing workers to adapt to changing technologies without repeatedly leaving the labor market.

The economic implications extend further.

Population aging is changing patterns of demand throughout Asia. Healthcare services, rehabilitation, assistive technologies, age-friendly housing, financial planning and digital services for older adults are becoming important sources of business activity. The silver economy should not be viewed simply as the cost of supporting older populations. It also represents a growing market capable of generating innovation, investment and employment.

This is where China and ASEAN complement each other particularly well.

China has accumulated considerable experience in digital infrastructure, AI applications and smart manufacturing. ASEAN contributes dynamic markets, expanding digital economies and countries that are progressing through demographic transition at different stages. That diversity allows governments, businesses and researchers to learn from one another instead of repeatedly solving the same problems independently.

The completed negotiations on the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area Version 3.0 illustrate how regional cooperation continues to evolve beyond tariff reduction toward the digital economy cooperation and institutional coordination. Demographic cooperation fits naturally within this broader agenda.

One practical step would be to establish a China-ASEAN partnership for healthy aging. Rather than creating another regional institution, such a partnership could build on existing cooperation mechanisms to encourage joint pilot projects in AI-enabled healthcare, collaborative research on aging technologies, workforce reskilling and policy dialogue on long-term care. The objective would not be technology for its own sake, but practical solutions that improve people's daily lives.

Ultimately, the success of China-ASEAN cooperation should not be measured only by trade volumes or investment flows. It should also be measured by whether the partnership helps both sides respond more effectively to shared structural challenges.

Population aging is one of those challenges, but it is also an opportunity to rethink regional cooperation.

For decades, economists have understood comparative advantage in terms of what countries possess. The next stage of China-ASEAN cooperation may depend just as much on where countries are — not on the map, but along the path of demographic transition.

Knowledge can travel before demographic pressures do. Policies can be tested before they become urgent elsewhere. Innovation can spread before problems become crises.

Trade has connected China and ASEAN. Shared prosperity has strengthened that partnership. Handling aging together may become the next reason to deepen it.

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QU SHENNING

Emerging industries unlock job growth

China is bridging structural mismatches between burgeoning sectors and employment

China's overall employment scene remains stable, with the synergy between industrial upgrading and employment expansion continuing to deepen. Yet structural mismatches in the labor market persist as a prominent challenge. The 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) sets out a strategic vision for promoting high-quality and full employment, calling for the integration of an employment-first policy with efforts to expand employment and improve job quality. In June, the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued a plan to implement an employment-first strategy, which underscores the need for stronger coordination between industrial and employment policies during the 15th Five-Year Plan period.



Emerging industries are a new source of job creation. These include not only strategic emerging sectors such as next-generation information technology, new energy, new materials, robotics and biomedicine, but also future-oriented fields such as quantum technology, bio-manufacturing, hydrogen energy and nuclear fusion, brain-computer interfaces, embodied intelligence and 6G telecommunications.

Although emerging industries are typically technology- and capital-intensive and employ fewer workers directly than labor-intensive sectors, their indirect contribution to job creation is substantial. This potential manifests in the lengthening value chain — encompassing R&D, design, systems integration and application operations. The key to unlocking this potential does not lie in seeking new engines for mass hiring, but in translating the new technologies, scenarios and business models born from industrial upgrading into sustainable and expandable job opportunities. In other words, the employment potential of emerging industries is realized not through an expansion of low-cost labor, but through a finer division of industrial chains, an extension of service networks and a restructuring of occupational systems.

China's emerging industries are already a solid pillar of employment. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, China's "three new" economy — a collection of economic activities centered around new industries, new business formats and new business models — generated 24.29 trillion yuan ($3.58 trillion) in value added in 2024, accounting for 18.01 percent of GDP. The momentum carried into 2025. The value added of equipment manufacturing in large-scale industries grew by 9.2 percent, high-tech manufacturing by 9.4 percent, revenue of strategic emerging service enterprises by 9.3 percent and that of high-tech service enterprises by 7.9 percent. New energy vehicle production and sales both surpassed 16 million units, while output of service robots and 3D-printing equipment also saw rapid growth.

This suggests that employment opportunities generated by the "three new" economy come not only from manufacturing but also from services — and, more importantly, from the convergence of the two, which gives rise to new professions, new job categories and new entrepreneurial avenues. This is already evident in several key areas. In the NEV sector, industrial expansion has not only boosted assembly-line jobs, but also created new demand for power batteries, automotive chips and smart cockpits. In the low-altitude economy, the proliferation of drones has created not only pilot positions but also a range of composite roles in route planning, emergency response and logistics delivery. New occupations, released by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, include generative AI system testers, drone fleet operations planners and hydrogen fuel cell test engineers. These reflect the reshaping of the employment landscape by industrial transformation and open new pathways for college graduates, skilled workers and those transitioning between occupations.

Generally speaking, however, the employment potential of emerging industries does not automatically materialize into real jobs. In some localities and enterprises, the focus tends to tilt heavily toward project investment, output value and technological breakthroughs — often overlooking job creation, skills alignment and career development. This can produce peculiar paradoxes: some industries expand rapidly while employment lags behind; some companies struggle to recruit qualified talent while some workers have difficulty landing suitable jobs.

One major reason is that emerging industries are inherently interdisciplinary, cross-cutting and fast-moving, whereas conventional vocational education and training systems are slow to adapt. Many college graduates fall short in the engineering, application-oriented and tool-based competencies that employers demand. Similarly, workers from traditional industries often lack digital literacy and hands-on proficiency in operating and maintaining new equipment. Adding to the challenge, future industries are marked by uncertain technological trajectories and unproven business models. If some local governments chase buzzwords without cultivating viable application scenarios and a supportive industrial ecosystem, it is hard to achieve stable job growth.

Emerging industries represent the direction of industrial development and should also serve as an anchor for high-quality job growth and full employment. Tapping into this potential requires moving beyond the conventional mindset of treating industrial policy and labor policy in isolation. Job creation goals can be embedded in industrial policy; employment policy can grasp industrial trends; and talent development can be grounded in real-world scenarios. Industrial upgrading should ultimately benefit workers — by delivering quality jobs, sharpening skills alignment and strengthening labor rights protection — so that industrial progress and job security advance in tandem. This can be pursued concretely along two dimensions.

First, industrial development and job creation should be planned simultaneously. When local governments draw up plans for sectors such as AI, robotics and bio-manufacturing, they should not confine themselves to lists of projects and enterprises. They should also develop corresponding job inventories, skills matrices and training road maps. It is worth noting that not every region needs to engage in original innovation or full-chain competition. A more pragmatic approach is to identify viable niches based on local strengths and application scenarios.

For example, regions with a strong manufacturing base could focus on supporting jobs in smart equipment, critical components and inspection and testing services. Those rich in agricultural and cultural tourism resources could expand employment scenarios in low-altitude inspection, smart agriculture and wellness services. And areas with a concentration of universities and research institutions could develop specialized service roles in proof-of-concept validation, trial runs, data annotation and model evaluation.

Second, vocational skills development can take center stage. For new occupations and job categories, it is essential to move quickly in formulating occupational standards, training syllabi and assessment frameworks. Leading enterprises, vocational schools and industry associations should be encouraged to jointly develop curricula that incorporate real corporate projects, equipment and workflow into training.

Public employment services should also pivot toward monitoring labor demand in emerging sectors, diagnosing skills gaps and providing job transition support — helping college graduates and workers from traditional industries find viable pathways into employment. As for technologies such as AI that may displace certain jobs, it is worth exploring human-machine collaboration models and guiding enterprises to use new technologies to boost labor productivity, reduce physical strain and expand service reach, rather than simply cutting headcount. At the same time, continued efforts should be made to strengthen the management and support for new forms of employment, ensuring that new occupations remain dynamic and vibrant while also being underpinned by clear standards and adequate protections.

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BUSINESS

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Summer of tech debuts heating up

Unitree, CXMT among Chinese humanoid robots /chip IPOs setting records

By MA SI
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MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

In this year's sweltering summer, China's technology landscape arrived at an inflection point. In the span of a single fortnight, two domestic tech companies made global headlines with stock market debuts that would have been unthinkable a decade ago.

On August 10, Unitree Robotics — hailed as "China's first humanoid robot stock" — opened subscriptions for its initial public offering on Shanghai's STAR Market. The company priced its IPO at 150.80 yuan ($22), aiming to raise about 6.1 billion yuan in total proceeds — a staggering multiple for a company that, like many in the humanoid robotics space, is still scaling commercial deployments.

Two weeks earlier, on July 27, the Chinese mainland's largest memory chipmaker ChangXin Memory Technologies (CXMT) had an even more headline-making debut on the same exchange. Shares of the tech giant surged 465.82 percent to close at 49 yuan per share, propelling its market value to more than 3 trillion yuan — making it the most valuable company on the A-share market on its first trading day.

But a look beyond the head-turning numbers reveals a far more consequential tale unfolding.

This is not about one company's heroics, but a replicable, self-reinforcing innovation ecosystem that is emerging across China's technology landscape. It spans semiconductor design, chip fabrication, artificial intelligence frameworks and industrial integration. And it is beginning to challenge the long-standing assumption that tech supremacy flows only from a handful of breakthrough nodes controlled by a few foreign players, said experts and corporate executives.

Such a robust innovation ecosystem is manifested from Huawei's newly proposed Tau Scaling Law, which reimagines chip development processes for the global semiconductor industry — to the dizzying pace of five major Chinese AI models released in just eight weeks. The flurry also includes a Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based supply chain that can source 30,000 robot components within half a day, and the seamless integration of traditional manufacturing with cutting-edge embodied intelligence.

"Foreign technology export controls are forcing China to solve a structural problem that Silicon Valley never had to," said Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Information Consumption Alliance — a telecom industry association.

"China is no longer chasing a single 'silver bullet'. Instead, it is building an orchestrated stack where every layer, from silicon to software, improves in lockstep — and that may prove more resilient," Xiang said.

Start with Unitree Robotics. Its listing partners offer a clue to the systemic shift. Its strategic investors include not only the National Council for Social Security Fund and DeepSeek, but also the investment arms of China National Petroleum Corp, China Southern Power Grid, China Telecom, Tencent and CITIC Securities. A humanoid robot is no longer a niche gadget — it is a node connecting energy infrastructure, telecom networks, financial services and AI research. Behind a single robot, dozens of interconnected sectors come together: AI models, chips, sensors, precision reducers, motors, batteries, new materials, industrial software and intelligent manufacturing equipment.

Meanwhile, CXMT's debut delivered an even louder statement. Wu Hao, a portfolio manager at Founder Fubon Fund, described CXMT's significance in clear terms: "It completes the most critical piece of a puzzle for the A-share market's memory sector. It gives China its first homegrown DRAM powerhouse with global heft, sharpening the investment case across the memory value chain."

What Wu did not say explicitly, but industry watchers have begun to recognize, is that CXMT's rise is inseparable from the wider ecosystem. The memory value chain — equipment, materials, design, manufacturing and packaging — is no longer a series of isolated Chinese firms fighting their own battles. They are being wired together.

In late May, as CXMT was preparing for its IPO, a different kind of breakthrough was presented at an international semiconductor conference. He Tingbo, president of Huawei's semiconductor business department, unveiled the Tau Scaling Law — a theory that is quietly being described by experts as the most significant rethinking of chip evolution since Gordon Moore articulated his eponymous law in 1965.

Moore's Law, which observed that the number of transistors on silicon chips tends to double about every two years, drove six decades of progress by relentlessly shrinking the transistor. But with features now approaching atomic scales, that path is hitting physical and economic hurdles. Huawei's Tau Scaling Law takes a different approach. Instead of obsessing over smaller transistors, it aims to reduce processing times at every level using transistor switching, circuit delays, chip architecture, interconnect topology and even data center workloads.

Zhou Jianjun, a professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University's School of Integrated Circuits, said the theory offers a fresh road map. "Chip manufacturing no longer needs to rely so heavily on cutting-edge lithography tools, and the strategic role of advanced packaging continues to grow," he said.

The background is instructive. China's chip sector has faced mounting pressure, with the United States blocking shipments of extreme ultraviolet lithography tools and advanced chipmaking equipment from top suppliers.

Huawei said the Tau Scaling Law will allow it to produce a chip with transistor density equivalent to 1.4 nanometers by 2031. By comparison, TSMC, the world's largest advanced chip foundry, plans to roll out 1.4 nm products in 2028.

Zhou Hongyi, founder of 360 Security Group, framed it as a long-awaited answer to a pointed question: "When others block China from cutting-edge chip technologies, does China still have a second path? Chinese semiconductors are moving from single-point breakthroughs to system-level collaboration across the entire industrial chain."

If the Tau Scaling Law represents systematic thinking at the chip level, then the recent AI landscape is the evidence that the same logic is working at the application layer.

Between June and early August — just eight weeks — China's AI labs released five major models in rapid succession: Alibaba's Qwen3.8-Max, Moonshot AI's Kimi K3, DeepSeek-V4-Flash, Zhipu AI's GLM-5.2 and ByteDance's Seedance 2.5. On July 16, Kimi K3 debuted with 2.8 trillion parameter MoE (Mixture-of-Experts) large language model, and a 1-million-token context window — making it the largest open-source model ever published globally.

The numbers bear this out. The Stanford AI Index Report 2026 showed the comprehensive performance gap between top Chinese and US models has narrowed to just 2.7 percent. The cost differential is even more telling. For equivalent workloads, some Chinese models cost a fraction of what US closed-source flagships charge.

But the deeper point is that these model breakthroughs are not accidents of isolated genius. They are downstream outcomes of a hardware-software feedback loop that is growing tighter by the month. Chinese AI labs are not waiting just for US-made chips — they are training more on domestic accelerators, whose market share in China's AI accelerator market surged to 41 percent in 2025, according to International Data Corp, while Nvidia's share fell to 55 percent.

The training data, the model architectures and the deployment scenarios are being optimized in parallel with domestic hardware, creating a flywheel that accelerates with each iteration, experts added.

Walk into an industrial park in Shenzhen, and you will see a 62-kilogram robot performing continuous backflips, side flips and a spinning jump that launches it 87 centimeters off the ground. The leaping automaton is not a laboratory curiosity. It is the product of a supply chain so tightly integrated that the company can source all 30,000 of its components within half a day. That turnaround allows eight product iterations in just six months — a pace that many overseas competitors cannot match.

Zhang Yin, vice-chairman and secretary-general of the Guangdong Artificial Intelligence and Robotics Industry Alliance, put it bluntly: "The Greater Bay Area (Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao GBA) is the only region in the world that has both AI technology and mechatronics (derived from the combination of "mechanics" and "electronics") technology, and the ability to deeply integrate the two."

This integration — between traditional manufacturing and cutting-edge intelligence — is the secret sauce that many outside observers miss. Wei Liurong, chief engineer of the policy and economics research institute at the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, offered a vivid analogy.

"Traditional industries provide the 'body' and the 'scenario' for embodied intelligence. A humanoid robot needs high-precision reducers, servo motors, torque sensors and lightweight structural components — the core manufacturing capabilities for these components reside precisely in traditional manufacturing enterprises," Wei said.

At the same time, she added, traditional factories, warehouses and mines are exactly where robots can first go to work after leaving the laboratory.

"The complexity of these scenarios and the feedback of real-world data are essential for robots to evolve from being able to walk to being able to work. If you only focus on the large language model for embodied intelligence while neglecting the foundation of traditional precision manufacturing, the robot will suffer from 'cerebral palsy' — a very smart brain with unresponsive limbs, unable to pass tests of precision, durability and stability."

Chen Yanbin, director of the Institute of Industrial Economics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said China's manufacturing scale ranked first globally for the 16th consecutive year in 2025.

"The strategic underpinning for this has been its complete industrial system," Chen said.

Hong Qunlian, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research under the National Development and Reform Commission, placed this shift in a broader context.

"As a new round of technological revolution accelerates, global economic competition has shifted from product rivalry and corporate battles to a competition between entire industrial ecosystems. Whether China can seize opportunities and meet challenges by building a modern industrial system aligned with this technological revolution will determine our strategic position in future development," Hong said.

'When the chips are down' — what a difference 7 years can make!

REPORTER'S LOG

By Ma Si

Seven years ago, I stepped off the train at Hefei South Railway Station in Anhui province to visit a memory chip startup that had just developed its first self-designed high-end product. At the time, the global DRAM industry was a near-monopoly of Samsung, SK Hynix and Micron. Few believed a Chinese upstart could ever crash that party.

On July 27, China's largest memory chipmaker ChangXin Memory Technologies, or CXMT, made a blockbuster debut on the Shanghai Stock Exchange's STAR Market. Shares surged 465.82 percent to close at 49 yuan, propelling its market value to more than 3 trillion yuan ($444.9 billion). The company not only overtook US peer Intel in market value, but also dethroned the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China as the domestic market's top-weighted company. The single-day turnover of 140 billion yuan shattered all records for an individual A-share stock.

The seven-year arc from my first site visit to today's financial milestone is not just a corporate success story. It is a testament to what happens when strategic patience meets a fortuitous market moment.

To understand CXMT's rise, one must first understand its founder. In 2005, Zhu Yiming founded GigaDevice Semiconductor Inc, a Nor Flash memory company, with just $100,000 in startup capital. He took it public on Shanghai's main board in August 2016 — a comfortable exit by any measure. At 44, he was wealthy, respected and could have coasted on GigaDevice's success.

But Zhu had a bigger ambition. Nor Flash was not mainstream memory. China, the world's largest electronics manufacturing base, consumed enormous quantities of DRAM chips each year — yet had no meaningful domestic production capability.

Zhu knew China had to crack DRAM. So in 2016, he made a choice that few understood: he plunged into what would become a decade-long, capital-intensive, and brutally difficult war of attrition.

On May 6, 2016, Zhu reached an agreement with the city of Hefei to launch CXMT. The total commitment would eventually reach 150 billion yuan.

In 2019, CXMT achieved what no Chinese company had done before: it successfully mass-produced China's first self-designed, self-manufactured 8 gigabyte DDR4 memory chip. It was a historic "from zero to one" breakthrough for China's DRAM industry.

That's exactly when I first visited the company. I still remember the pride the engineers had when they showed us their first products, and I even brought home a souvenir version of the packaged 8GB DDR4 memory chip.

It is worth noting, however, that CXMT is not the only Chinese company that tried to develop DRAM chips. Tsinghua Unigroup, a major Chinese integrated circuit manufacturer, also spent big money on building factories and acquiring talent from the bankrupt German DRAM maker Qimonda, but it failed.

DRAM is a scale-driven, capital-intensive business with brutal technology barriers. CXMT's success is a combination of long-term capital investment, persistent technological innovation and good timing.

In fact, from 2016 through 2025, CXMT burned through cash year after year. According to its prospectus, as of Dec 31, 2025, the company's cumulative losses had reached 36.65 billion yuan.

Then came 2025 — the turning point.

Driven by explosive artificial intelligence demand, the global DRAM market entered a historic super-cycle. Hyperscalers ramped up infrastructure spending, and server demand for memory chips surged. CXMT's capacity expansion — three 12-inch fabs across Hefei and Beijing — hit the market at precisely the right moment.

The numbers tell the story. In 2025, CXMT's revenue reached 61.799 billion yuan, up 155.6 percent year-on-year, with net profit attributable to the parent company of 1.875 billion yuan — its first full-year profit.

Then 2026 blew those numbers away. In the first quarter alone, CXMT generated 50.8 billion yuan in revenue — up 719 percent year-on-year — and net profit attributable to the parent company of 24.762 billion yuan.

By the second quarter of 2026, CXMT's global DRAM market share reached 7 percent, ranking fourth worldwide, according to the latest data from global technology market intelligence company Counterpoint Research. It has broken the three-way monopoly that once seemed unassailable.

When I asked a veteran engineer what the IPO means for the team, he smiled: "Seven years ago, we were proving we could make a chip. Now we're proving we can build a business."

Some will say CXMT is simply riding a wave. True, global DRAM revenue more than doubled over the past year, but windfalls don't explain everything. CXMT didn't just get lucky; it positioned itself to capitalize. Its long-term research and development strategy paid off. Its capacity expansion hit the market at exactly the right moment.

During the IPO roadshow, Zhu said the company would "actively seize the incremental opportunities brought by AI computing power" while remaining "objective about the strong cyclical nature of the DRAM industry." That is the voice of someone who has learned to dance with volatility.

The question is no longer whether China can compete. It is how fast it can catch up — and what happens when it does.

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BUSINESSINSIGHT

China reshaping, not squeezing, global industrialization

EAGLE EYE
By Tu Xinquan and Cui Yuyang



Chinese project manager (front right) and local employees work together at the construction site of B75 highway in northern Kenya on July 15. LIU QIONG / XINHUA

As tariff tensions continue to cast a shadow over global trade, debate over China's trade surplus has expanded beyond the United States and Europe to developing economies.

A recent report by the Washington-based Peterson Institute for International Economics, titled "China's mercantilist squeeze on developing countries" — and commentaries inspired by it — has advanced a provocative argument: China is not leaving enough room for latecomers to industrialize, but instead is constraining their development prospects by maintaining dominance in low-skilled manufacturing.

The report estimates that such a "squeeze" could cost developing economies tens of billions of dollars in exports annually, equivalent to millions of manufacturing jobs.

The argument has gained traction among some Western policymakers because it fits a familiar narrative: that China has become an economic force dominating large parts of global manufacturing, leaving limited room for others to industrialize.

But this interpretation rests on a flawed reading of both trade data and global industrial dynamics. It treats international production as a fixed pie, rather than a constantly evolving network shaped by investment, technology diffusion and changing comparative advantages.

China's Ministry of Commerce recently rejected the claim that Chinese industrial development has reduced opportunities for developing countries, arguing instead that China's exports of affordable and high-quality machinery, components and production equipment have lowered the barriers for other economies seeking to industrialize.

The central argument behind the "squeeze" theory is that China's share of global exports in low-skilled manufacturing is disproportionately high. By value, China accounts for nearly 65 percent of such exports — far above what some researchers estimate would be justified by its labor force size.

Yet this comparison relies on a questionable assumption: that export competitiveness is determined primarily by the number of workers a country has.

In reality, industrial capacity depends on a much broader set of factors, including logistics networks, infrastructure quality, reliable electricity supplies, supplier ecosystems and institutional efficiency.

A country does not win manufacturing orders simply because it has abundant labor. It must also have the ability to deliver products efficiently, consistently and at scale.

The comparison also overlooks the very different global environments faced by today's China and developed economies at similar income levels decades ago. The degree of globalization, the speed of technology transfers and the organization of supply chains today are fundamentally different from those of the 1960s.

Without accounting for these structural changes, historical comparisons risk producing conclusions that reflect assumptions rather than reality.

More importantly, static export shares fail to capture the dynamic process of industrial relocation.

China's continued strength in labor-intensive manufacturing has existed alongside — rather than against — the expansion of manufacturing capacity elsewhere. Chinese companies have increasingly invested in Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America, transferring production capabilities while maintaining deeper integration with global supply chains.

In Southeast Asia, for example, Chinese companies have expanded manufacturing investment in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. In sectors including electronics and automobiles, a new division of labor has emerged — research, advanced components and core technologies remain concentrated in China, while assembly and downstream production increasingly take place across the region.

This is therefore not a zero-sum competition, but an evolving production network.

The second weakness of the "squeeze" argument is that it treats all manufacturing exports as the same, ignoring the transformation of China's export structure.

China's exports have shifted significantly over the past decade. The share of intermediate goods in total exports increased from about 42 percent in early 2015 to 46 percent by mid-2025, while consumer goods declined from 37 percent to 31 percent.

In simple terms, China is increasingly moving from selling finished products to supplying the machinery, components and technologies needed to make those products.

For developing economies, this distinction matters.

When a country exports capital goods and intermediate products, it is not merely competing with other manufacturers; it is providing tools that enable industrial development elsewhere.

China's rising exports of machinery and electrical products to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Africa reflect this trend. These flows increasingly involve production equipment, industrial components and technologies that support local manufacturing capacity.

The "squeeze" argument also attributes China's manufacturing competitiveness largely to currency advantages and industrial subsidies. But such claims often lack convincing evidence.

Research by international institutions has shown that China's industrial support measures have increasingly focused on strategic emerging sectors such as electric vehicles, batteries and renewable energy, rather than traditional labor-intensive manufacturing.

Moreover, Chinese manufacturing wages are now significantly higher than those in many competing developing economies, including Bangladesh and India. Yet Chinese manufacturers remain competitive because of factors such as industrial clusters, supply-chain efficiency, infrastructure quality and economies of scale.

These are structural advantages developed over decades, rather than simply the result of policy distortions.

Indeed, rising labor costs in China may create opportunities for lower-income economies by gradually shifting labor-intensive production elsewhere.

China is a participant in developing countries' industrialization, not an obstacle.

The portrayal of China as a country "taking away the ladder" overlooks the expanding role Chinese companies play in supporting industrial development in the Global South.

Across Africa, Chinese investment has contributed to manufacturing projects, industrial parks and infrastructure development. From Morocco's Mohammed VI Tanger Tech City to industrial cooperation zones in Zambia and Ethiopia, Chinese companies have brought not only factories and employment, but also technical training and supply-chain development.

International organizations, including the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, have highlighted the role of technology transfers, investment flows and access to clean technologies in support of industrialization in developing economies.

China's trade and investment policies have also expanded market access for developing countries. Beijing in May expanded its zero-tariff treatment to cover all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic ties, while cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative has continued to expand.

These developments point to a different interpretation of China's role: not as a country restricting industrial opportunities, but as one reshaping how industrialization takes place.

At the multilateral level, initiatives focused on global development cooperation have supported projects in areas including poverty reduction, food security, industrialization and the digital economy, while providing training opportunities for developing-country professionals.

The underlying principle is not about deciding who should surrender market share, but about expanding productive capacity and creating new opportunities.

South-South Cooperation is not simply a form of assistance. It reflects changing comparative advantages and mutual economic interests. China provides capital, technology, manufacturing capabilities and market access, while developing economies gain infrastructure, industrial ecosystems and integration into global supply chains.

The global manufacturing landscape is expanding, not shrinking.

Ultimately, the "China squeeze" narrative reduces a complex and dynamic process into a zero-sum contest: every additional percentage point gained by China is portrayed as a loss for others.

But global manufacturing has continued to expand, and international production networks have become more interconnected.

China's role is also changing — from being merely the "world's factory" to becoming a major market, investor and supplier of industrial capabilities.

This does not mean developing countries face no challenges. Weak infrastructure, limited human capital and institutional constraints remain major barriers to industrialization.

But attributing these difficulties primarily to China overlooks the deeper structural issues facing late-industrializing economies.

The Chinese proverb "give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime" captures this broader point.

China's engagement with other developing economies is not about removing ladders, but about helping build more of them.

The real question is not whether China is taking industrial opportunities away from others, but whether the global economy can create more pathways for countries seeking to climb the development ladder.

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The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Key meeting sends message to shore up drivers, focusing on structural issues in H2

MAIN STREET
By Li Xunlei and Zhang Deli

China's first-half GDP growth came in at 4.7 percent, within the full-year target range set at between 4.5 to 5 percent. Against this backdrop, the recent meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, as widely expected, did not announce fiscal or monetary stimulus measures beyond market expectations. Instead, its intent was seemingly to focus more on the structural end.

On consumption, the meeting called for expanding quality supply to meet the needs of different consumer groups and tapping the potential of services consumption. On fiscal and monetary policy, it urged faster fiscal expenditure and bond-fund use, as well as the comprehensive and timely adjustment of monetary policy tools. This emphasis reflects the main features of China's first-half economic performance.

Total retail sales of consumer goods grew only 1.3 percent year-on-year, while per capita disposable income and consumption expenditure rose 5.2 percent and 3.7 percent, respectively, showing that spending growth lagged behind income growth. Household balance-sheet adjustments may help explain the gap: early mortgage repayments have reduced household borrowing, while excess savings have continued to accumulate. Meanwhile, the multiplier effect of consumer trade-in policies has weakened, contributing to sharp declines in home appliance and automobile purchases.

The 2025 trade-in program benefited more than 360 million person-times, according to official data. Measured by unique participants, coverage may have been below 20 percent of the population, with higher-income households likely accounting for a relatively larger share. This helps explain the meeting's emphasis on expanding quality supply for different consumer groups.

GDP growth slowed from 5 percent in the first quarter to 4.3 percent in the second, partly reflecting slower fiscal expenditure in April and May. Measured by the financing gaps in the general public budget and the government-managed fund budget, about 38.5 percent of the implied full-year broad deficit had been used by midyear, well below the 44.4 percent average for the same period in the previous three years.

This leaves considerable room for fiscal policy to support growth in the second half. In addition to 2.2 trillion yuan ($326 billion) in local government special-purpose bonds yet to be issued and 800 billion yuan in new policy-based financial instruments, historical experience suggests that more than 600 billion yuan in unused special-bond quotas could also be mobilized. Against this backdrop, it is understandable that the meeting did not deliver a clear policy surprise.

The absence of stronger-than-expected measures does not rule out additional support later this year, as uncertainties remain. Compared with the April meeting, the language became more forceful, shifting from optimizing incremental resources and revitalizing existing assets to fully leveraging existing policies and promptly planning practical and effective additional measures. The wording also changed from continuing to expand domestic demand and optimize supply to intensifying efforts in both areas.

The most prominent structural feature of the first-half economy was that investment and consumption both fell short of expectations, while exports exceeded expectations, rising 17.6 percent year-on-year. Technology-related products made a particularly strong contribution. Integrated circuits contributed 4.8 percentage points to export growth, other electronic products 4.78 percentage points and artificial intelligence and server-related exports 2.3 percentage points. The meeting therefore concluded that new growth drivers were gaining momentum and the economic structure was improving.

This suggests that policymakers are likely to tolerate a greater degree of structural divergence and are unlikely to revive large-scale stimulus moves for traditional growth drivers merely to smooth aggregate fluctuations. The sustained outperformance of certain industries may therefore become a medium-term feature rather than a temporary phenomenon.

The meeting called for long-term and stable support for basic research, deeper implementation of the "AI Plus" initiative, the development of new forms of the intelligent economy, improved AI governance, breakthroughs in frontier technologies and future industries, and the cultivation of emerging pillar industries. This points to continued policy and fiscal support for AI-related research, infrastructure and industrial development.

Real estate, by contrast, received only brief mention. The meeting called for stabilizing the property market and placed the issue in the section on risk prevention, alongside risks involving local small and medium-sized financial institutions. This suggests that the approach toward traditional growth drivers is to provide necessary support without restoring large-scale stimulus measures.

The meeting's call to comprehensively use and adjust monetary policy tools while improving fiscal and financial coordination to support domestic demand has led to expectations of cuts in interest rates and banks' reserve requirement ratios. Whether such measures will materialize, however, remains uncertain.

The weighted average reserve requirement ratio currently stands at about 6.2 percent, only around 120 basis points above the 5 percent level commonly regarded as an implicit lower level, leaving limited room for further reductions. The central bank also has other liquidity instruments, including open-market operations, outright reverse repos, government bond transactions, the medium-term lending facility and structural tools. These can meet liquidity needs without further reducing the RRR.

A large trade surplus and greater willingness among exporters to convert foreign-currency receipts into renminbi are also adding liquidity to the banking system. RRR cuts are therefore more likely to be kept in reserve.

Interest rate cuts face even greater constraints. Commercial lenders' net interest margin fell to a historic low of 1.4 percent in the first quarter. Further compression could weaken banks' ability to generate capital internally, reduce their willingness to extend credit and increase operational risks. The China-US interest rate differential and the need to maintain exchange-rate stability also create external constraints.

More fundamentally, the marginal impact of rate cuts is weakening. When insufficient effective demand is driven more by expectations than by financing costs, monetary-policy transmission becomes weaker and more protracted. As year-on-year data may improve in the second half, the market may be overestimating the likelihood of further rate cuts. A broader recovery in credit growth is more likely to occur through structural monetary tools working in coordination with fiscal policy.

Both fiscal revenue and expenditure progressed slowly in the first half, leaving substantial room for fiscal policy to gain momentum later in the year. Revenue from government-managed funds fell 21.6 percent year-on-year. Assuming the same rate of decline for the full year and that general public budget expenditures proceed in line with the budget, combined expenditure growth under the general public budget and government-managed fund budget could rise from minus 2.9 percent in the first half to 5.4 percent in the second.

The Government Work Report also arranged 800 billion yuan in new policy-based financial instruments. These can be used as supplementary project capital to support major projects and sectors associated with new quality productive forces. Faster deployment is expected to help stabilize infrastructure and manufacturing investment.

The call to promptly plan and introduce practical and effective additional policies should therefore be understood mainly in fiscal terms. Local governments, local government financing vehicles and State-owned public institutions continue to face considerable debt burdens. The meeting also called for regular efforts to resolve overdue payments owed to enterprises, indicating that amid accelerated population aging and the continued adjustment of the real estate sector, the revenue-generating capacity of some local governments has weakened. Additional transfers or targeted fiscal support from the central government may therefore still be needed.

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CHINA

Abandoned Japanese WWII weapons still pose a threat in China

HARBIN — The latest leak involving abandoned Japanese chemical weapons in Northeast China's Jilin province, which contaminated two Japanese personnel during disposal operations, has renewed concerns about the lingering dangers of wartime chemical weapons still buried in China.

As Saturday marked the 81st anniversary of Japan's unconditional surrender during World War II, the incident has drawn renewed attention to Unit 516, the invading Japanese army's clandestine chemical warfare unit headquartered in Qiqihar, Heilongjiang province, during World War II.

Experts noted that Japan has yet to provide China with critical information regarding Unit 516 and the chemical weapons it abandoned at the end of the war. Some high-risk munitions remain undiscovered, and deterioration of their containers increases the risk of toxic agents seeping into soil and water sources.

At a news briefing on June 4, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning disclosed that on May 26, two Japanese personnel had their arms contaminated with toxic agents during a disposal operation in Jilin when the abandoned Japanese chemical weapons ruptured. The Chinese side immediately provided on-site medical treatment before rushing them to a hospital. After receiving treatment, they returned to Japan on May 29.

However, the incident was not unprecedented. According to China's position paper submitted to the Fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, abandoned Japanese chemical weapons have caused more than 2,000 casualties in China since the end of WWII.

This year marks the 81st anniversary of the end of WWII and of victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. The 14-year war was the longest and largest fight against foreign aggression for the Chinese people in modern times. It came with a great cost — 35 million casualties among the Chinese military and civilian population — before Japan ultimately surrendered in 1945.

While scars left by the war have yet to heal fully, dangerous remnants from the war continue to threaten the safety of communities.

Of particular concern is the Japanese military's incorporation of arsenic into its chemical weapons, both to stabilize mustard agents under extremely cold conditions and to enhance their lethality. Arsenic does not naturally break down in the environment. During excavation, investigators have found many shells already corroded or even ruptured. According to experts, ongoing deterioration could allow large amounts of toxic liquid to seep into the ground.

Such contamination could permanently pollute local soil and groundwater, increasing long-term cancer risks and threatening nearby communities for generations.

Heilongjiang has been more severely affected by abandoned Japanese chemical weapons. The city of Qiqihar, where Unit 516 was deployed during the war, is considered the epicenter of the problem.

"Unit 516 was responsible for developing a wide range of chemical warfare agents, including mustard gas, Lewisite and chlorine gas, all of which were used in combat," said Wang Tianjiao with the Qiqihar Museum.

"Qiqihar was used as a major base for Japan's chemical warfare program, so virtually every type of abandoned Japanese chemical weapon could potentially still be found here," Wang added.

The city has seen some of the worst toxic exposures over the years. On Aug 4, 2003, construction workers unearthed five drums containing mustard gas at a building site. The leak resulted in injuries to 44 people. Some victims have since died, while many survivors continue to suffer from severe pain and illnesses.

A long-term follow-up medical study published on the website of the United States' National Center for Biotechnology Information found that severe autonomic failure, such as hyperhidrosis, pollakiuria, diarrhoea, diminished libido, and asthenia, appeared in almost all victims from the incident. Polyneuropathy occurred in 35 percent of the victims and constricted vision in 20 percent of them, among other malfunctions. Many continued to suffer from severe post-traumatic stress disorder and depression years after exposure.

In the years following the 2003 incident, abandoned Japanese artillery shells were repeatedly discovered at construction sites and disused factories across Qiqihar.

On July 30, 2010, a group of schoolchildren in Qiqihar were found fiddling with three rusted shells, with fuses still attached to two of the shells. The terrifying discovery sent local police into an intense excavation that lasted over eight hours. By the end of the operation, they had recovered 359 artillery shells of various types from a disused factory. The shells were later identified as abandoned by Japanese invaders.

> "Unlike germ warfare weapons, effectiveness of which diminishes over time, chemical weapons remain highly toxic for a long time."
>
> **Wang Tianjiao,** a staff member of the Qiqihar Museum

Shortly afterward, another 63 shells were uncovered at a construction site and later identified as abandoned by Japanese troops. Thanks to the prompt response of local police, the danger was neutralized without any casualties.

Wang estimated that Unit 516 abandoned roughly 200,000 chemical munitions at the end of WWII. Some were buried underground, while others were dumped into the Nenjiang River. "Unlike germ warfare weapons, the effectiveness of which diminishes over time, chemical weapons remain highly toxic for a long time," he said.

Japan has continued to withhold information on the locations, quantities and types of these abandoned weapons, as well as details about Unit 516, hampering efforts to recover and destroy them.

Historical records indicate that abandoned chemical weapons are scattered across numerous burial sites in widely varying quantities. Their small size and varying burial depths make them especially difficult to locate.

Under the CWC, Japan was required to complete the destruction of all abandoned chemical weapons in China by the end of 2007. However, the deadline has already been postponed four times.

Furthermore, legal efforts to seek accountability have also met setbacks. On Sept 21, 2012, the Tokyo High Court rejected an appeal by victims of the 2003 Qiqihar chemical leak incident seeking state compensation from the Japanese government.

While acknowledging that the abandoned Japanese chemical weapons had caused the injuries, the ruling denied the Japanese government's liability for inaction, citing the lack of clarity over the locations where the chemical agents had been abandoned and the inability to prevent the incident from occurring.

Twenty-three years after the 2003 incident, many of the original 44 victims have died. Those who remain continue to suffer debilitating long-term health problems.

Hao Yanzhi, whose wife Niu Haiying was among the victims, said his wife's immune system has steadily weakened over the years. The youngest victim of the incident dropped out of school at an early age and has endured chronic pain and poor immunity for more than two decades.

Many survivors say they do not know whether they will live long enough to hear an official apology from the Japanese government.

XINHUA

Cooling off indoors



Visitors crowd an indoor pool at the Daying salt lake, also know as the Dead Sea of China, in Suining, Sichuan province, on Saturday, as temperatures topped 35 C in many parts of Sichuan and Chongqing. Built over underground saline brine reserves estimated at 4.2 billion metric tons, the resort features a natural thermal brine pool with a salt concentration of more than 22 percent. ZHONG MIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

New code set to bolster eco-rehabilitation efforts

Cases highlight compensation system's ability to hold offenders accountable

By CAO YIN
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Chinese authorities are committed to strengthening the ecological damage compensation system, a significant step toward improving the framework for modern environmental governance and establishing a solid institutional foundation for a greener, more sustainable China.

On Saturday, which marked the fourth National Ecology Day and the implementation of the Ecological and Environmental Code, the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment jointly released details of 10 landmark cases related to the system.

Focusing on key regions such as the Yangtze and Yellow river basins and the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the cases demonstrate the development of the ecological damage compensation system from a pilot program to a robust mechanism built for holding environmental offenders accountable through coordinated government action.

By July, China had handled more than 70,400 ecological damage compensation cases involving over 35.5 billion yuan ($5.2 billion) in compensation, penalties and remediation costs, according to data from the three authorities.

The system was initially piloted in 2015 across seven provinces, including Jilin, Jiangsu and Shandong, before expanding nationwide in 2018. It requires those responsible for pollution and ecological damage to cover the cost of restoring damaged ecosystems, shifting the burden of environmental remediation from the public and government to the responsible parties.

With the Ecological and Environmental Code, the country's second law designated as a "code", now in effect, the three authorities noted that the cases highlight the achievements of the compensation system and send a clear warning that environmental offenders will face legal and financial consequences, backed by strong inter-agency collaboration.

One notable case involved illegal coal mining activities in the Muli mining area on the southern slopes of the Qilian Mountains in Qinghai province, which were discovered in August 2020. Investigations uncovered massive pits and waste rock piles created by 11 companies, which led to the destruction of over 5,500 hectares of alpine meadows and 53 hectares of vegetation.

The mining activities caused extensive ecological damage, including the stripping of permafrost, reduced water conservation capacity, grassland degradation, desertification, and slope instability.

Between 2021 and 2024, the Haixi and Haibei prefectural governments in Qinghai negotiated with the 11 companies involved and settlement agreements were reached with seven enterprises, with compensation totaling 2.46 billion yuan. By June 2026, about 1.85 billion yuan had been collected. The companies that refused to settle now face litigation.

Given the mining area's location in a high-altitude, cold region with fragile ecosystems and slow natural recovery, the provincial government advanced the required funds to begin restoration while negotiations were ongoing. Provincial, prefectural and county governments, together with departments responsible for natural resources, ecology and environment, and forestry, adopted a "pit-by-pit responsibility" approach to coordinate restoration efforts.

Restorative interventions included backfilling, waste rock rehabilitation, slope stabilization and vegetation restoration. Nearly 58.98 million cubic meters of earth and rock were used, 65.23 hectares of wetlands were restored, and vegetation was replanted across 2,620 hectares.

The three authorities said the Muli mining case involved the highest compensation amount in any environmental damage case nationwide and has significant ecological and social implications. Local governments not only advanced funds for restoration and worked with research institutions and experts on the scientific rehabilitation of the alpine grassland, but also implemented staggered payment plans in order to ease the financial pressure on the companies and encourage them to restore the damaged ecosystem.

Qin Tianbao, head of the Research Institute of Environmental Law at Wuhan University, praised the handling of the case.

"The differentiated solutions and phased payment approach effectively relieve the financial burden on the companies, while the local government's upfront funding for restoration expedited ecological recovery and minimized service function losses during the restoration period," Qin said.

The Supreme People's Court said the highlighted cases demonstrate the judiciary's determination to safeguard national and public interests and protect the people's environmental rights.

Over the past decade, the SPC has issued more than 20 judicial interpretations related to environmental and public interest litigation, further developing the legal framework in this area. Courts nationwide have prioritized natural restoration, supplemented by artificial remediation, and standardized alternative restoration measures, such as replanting trees and releasing fish stocks, to provide comprehensive restoration options for different ecosystems.

Some courts have also introduced innovative measures to improve the system. Courts in Chongqing, Sichuan and Gansu province, for example, have established expert databases in cooperation with environmental authorities and invited researchers to participate in investigations, evidence collection, damage assessment and restoration plan design, creating a new model of shared governance.

Chinese prosecutors have also played a crucial role in enforcing the system through public interest litigation. Between July 2017 and July 2026, prosecutors nationwide handled 615,000 public interest litigation cases involving environmental and resource protection, including 527,000 administrative cases and 88,000 civil cases. These accounted for 46.7 percent of all public interest litigation cases handled during this period.



Students take flight

University students compete in an aircraft design and innovation competition in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on Saturday. The event brought together more than 1,200 students from 56 universities across eastern China. Participating students independently completed every stage of their projects, from design and component construction to assembly, testing and actual flight.

YANG BO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

'Glueball' find hailed a victory for physics

By LI MENGHAN
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While subatomic building blocks of matter were once thought to always contain fundamental components known as quarks, Chinese scientists have confirmed the existence of a unique particle made entirely of pure force with no quarks inside.

The BESIII Collaboration, a major facility operating at the Beijing Electron Positron Collider under the Institute of High Energy Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, announced the results in a special plenary report at the International Conference on High Energy Physics in Natal, Brazil, on Aug 5.

After more than a decade of data collection and over 10 billion recorded particle collisions, researchers verified that a particle designated as X(2370) is predominantly a "glueball" — a particle composed exclusively of gluons bound together.

Gluons act as subatomic "glue". They are force-carrying particles responsible for the strong nuclear force, which holds atomic nuclei together. While particles of light, known as photons, pass through one another without interacting, gluons interact directly with each other. This unique property allows them to bind together into a self-contained particle. Quantum chromodynamics, the theory describing the strong nuclear force, first predicted this "particle of pure force" in the 1970s.

"We found it 15 years ago, but confirming its identity was extremely difficult. We went through a great deal of effort and built a complete chain of evidence before announcing it to the international community," said Jin Shan, a professor at Nanjing University in Jiangsu province who led the finding.

First reported in 2011, X(2370) decays too quickly for direct measurement. Scientists instead identified it by analyzing its decay products — the secondary particles left behind.

In 2024, the team measured key quantum properties of X(2370), showing an exact match to theoretical models for the lightest type of glueball. Out of 10 billion collisions, only about 5,000 yielded the target signal.

To prove X(2370) was entirely quark-free, Jin's team looked for specific breakdown patterns that a pure glueball is forbidden from producing.

The experiment yielded zero prohibited signals, satisfying the theoretical requirements. The team also confirmed that X(2370) distributes its decay across many different particle types and rarely converts into light, further verifying its identity.

Huang Yanping, a researcher at the Institute of High Energy Physics, noted that X(2370) satisfied all theoretical predictions, providing the clearest evidence yet for glueballs and establishing a framework for future discoveries.

The search for glueballs has been one of the Beijing Electron Positron Collider's primary goals for decades. First built in the 1980s, the collider underwent a major facility upgrade in 2008 which increased data output a thousandfold, laying the groundwork for the breakthrough.

"This discovery was the result of five generations of scientists working over four decades," said Wang Yifang, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and researcher at the Institute of High Energy Physics. "Many people left along the way because the task seemed too difficult. Those who stayed finally got the answer."

The discovery has drawn praise from international experts.

Colin Morningstar, a professor at the Carnegie Mellon University in the United States, called the result "a monumental achievement for fundamental physics", while William Detmold, a theoretical physicist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said the discovery ticks all the right boxes.

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VISUAL







Illustrating China's devotion to eco-restoration





Newly unveiled thematic artworks depict vision for conservation

By CHINA DAILY

In a land where the whispers of nature are intertwined with its people's daily lives, the concept of "ecology" is not just a word but a way of life. It is a promise of lush landscapes and vibrant communities.

From the onset of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), China embarked on an ambitious journey to integrate the protection and systematic management of its mountains, rivers, forests, fields, lakes, grasslands, and deserts.

This initiative aims to ensure that the land retains its hues of greens and blues and that the bounty of nature enriches the lives of all.

At the heart of this ecological renaissance is a newly unveiled series of thematic illustrations, each a piece representing one of the seven vital dimensions of nature. These artworks are not merely illustrations; they are a narrative of interconnected existence, revealing the secrets of mutual survival.

The first illustration depicts the mountains, the backbone of the Earth. It showcases the rejuvenated mining areas of Wuyi Mountain in Fujian province, now cloaked in verdant regrowth, standing guard as the ecological shield at the source of the Minjiang River.

Next is the illustration of water, the lifeblood of rivers and seas. The vibrant waters around Weizhou Island in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, with restored coral reefs, protect the South China Sea and nurture a thriving marine ecosystem.

The third piece celebrates forests, the natural carbon reservoirs. It portrays the lush giant panda habitats, where ecological corridors connect these sanctuaries, fostering biodiversity and sequestering carbon.

Farming fields, the foundation of sustenance, are illustrated through the fertile black soil of the Sanjiang Plain in Heilongjiang province, where modern machinery work in harmony with land conservation to preserve rich farmlands.

The lakes are depicted in the fifth illustration. It shows the lush wetlands of Huzhou in Zhejiang province, where interconnected river and lake systems breathe life into the lakeside ecosystems.

Grasslands are captured in the rejuvenated landscapes of the Hulunbuir grassland in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, where new grazing practices and wind energy development created a green barrier.

Finally, the deserts are illustrated with straw grids of desert areas in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, where innovative sand-fixing techniques halted desertification, heralding an expansion of greenery.

These seven illustrations tell a story of interdependence: mountains give birth to water, water nourishes forests; forests protect fields, fields reflect lakes, lakes nurture grass, and grass stabilizes sand. No landscape is isolated; all form part of an intricate web of life.

Through these artworks, the nation celebrated its commitment to ecological integrity. By embracing these seven vistas, they envisioned a harmonious coexistence of humanity and nature.







Online
See more by scanning the code.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

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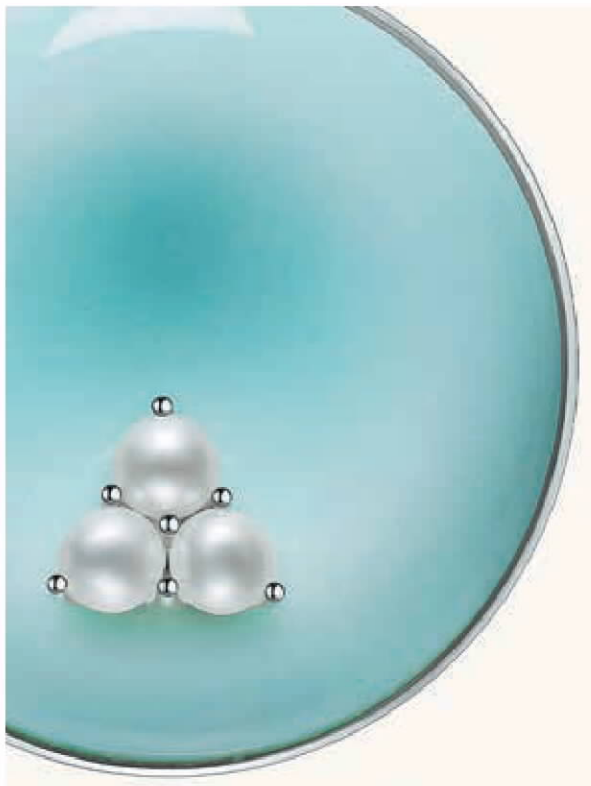
LIFE





Earrings (left and right), inspired by traditional ceramic glaze, are the latest creations by jewelry designer Zhao Yici. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Wearable pieces of history

Jingdezhen's ceramic heritage sparks new ideas as artist explores porcelain through distinctly contemporary perspectives, **Lin Qi** reports.

The recent inscription of Jingdezhen's handicraft industry sites as a group on the UNESCO World Heritage List pays tribute to the historical glory of the hilly, riverfront city in landlocked Jiangxi province as a flourishing center of porcelain production and trade between the 10th and 19th centuries.

The inscription also celebrates a long-standing, comprehensive system of manufacturing and craftsmanship that still thrives in Jingdezhen, renowned as China's "porcelain capital", whose exquisite products captivate people today.

Among those fueling the city's creative energy are local ceramists, as well as the community of *jingpiao* ("Jingdezhen drifters"), a term affectionately used to describe artists who come to the city for long-term or brief stays.





Earrings from the Eterna series (above) and brooch (below) designed by Zhao Yici.

Zhao Yici is one of these gifted and ambitious visitors.

A seasoned jewelry designer, she was first drawn to Jingdezhen by its heritage and, at the same time, its inspiring creative atmosphere.

The city opened up a different world for her — a material with which she had limited experience and a handicraft tradition in which she saw possibilities for innovation by integrating her existing practices.

This led to the birth of Trace by Yici in 2024, through which she brings the sensibilities of a jewelry designer with more than 10 years of experience to ceramics.

Her stay in Jingdezhen also marked the beginning of a creative renewal for her as she pursued "a state of free expression" within the realm of Eastern aesthetics, after years of being accustomed to a business-oriented way of thinking.

She describes her foray into ceramics as an impulsive act. "For me, ceramics is a natural material, and full of uncertainty."

While in Jingdezhen, she made porcelain paintings and installations using cobalt blue pigment. During the process, she was impressed by the lightness of ceramics, as well as by the way a single material can possess different degrees of luster and shifting colors — qualities she finds quite unique.

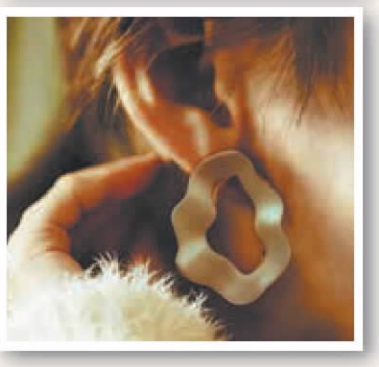
She has continued her exploration of ceramics back in her hometown, Beijing, working from her studio on the third floor of the Hongqiao Market. The emporium, known as a destination for pearls and other jewelry, is bustling year-round with traders and customers from across the country and abroad.

Zhao has transformed a space at the end of rows of booths into a world of her own, where she immerses herself in the peaceful pleasure of playing with ceramics.

There, she displays the porcelain paintings made in Jingdezhen, as well as accessories from Trace by Yici.

In her earring series, Embrace, Serenity and Celestial, one can sense a distinct chemistry between porcelain clay and fire, modern minimalism and traditional craftsmanship. She deliberately molds the earrings into petal shapes. The irregular ripples across their surfaces resemble a silk ribbon held by a dancer, leaving elegant traces in every swirl and leap.







Zhao Yici (top) transforms her artistic vision into innovative ceramic creations, such as earrings (center) and cups, blending tradition with modern aesthetics.

The colors include milky white, blue, red, rosy pink, and pale blue-green — hues one might find on a porcelain vessel dating to the Song Dynasty (960-1279), a peak of China's monochromatic ceramics.

The designs evoke a graceful, laid-back mood in keeping with people's yearning for a simple, slower-paced lifestyle. They also resonate with the concept of *liubai* ("leaving blankness") in Chinese aesthetics, in which sparse compositions in classical paintings leave room for imagination, as well as for philosophical contemplation of the relationship between fullness and emptiness.





Earrings from the Celestial series (above) and brooch (below) designed by Zhao Yici.

"When working with glaze colors, I hope to usher tradition into contemporary living. For example, the glaze on one pair of these petal earrings is a variation on the celebrated Longquan celadon ware," she says.

"Normally, if you want to appreciate authentic Longquan celadon, you would visit the Palace Museum in Beijing, which houses fine examples. I see wearing these earrings as being like possessing a small piece of historical memory in everyday life."

Coco Wang, a longtime friend, says that when she wears Zhao's designs, she feels the power of transformation from raw earth into refined porcelain, an artistry born from nature.

Zhao has turned the back room of her studio into a laboratory, with shelves of books and a ceramic kiln where she makes test pieces.

She sends the works, along with manufacturing specifications, to her collaborators in Jingdezhen for production.

She has also learned the technique of lacquerwork.

"Lately, I've been exploring the fusion of lacquer and ceramics, both of which are quintessentially Chinese," she says.

"I decline to predetermine the outcome. I pick up a lump of clay and let instincts guide the form, allowing it to evolve into whatever shape it ultimately wants to be."

Contact the writer at linqi@chinadaily.com.cn

Blockbuster series reimagines forgotten Wuyue chapter

By CHEN YE in Hangzhou
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An exhibition at the Zhejiang Provincial Museum showcases the history of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960). Exhibits include props (left) from the TV drama *Swords into Plowshares* and relics (center and right). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

As a Hangzhou native, 39-year-old Liang Mengying had walked past Qianwang Temple by the city's iconic West Lake many times, rarely giving it a second thought.

The temple honors the kings of the Wuyue Kingdom during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907-960), whose territory largely overlapped with today's Zhejiang province, with its capital likewise in Hangzhou.

Yet, for most of Liang's life, that chapter of Chinese history remained little more than a rough outline. Liang, editor-in-chief of a big data website, knows it was brief, brutal and chaotic. But when pressed for specifics, she might struggle to recall them.

"My knowledge of that era is mostly pieced together from introductions to various artifacts scattered in museums across Zhejiang," says Liang, who would learn about such things and quickly bury them at the back of her mind.

Then a historical drama rekindled those dormant memories.

In January, *Swords into Plowshares* aired on China Central Television. Centering on Qian Hongchu, the drama chronicles how he became the ruler of Wuyue and then chose to surrender his kingdom to the rising Song Dynasty (960-1279) rather than see his people engulfed in possible bloodshed.

The show became an instant hit. It won multiple awards, including Best TV Series, at the country's prestigious Magnolia Awards in June.

Fans like Liang scrambled to delve into books and records to learn more about that particular period. They began to take a much keener interest in the choices Qian had made and their lasting impact not only on the region but also on China as a whole.

For Liang and her fellow fans, the thirst for knowledge is being quenched by an exhibition that opened at the Zhejiang Provincial Museum on July 28.

The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms: Historical Culture & Cinematic Art Major Exhibition brings together some 1,000 rare relics from that period drawn from nearly 100 institutions nationwide, including the National Museum of China and the Palace Museum in Beijing, as well as many provincial museums.

What makes it unique is its dual structure: one hall displays authentic artifacts, while another offers props and interactive experiences from the drama, allowing visitors to move between historical evidence and cinematic imagination.

Running for almost a year until June 20, 2027, the exhibition is organized into three stages, each lasting about three months with intervals between stages.

"Rather than calling it one exhibition, it's more like three," explains Ji Yunfei, director of the Zhejiang Provincial Museum.

"We will have a new collection of artifacts for each stage as the themes change.

"Also, many treasures simply cannot be displayed for extended periods due to preservation requirements."

One relic on display is a combined scroll bearing the original written instructions of Qian Liu, the first Wuyue king, and his grandson Qian Hongchu. It is one of China's earliest surviving official documents with a sovereign's signature and handwriting.

Another highlight is a gilded silver pagoda excavated in 2001 from the underground chamber of Hangzhou's Leifeng Pagoda, widely regarded as a showcase of the sophisticated metalwork and flourishing Buddhism fostered under Wuyue patronage.

"I gained a much more vivid understanding of Chinese history during that time, especially of Qian Hongchu," Liang says of the exhibition and the drama.

Liang has also revisited the Qianwang Temple and traveled to other places of historical interest — not as a casual sightseer, but as someone eager to appreciate the stories behind historical figures like Qian Hongchu.

"To me, the temple used to be just a scenic spot for flower shows," she says. "Now, every trace of the past means something."

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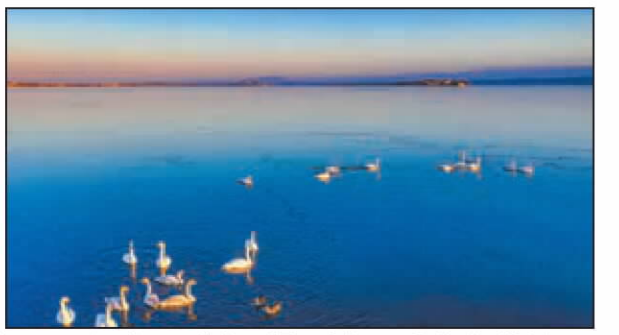
CULTURE





From left: The Buha River flowing through the Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Qinghai province. The Yardang formations on water. A tranquil view of Tosu Lake near Delingha, Haixi.

History amid the mountains

Writer pens book about Qilian, sharing not only his research but also his personal journeys, offering a new perspective on Chinese civilization, **Yang Yang** reports.



Between the northeastern part of Qinghai province and the western border of Gansu province lies the Qilian Mountains, which extend about 800 kilometers from east to west and 200 to 400 km from north to south. In the language of ancient Xiongnu nomads, Qilian means heaven, or *tian*, and was once called the Tianshan Mountains.

They are the mountains that the great poet Li Bai (701-762) of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) wrote about in *Guan Shan Yue* (Moon over the Border Mountains), "The bright moon rises over the Tianshan Mountains, amid the vast, misty sea of clouds". The poem depicts the mutual longing between frontier soldiers far from home and their wives, a bleak image of a millennium of endless border warfare between agricultural and nomadic groups.

Glacial meltwater from the Qilian Mountains has been an important water source for the cities along the Hexi Corridor from Wuwei to Dunhuang. It supported various activities along the 1,000-km-long Hexi Corridor, part of the ancient Silk Road, facilitating the long-distance transmission of civilizations.

Standing between two distinct production modes on its northern and southern slopes, the Qilian Mountains, a key geographic landmark, have witnessed the formation and evolution of the history, culture and ethnic landscape of not only China but also the eastern part of the Eurasian continent.

This geopolitical landmark dictated the expansion and contraction of national territories over history: when the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) held it, they "cut off the Xiongnu's right arm"; when the Tang lost control, the Silk Road was obstructed; and when the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) built the Jiayu Pass, they took the mountains as the frontier.

The Qilian Mountains are not merely a backdrop, but a shaping force, as portrayed by Qiu Huadong in *A Biography of the Qilian Mountains*, a book recently co-published by Yilin Press and Qinghai People's Publishing House.

At a book launch ceremony in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in late July, Qiu shared the motivation behind writing this book. As a writer born at the foot of the Tianshan Mountains in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, he has long dreamed of creating a literary map focused on the *Xiyu* (Western Regions), which encompassed today's Xinjiang and parts of Central Asia.

In 2024 and 2025, he published three novels about the six ancient cities associated with *Xiyu* and the ancient Silk Road— Kucha (or Qiuci), Gaochang, Niya, Loulan, Hotan, and Dunhuang. When reportage author Xu Jian asked him to join other writers, including A Lai and Shi Yifeng, in writing books about Qinghai province, he shifted his focus to the Qilian Mountains, which served as both a bridge and a boundary between the Central Plains and *Xiyu* in ancient times.

To write the book, Qiu, 57, spent several years making multiple journeys into the heart of the Qilian Mountains. Places such as the edge of the Gobi Desert in the Hexi Corridor, the alpine pastures, salt lakes, glaciers, the Dunhuang cave murals, and the Heishuiguo site ruins in Zhangye, Gansu province, where archaeological excavations have revealed a Chalcolithic and Bronze Age settlement dating to approximately 2100-1600 BC, have all become crucial points in verifying the historical documents he studied.

Drawing from sources such as *Records of the Grand Historian*, *Book of Han*, *A Comprehensive History of Qinghai*, and *Chronicles of Qilian County*, as well as plant identification manuals, mineral exploration reports, Tang Dynasty transportation studies, and the expedition records of the 19th-century Russian geographer and explorer Nikolai Przhevalsky, Qiu blends historical records and rigorous scientific research with vivid firsthand experiences.

The author's candid personal travel reflections impart warmth to this biography. The glaciers, meadows, rock paintings, and beacons of the Qilian Mountains transform from objects of observation into internalized life experiences.

Qiu spent over a year thinking about the best way to structure the book.

"The mountains have existed far longer than the history of humanity; they will always be there, while we are just temporary visitors. We humans should not be too arrogant, for we are so small in comparison," he says.

As a result, he moves away from a "human-centered" narrative, allowing the mountains themselves to become the story's main focus and offering a comprehensive exploration of the Qilian Mountains through seven perspectives: geology, plants, animals, history, culture, literature, and travel experiences.

At the launch ceremony, poet Shen Wei commented that the book's most valuable quality lies in "the spirit of humility in the face of the mountains". Prizewinning author Shi Yifeng also noted, "What's most brilliant about the book is its layered and evolving logic."

The author explores the mountain starting with its geology, then its life, history and culture, concluding with its role in civilization, Shi noted.

The book provides an in-depth, multidimensional mapping of the region, delving into the formation of the mountains and the evolution of their landscapes driven by geological activity, as well as the intricate survival networks of plants and animals in the harsh alpine ecosystem.

It also discusses the historical strategic battles involving the Xiongnu cavalry, the Tubo regime that ruled the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau from the 7th to the 9th centuries, and the Han and Tang dynasties, as well as the migration, integration, and everyday life of diverse ethnic groups such as the Tibetan, Yugur and Mongolian. Additionally, it explores the changing literary imagery found in frontier poetry and includes the author's personal travel accounts from multiple journeys through the Qilian Mountains.

The author blends various literary styles, such as dictionary entries, Q&A formats, narratives, and second-person travelogues, creating a dynamic, engaging reading experience.

"The book's significance goes beyond simply depicting a mountain range. It offers a fresh perspective on Chinese civilization by creating a 'history-culture-ecology' framework through literature," says Song Jishu, general manager of Phoenix Publishing & Media.

"Qilian" is more than just a geographical term; it is a crucial source of Chinese civilization, rich with the legacy of diverse cultures blending and thriving together, Song adds.

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Above top: Yanzhi Mountain in Lenghu town of Haixi is known for its striking red hues against the barren landscape. **Left:** Qiu Huadong (center) shares his creative process at a book event in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in late July. **Right:** The cover of the book. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

From Jordan to Beijing, young Sinologist builds literary bridge

AMMAN — In a quiet neighborhood north of the Jordanian capital Amman, Manal Al-Khammash sits with unwavering focus before a *guzheng*, a traditional Chinese instrument, carefully plucking its strings and practicing one note after another.

Nearby is a collection of books, some Chinese classics and others contemporary works, offering a glimpse into a passion that has shaped much of her life: China and its culture.

"I started learning Chinese when I was 17. Now I am approaching 30, and I am still passionate about the language and culture," Al-Khammash says.

Her fascination with China began in childhood when she watched kung fu films starring Chinese actor Jackie Chan. The films ignited her curiosity about a distant country and prompted her to wonder about its language and people.

"Chinese pronunciation is so different from Arabic. How are these characters pronounced?" she recalls.

That curiosity eventually grew into a plan to study Chinese in high school and, later, into the determination to make the language her university major.

Learning Chinese was far from easy at the beginning.

"Both the grammar and pronunciation were difficult," Al-Khammash says. But with her Chinese teachers' patient guidance, who carefully corrected her and followed her progress, together with her own persistent practice, she eventually mastered the pronunciation.

As her proficiency improved, she began to discover the joy behind the struggle. "I gradually started to feel the pleasure of learning and the sense of achievement that came with it," she says.

After graduating from the University of Jordan with a bachelor's degree, Al-Khammash realized that her knowledge of the language and understanding of China still needed to expand. With support from her family, she moved to Beijing in 2019 to pursue postgraduate studies at Beijing Language and Culture University.

As her mastery of Chinese grew, she began translating Chinese television dramas into Arabic. Seeing Arab viewers understand and connect with Chinese stories through her translations brought her immense satisfaction. It encouraged her to venture into literary translation, which, she soon discovered, demanded even more patience and effort. Yet for Al-Khammash, her passion made the challenge worthwhile.

Among her favorite works is *Cold Nights*, a novel by renowned Chinese writer Ba Jin (1904-2005). Although the story is set in China, Al-Khammash found in it emotions that transcend borders — the warmth of family relationships and the emotional struggles experienced by its characters.



Manal Al-Khammash plays the *guzheng*, a Chinese zither, at her home in Amman, Jordan, on July 20. XIN MENGCHEN / XINHUA

That sense of shared culture inspired her to bring the novel to Arabic-speaking readers. Her translation was published in 2024.

During the process, Al-Khammash gave every character in the book Arabic names that she felt suited their personalities. She also included a detailed table at the end of the book explaining the original names of people and places, as well as the distinct cultural terms that appear in the novel.

Her goal was not simply to translate words, she says, but to open a window through which Arab readers could gain a deeper and more accurate understanding of Chinese culture.

"When I see Arab readers interacting with these Chinese stories through my translation — crying, laughing, and being moved by the characters — I feel an indescribable sense of pride and achievement," she says with a smile.

Today, Al-Khammash is pursuing a PhD in contemporary Chinese literature at Sichuan University. She spends most of the year in China and returns to Jordan mainly during academic breaks.

Her home on the northern outskirts of Amman reflects the life she has built between the two cultures. Chinese musical instruments, traditional tea sets and other Chinese cultural artifacts are displayed throughout the house.

Whenever friends visit and express curiosity about them, she eagerly introduces them to Chinese tea culture, preparing tea in accordance with traditional customs.

There is a difference between the two countries' tea traditions, she notes. In China, tea is often prepared using traditional brewing methods, whereas in Jordan, it is commonly boiled. Yet behind the different techniques lies a shared value: hospitality.

The deeper Al-Khammash delves into Chinese culture, the more similarities she discovers between the two societies: from filial respect for parents to reverence for teachers and elders and the willingness to help others.

"Many aspects of Chinese culture are similar to those found in Jordan and other Arab countries," she says.

For her, these cultural parallels have become a source of motivation to continue studying Chinese and researching its culture.

In May, she took another step toward advancing that mission by participating in a special China-Arab States session of the 2026 International Youth Poetry Festival.

At the Great Wall of China, beneath the red walls of the Forbidden City and at the Guangdong Literary Museum, she drew on her knowledge to help young poets from China and the Arab world communicate and connect.

For Al-Khammash, these encounters offered a firsthand glimpse of how exchanges between the two ancient civilizations can transcend geography and time. "I am willing to be a bridge connecting the Chinese and Arab cultures and to promote greater understanding between the two," she says.

Looking ahead to life after completing her doctorate, Al-Khammash has a clear vision: "I hope to work with Chinese people in the future, continue translating more Chinese literary works, and introduce more Arabs to the real and beautiful China," she says.

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LIFE



Miao silver ornaments on display at Tang Feiyang's workshop, part of his effort to bring traditional craftsmanship into contemporary markets.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The science of saving tradition

A childhood legacy becomes a new business as one biochemistry graduate works to reshape Miao embroidery, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Tang Feiyang grew up watching his grandmother and mother embroider.

Every afternoon in Taijiang county, deep in the mountains of southwestern Guizhou province, the women in his family would sit where the sunlight fell best, drawing threads through soapberries to stiffen them before stitching intricate patterns onto cloth.

"We didn't pay much attention to it," Tang recalls.

"It was just something they did — like cooking or washing clothes."

As a child, he never thought of embroidery as art, heritage or business. During festivals, when women appeared in elaborate silver headdresses and densely embroidered garments, he and the other children were more interested in snacks and fireworks than needlework.

After graduating in 2012 with a degree in biochemistry, Tang worked briefly in a lab in Shenzhen in South China's Guangdong province, before moving into sales. A year later, he returned to Guizhou and opened an art gallery.

He noticed that decorative paintings that sold cheaply in Shenzhen could find a ready market in his home province. Soon, he expanded into Taijiang's old county center, where small workshops producing embroidery and silver ornaments lined the streets.

Something he had once overlooked suddenly looked different.

"After traveling to other cities, I suddenly realized that our local people still make and wear clothing like this, keeping such elaborate traditions in daily life," he says.

The feeling deepened during the annual Sisters' Meal Festival, one of the Miao ethnic group's biggest celebrations. Every spring, tourists carrying cameras poured into Taijiang to photograph the embroidered costumes and silver ornaments.

Watching the crowds, Tang began to sense the market potential behind the tradition.

"I've always been sensitive to business opportunities. I thought maybe this could become something larger," he says.

In 2015, Tang founded a company focused on Miao embroidery and plant-dyeing techniques. But he was never interested in simply reproducing traditional crafts for souvenir markets. He wanted to redesign the system behind them.

A different inheritor

Tang does not weave cloth or stitch patterns himself. What he builds instead are processes, from dyeing systems and workshop networks to product pipelines and market connections.

"The older generation's logic was that our ancestors did it this way, so you must do it the same way," he says. "I thought if something is inconvenient, can we make it more efficient? Can we use different tools or materials?"

He attributes this mindset to his scientific training.

When Tang first began studying traditional plant dyeing, he found that most recipes relied heavily on intuition. Older artisans described proportions in vague terms like "a little ash", "a handful of leaves", and "boil it longer".

Tang approached the process like a lab problem. He brought measuring cups, temperature controls and pH test paper, aiming to convert inherited experience into repeatable formulas.

His biggest breakthrough came after a hotel placed an order for uniformly dyed bedsheets.

Traditional methods could not meet the demand. A single worker could dye only around 14 to 20 meters of cloth a day, and achieving even color across large pieces was difficult.

Tang started redesigning the process itself.

He built a deep dye vat equipped with an electric hoist. Fabric could be fully submerged, then lifted into the air to oxidize evenly before being lowered back into the vat.

"The key to dyeing isn't soaking. It's oxidation," he explains.

In traditional indigo dyeing, fabric turns blue only after exposure to oxygen. Tang found that repeatedly lifting cloth from the vat produced richer, more even color than leaving it submerged for long periods.

"If you soak fabric all day, the color still won't be as deep as lifting it out every 15 minutes," he says.

Later, he developed a folding rack roughly one meter wide that could hold up to 200 meters of fabric at a time. Combined with the hoist system, it allowed a single worker to dye several hundred meters a day.

Compared with traditional methods, Tang estimates the system improved efficiency roughly 40-fold.

For rural workshops trying to survive in modern markets, the changes have breathed new life into an old craft.

Black dye reinvented

Tang's scientific instincts also pushed him to experiment in ways traditional dyers rarely attempted.

One example is black dye.

Historically, artisans produced black fabric by boiling cloth with tea leaves and iron in iron pots. The chemical reaction darkened the fabric, but results varied from batch to batch.

Tang wanted greater control.

"Tea itself creates a yellow-brown color," he explains. "But when it reacts with iron, it turns black. So I started asking if we could shape that reaction more precisely."

He eventually transformed the dye mixture into a paste.





Top: Tang holds a piece of naturally dyed fabric in a rural field in Guizhou. **Above:** Local women work with plant-based dyes, providing them with supplementary income.

Using molds and stencils, his team could apply the black dye in controlled patterns, creating geometric designs, Chinese characters and calligraphy-like motifs directly on fabric.

Tang's decade-long effort sits within a quiet wave of innovation that is transforming how Miao embroidery is made, sold, and sustained.

Taijiang has established more than 10 intangible cultural heritage workshops that combine traditional crafts with the explosive popularity of the "Village Basketball Association", or "Village BA" basketball tournament. The grassroots sporting event has drawn more than 8 million visitors and generated billions of online views in recent years, according to local authorities. The county's embroidery program has trained over 1,000 women in advanced stitching techniques, established 16 industry bases, and helped more than 5,000 embroiderers find stable employment.

Tang's central concern is economic survival.

Between 2016 and 2018, he identified women across Taijiang and neighboring counties who could organize local embroiderers. Around them, he established small "Miao embroidery workshops" operating from homes or village public spaces.

"We trained one organizer in each village," Tang explains. "We provided patterns and orders, and they coordinated production locally."

At its peak, the network included more than 15 workshops and over 400 embroiderers.

For many rural women, especially during slow farming seasons, the workshops provided supplementary income ranging from 500 to 800 yuan ($74-118) a month.

"What we built was a bridge between villages and the market," Tang says. "Heritage commercialization is hard. But we've stayed with it for 10 years."

Choosing what lasts

Over the years, Tang's team experimented with almost every product category imaginable, from leather bags and notebooks to shirts, suitcases and scarves.

One of his most unusual creations was a tracksuit made from *liangbu*, a traditional Miao fabric treated with egg whites and repeatedly beaten with wooden mallets until it develops a glossy, water-resistant surface.

Historically, villagers used the fabric for outdoor work in the mountains.

Tang saw something else in it.

"It felt cyberpunk to me," he says.

So he transformed the material into modern sportswear.

The tracksuit attracted national media attention and was eventually acquired by the China National Silk Museum in Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang province.

Tang has been constantly calculating what can realistically survive modern markets and what cannot.

While keeping close tabs on the latest market developments, Tang has grounded his priorities in production systems.

Recently, his company has narrowed its focus to products with more stable long-term demand: canvas bags, towels, accessories and household goods.

Tang has also partnered with Tencent to digitize his Miao embroidery patterns and license them for use in digital products, from game skins to virtual merchandise. Under the arrangement, the patterns are documented, tagged with their cultural stories, and made available for Tencent to use in exchange for a share of the revenue.

"Their approach emphasizes the stories behind the patterns," Tang says. "That adds value beyond the visual."

Chen Ping, director of the Academy of Cultural Heritage and Creativity of Jinan University and chair of the International Organization of Folk Art, has a name for what Tang is doing.

"Don't turn 'protection' into 'preservation in formaldehyde'," Chen says.

"Preservation in formaldehyde means keeping crafts in a glass case — beautiful but lifeless. True protection acknowledges that tradition itself has the capacity for self-renewal."

For Chen, the ultimate test of heritage revival is not how many artifacts are stored in museums. It is how many products find their way into ordinary homes.

Recently, Tang's products have also made their way to Yuxun, a cultural retail space in downtown Beijing, sitting on shelves beside other heritage-inspired brands.

Sales remain modest. But for Tang, visibility itself matters.

"A decade ago, very few people in Beijing were buying Miao embroidery accessories," he says. "Now at least people stop and look."

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Peking Opera lights up Carthage

TUNIS — As the last rays of sunlight faded over the ancient theater of Carthage, night settled in, and the summer heat began to ease. Then the resonant strains of Peking Opera rang out.

The Monkey King, an iconic figure in the art form, appeared in a golden robe, moving in perfect sync with the drumbeats. His entrance unleashed a roar of applause that swept through the crowd.

On Tuesday evening, performers from the China National Peking Opera Company took the stage during the "Folklores of the World" segment of the 60th Carthage International Festival in Tunisia.

More than 20 performers presented *Havoc in the Heavenly Kingdom*, a classic Peking Opera work, captivating a Tunisian audience eager to experience the richness of traditional Chinese art.

The pounding drums and soaring vocals deeply resonated with Wissal Khlifi, a Chinese-language enthusiast. When the Monkey King led his "monkey children" onto the stage to battle the celestial army, the theater erupted in cheers and applause. Khlifi let out an excited cry and immediately pulled out her phone to capture the dazzling spectacle.

"I've seen face-changing and acrobatics before," she says, "but this was my first time watching Peking Opera. The range of styles on display really speaks to the depth and richness of Chinese culture."

Among the "monkey children" onstage were five Tunisian practitioners of Chinese martial arts. One of them, 17-year-old Zayneb Mannai, has been training for 13 years and is now a member of the Tunisian Wushu Kung Fu Federation. She has traveled to China twice for martial arts competitions.

"When I was 4, I saw my brother practicing and was fascinated by the moves, so I started training too," she recalls.

In full makeup and costume, Mannai moved remarkably like a monkey. "Learning the choreography and stage positioning wasn't easy at first," she says, "but performing alongside Peking Opera artists was an incredible thrill for me and my friends."

Hend Mokrani, director of the 60th Carthage International Festival, says that while other international acts were given around 10 minutes each, Peking Opera was given a special 30-minute slot to open the show.



Artists of the China National Peking Opera Company perform at the ancient theater of Carthage in Tunis, Tunisia, last Tuesday. ZHOU HAOJIN / XINHUA

"We wanted to give the audience enough time to follow the story, discover a different form of theater, and experience the richness of Chinese culture," Mokrani says.

She also praised the artistic expressiveness and technical mastery of Chinese opera. "The audience's enthusiastic response says everything about their appreciation for Peking Opera. I hope to see more performances like this in Tunisia in the future. They're a wonderful bridge for cultural exchange between our two countries."

Backstage after the show, Tian Lei, vice-president of the China National Peking Opera Company, was still buzzing with excitement.

"Onstage, we were met with thunderous applause and warm appreciation. Offstage, I saw children eagerly applying makeup and trying out Peking Opera movements themselves," he says.

The company prepared three classic productions for this tour. Following its performance in Tunis, the troupe traveled to Sousse and Kairouan, where it staged shows from last Wednesday to Friday, according to Tian.

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SPORTS

MOTOR SPORTS



Seventeen-year-old Swedish driver Alexia Danielsson is not shy about stating her ambition to be a Formula One world champion after being hand-picked for More Than Equal, a program that aims to unlock female talent in motor sports. AFP

World's fastest sport still slow to change

It's been 50 years since Formula One had a female driver on the grid

Alexia Danielsson was 14 when she first drove a Formula One car, a modified 2007 Williams owned by a family friend.

Now 17 and competing in the Central European F4 series, where rivals include 15-year-old Ella Hakkinen, McLaren-backed daughter of retired double F1 world champion Mika, the Swede hopes one day to be on the grand prix starting grid for real.

"I don't think anything is impossible, you just have to really go for it. How long? I have no idea," Danielsson, currently 26th of 49 in the standings, told reporters.

The youngster is one of many chasing a dream that only a vanishingly small number will ever realize. And, for the past 50 years, only men have managed to make it all the way.

Last weekend marked half a century since a woman last raced in the Formula One world championship, and the wait looks far from over. F1 chief executive Stefano Domenicali said in 2024 he could not see it happening in the next five years.

More than equal

Danielsson, whose father Alexander won the 2006 World Series by Renault, is already an elite racer — one of a select cohort being helped by More Than Equal, an initiative set up in 2022 by former F1 racer David Coulthard and Czech billionaire Karel Komarek.

The nonprofit global program's founding aim was "to identify, develop and support the first female Formula One world champion".

"We're not a race team, we don't have shiny cars with shiny stickers, we're not a race series," chief executive Tom Stanton told reporters. "What we do is build drivers, and that's how we fit into the ecosystem."



Swedish driver Alexia Danielsson in action during a Formula 4 training session at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya in Montmelo, Barcelona, in December. AFP

> I don't think anything is impossible, you just have to really go for it. How long? I have no idea."
>
> **Alexia Danielsson,** stating her ambition to be F1 world champion

There is no doubting the commitment of those selected, or awareness of how difficult the chosen path will be as the sport's popularity explodes. These are not starry-eyed converts to the sport, lured in by the appeal of Netflix docu-series *Drive to Survive*.

Danielsson started karting at six, switching to cars at 13.

Others have moved away from home, some to other continents just as some current F1 drivers did at a similar age, to progress.

Stanton said that when More Than Equal started the driver development program, those involved knew there was a mountain to climb. Two years later it looks more like Everest, but at least the Base Camp has been clearly established.

The Formula One-backed all-female F1 Academy series, which effectively replaced a previous W Series, and with whom More Than Equal has a partnership, has also raised the profile with races during selected grand prix weekends on the support program.

Britain's Abbi Pulling won F1 Academy in 2024, as well as a British F4 race. She has also been a winner in the GB3 championship this year.

Frenchwoman Doriane Pin, last year's champion, has since tested a Mercedes F1 car.

"There are starting to be more female drivers out there," said Stanton.

"Also, they are performing better. I think that's one of the things, that as female drivers start to be more consistently towards the top of the field, more people will notice. That's a blessing and a curse, because there becomes an expectation then."

Emerging talent

More Than Equal has created FutureLap, a platform that crunches data from karting and junior single-seater championships to identify emerging talent, male and female, that might otherwise struggle to be noticed.

A study has also been launched with the University of Portsmouth in England to advance understanding of female ergonomics in F4.

"What we do see is that there are more female drivers coming through," said Stanton.

"And it's not that they weren't there. It's just that we couldn't see them, because the results are not gender marked. Andrea in the United Kingdom is a girl's name. In Italy, it's a boy's name."

The first group of six selected by More Than Equal was whittled down from 1,000 applicants. The second intake of eight came from 1,500.

"The ambition is still that we want to see the first female driver win that F1 Championship, I think that we also should acknowledge that there are a number of firsts along the way that are of really equal importance," said Stanton.

"I'm not saying that the first female F1 champion wouldn't be an absolutely meteoric event, but actually the first female to sit on the grid, in some ways, will have equal importance, because it legitimizes the notion that it can be a mixed sport.

"I think that what we're doing is unique. I also think that it will take a village to raise this child. It's going to be a combination of us and teams, and other support systems, and we are all going to have to work in concert to make it work."

REUTERS

Grassroots opportunities key to getting girls into F1, says Chadwick

Jamie Chadwick has no doubt that female drivers will rise to the top in motor sports if enough of them start at the bottom.

Britain's leading woman racer, a triple champion in the now-defunct W Series who is now eyeing a career in the world endurance championship, has her own initiative to get girls into karting and onto a motor sports path.

The key, she told reporters in a recent interview, is not only to awaken a passion for speed at an early age, but also to create an inviting and welcoming environment for young women in a sport still dominated by men.

"I had an older brother which helped, but I was the only girl there (at the go-kart track) and, yeah, you're eight to 12 years old and it's not necessarily an environment that, you know, is the most inviting," she recalled.

"I wanted to create a community, a championship that young girls can come in and make friends, come with their friends, enjoy the race and get into it in a really natural way ... and we've seen amazing uptake.

"I think this is what is going to ultimately help all the other initiatives that we see going on across the board, to continue to encourage more female talent into the sport."

Chadwick, 28, said starting earlier — as young as four years old — was one of the biggest advantages that men had in motor sports, with parents often more inclined to push boys than girls, because so few women were racing at the top.

This month marks 50 years since a woman last raced in Formula One, the late Maria Grazia Lella Lombardi at the Austrian Grand Prix on Aug 15, 1976.

The Italian qualified her Brabham BT44B in 24th position and finished 12th, last of those still running.



Lombardi, who died at the age of 50 in 1992, remains the only woman to have finished a grand prix in a scoring position — sixth in Spain in 1975, when half points were awarded.

Many more women are coming into the sport, but Chadwick said it would still take time for the grassroots pathways to really produce results.

Formula One, with 22 drivers and only one rookie this year, remains an impossible dream for almost all drivers, whatever their gender.

"You look at the percentages of those that make it to the top, it's very, very small," said Chadwick of elite motor sports in general.

"But when there's already such a small percentage of female drivers at the beginning, the odds are already stacked against you.

"It's going to take a long time probably to get anything close to 50-50. I don't know what it is at the moment, but it's probably about 80-20 at best."

Chadwick said all-female initiatives such as F1 Academy, or W Series when it existed, had catered for those women already in the sport, including some who had quit after running out of resources, but were then able to return.

"I'm confident that it will be much better for this next generation coming through," she said. "I think we are definitely going to see the highest quality of female racing drivers we've ever seen in the next five years, in my opinion. No doubt about that."

REUTERS

Dodds confident Formula E will win the race to get women back on track

Formula E chief executive Jeff Dodds has no doubt his all-electric series will beat Formula One in the race to put a woman back in the driving seat.

Last weekend marked 50 years since Italian Maria Grazia Lella Lombardi, who, in August 1976, became the last female driver to start a world championship grand prix.

Formula E, the first season of which took place in 2014-15, has featured three female competitors — one more than in 76 years of the Formula One championship — with the most recent being Switzerland's Simona de Silvestro in 2016.

"Would I have a bet that Formula E will (again) have a woman racing driver competing at the main championship level ahead of Formula One? Absolutely, I would make that bet," Dodds told reporters ahead of Formula E's season finale, which took place at ExCeL London over the weekend.

"Obviously, I'd never make a financial bet, because that would go against any governance rules, but if you and I want to have a private beer on it, then I'm happy to make it."

Dodds explained his confidence was due to a number of factors.

The first is having a structure in place that allows female drivers to test the actual cars raced in the championship, unlike Formula One where the all-female F1 Academy support series uses Formula Four-level cars.

Drivers who succeed in F1 Academy are given a career boost, but even Formula Three and Formula Two, critical steps towards obtaining sufficient points for an F1 super license, remain a long way off and require substantial funding. There is currently no woman racing in either of those series.



Jeff Dodds, CEO of Formula E, believes his series will beat F1 in once again putting a woman in the driving seat. LAT IMAGES

"I think the F1 Academy is a really good championship, and I really like what they're doing in terms of creating opportunities for women drivers," said Dodds, whose championship is controlled by Liberty Global, while F1 is owned by Liberty Media.

"On the other hand, the step between an F1 Academy car and a Formula One car is a massive one. It's very unlikely that somebody goes from winning F1 Academy into a Formula One car.

"Whereas our women's program today has women testing the same car, the same championship car, on the same track, in the same environment as the current championship drivers."

Formula E has for the past two years held a "women's test" to allow female drivers to experience the cars. Last October, at Valencia's Ricardo Tormo Circuit, 14 women participated, including 2024 F1 Academy champion Abbi Pulling, who is also a simulator driver for the Nissan team.

Four women also took part in the rookie test last March.

"The majority of our teams now have dedicated women drivers on their staff," said Dodds. "(Japan's) Juju Noda at Jaguar, and (German) Sophia Florsch was announced by Opel. And you've got (Filipina) Bianca Bustamante at Cupra Kiro and Abbi Pulling at Nissan.

"We will also make some big announcements about even more investment into our women's program for next season onwards."

Dodds said the new faster and lighter Gen4 car for next season also lends itself more towards women drivers because it will have power steering.

F2 and F3 cars have no power steering, whereas F1 cars, under heavy G-forces, do — a situation some have argued works against 16-year-old girls competing with physically stronger boys.

"I think the introduction of power steering really helps us put women on an equal footing in terms of their ability to break into the main championship," Dodds said.

REUTERS

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2026

WORLD WATCH
By Djoomart Otorbaev

Enduring impact of Jiang's legacy

The centenary of Jiang Zemin's birth provides an important opportunity to assess one of the most transformative periods in the history of the People's Republic of China.

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, with Jiang as the core of the central leadership, China navigated an era of profound domestic reform and international change. Building on the historic reform and opening-up initiated by Deng Xiaoping, Jiang institutionalized these reforms, strengthened the socialist market economy, safeguarded political stability and laid the economic and institutional foundations that continue to support China's modernization today.

Under Jiang's leadership, China underwent a significant economic transformation, one of the most notable in human history, while maintaining political stability.

The figures alone highlight the magnitude of this achievement. China's nominal GDP grew from about $347 billion in the late 1980s to nearly $1.47 trillion in 2002, more than quadrupling. For most of this period, annual GDP growth surpassed 9 percent, even reaching 13-14 percent several times. These consistently high growth rates were unmatched for an economy of China's scale and significantly shifted the country's role in the global economy.

Foreign trade expanded even more dramatically. Total trade increased from approximately $111 billion in the late 1980s to more than $620 billion by 2002 and exceeded $850 billion by 2003. China rapidly evolved from a poor developing economy into one of the world's leading manufacturing and trading powers.

During the same period, annual foreign direct investment rose to more than $50 billion, while the country's foreign exchange reserves increased from less than $6 billion to nearly $290 billion, providing a powerful foundation for long-term macroeconomic stability.

These accomplishments didn't occur overnight. While Deng Xiaoping's leadership set China's reform and opening-up in motion, the period under Jiang saw these reforms further consolidated and institutionalized through the collective efforts of the Party and government.

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A grand gathering is held to commemorate the birth centenary of late leader Jiang Zemin at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Monday.
FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Jiang's 'glorious life' celebrated

President addresses grand gathering in Beijing to mark centenary of late leader's birth

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

President Xi Jinping lauded on Monday the "indelible contributions" of late leader Jiang Zemin and called for efforts to continue advancing the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, as he addressed a grand gathering in Beijing to mark the centenary of the late Chinese leader's birth.

"Comrade Jiang Zemin lived a glorious life, a life of struggle," Xi said, noting that Jiang had made indelible contributions to safeguarding the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, breaking new ground in reform and opening-up in all respects, achieving overall moderate prosperity in people's lives, and successfully advancing socialism with Chinese characteristics into the 21st century.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, called on the whole Party and the Chinese people of all ethnic groups to learn from Jiang's exemplary qualities and continuously advance the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Jiang was the core of the third generation of the Party's central collective leadership and the principal founder of the Theory of Three Represents, which stipulated that the CPC should always represent the development trends of China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of China's advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.

He was born in August 1926 in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province. In 1989, he was elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee. He passed away in 2022 at the age of 96.

During a revolutionary career spanning more than 70 years, Jiang fully demonstrated his great talent, bold vision, key role and exceptional art of political leadership as a Marxist statesman, Xi said.

Xi spoke highly of Jiang's steadfast commitment to communist ideals and his devotion to the Party and the people, calling on Party members to draw strength from his firm political convictions.

On the new journey, Xi stressed, it is imperative to uphold the overall leadership of the Party and the centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee, unswervingly strengthen full and rigorous Party self-governance, and ensure that the Party remains the strong leadership core in the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Jiang always stood with the people and cared for their well-being, Xi said, calling for efforts to learn from the late leader's dedication to and profound love for the people.

Xi noted the importance of always bearing in mind that "this country is its people; the people are the country".



President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, delivers an important speech at the gathering on Monday in Beijing. LI XIANG / XINHUA

Xi's quotes

Comrade Jiang Zemin made indelible contributions to safeguarding the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, breaking new ground in reform and opening-up in all respects, achieving overall moderate prosperity in people's lives, and successfully advancing the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics into the 21st century.

On the new journey, we should stand ready to withstand high winds, choppy waters, and even dangerous storms, resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests, and continue to write a new chapter in the miracles of fast economic growth and long-term social stability.

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New growth drivers gain ground amid transition

By **ZHANG CHENXU** and **ZHOU LANXU**

China's shift toward new growth drivers gathered pace in July, with advanced manufacturing, technology-intensive exports and services consumption providing growing support for economic activity, officials and experts said.

New growth drivers contributed over half of industrial output growth in the first seven months of the year. Retail sales of services outpaced those of goods and external demand remained resilient, bolstering prospects for continued economic expansion.

However, they added that a deepening contraction in fixed-asset investment and slowing retail sales growth could weigh on the economy, and called for more forceful policy support.

The comments came as fresh data released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Monday showed that the country's industrial output rose 4.5 percent year-on-year in July, following a 5.3 percent rise in June.

The high-tech and equipment manufacturing sectors maintained robust growth in July, with value-added output rising 16.9 percent and 12.3 percent year-on-year, respectively, the bureau said.

Wang Guanhua, a spokeswoman for the bureau, said at a news conference in Beijing that new growth drivers contributed an estimated 50.9 percent to industrial output growth in the first seven months of this year.

Zhu Feng, China chief economist at JPMorgan, said that China has made solid progress in upgrading its manufacturing sector, with exports, industrial output and investment all pointing to stronger competitiveness in advanced manufacturing.

Meanwhile, the consumption mix continued to improve as spending shifted further toward services. The share of services in per capita spending rose 0.2 percentage point year-on-year in the first half, while retail sales of services grew 5 percent in the first seven months.

Growth in retail sales of goods slowed and the contraction in fixed-asset investment deepened, with the property sector remaining the main drag on investment.

Zhu from JPMorgan said a major challenge for China's economy is the pace of its growth driver transition.

Retail sales, a key gauge of consumer spending, grew 0.6 percent year-on-year in July, slowing from a 1 percent rise in June.

Fixed-asset investment declined 6.7 percent during the January-July period from a year earlier, deepening from a 5.7 percent drop in the first half, according to the NBS.

Yin Yanlin, deputy director of the Committee on Economic Affairs of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, urged policymakers to strengthen countercyclical adjustments and introduce additional measures to bolster investment.

"Policymakers should capitalize on easing imported inflation pressures to cut the reserve requirement ratio and policy rates when appropriate," Yin added.

In the latest move, the National Development and Reform Commission, China's top economic regulator, said on Monday it will accelerate the rollout of new policy-based financial instruments for 2026 and step up support for private investment projects.

Contact the writers at zhangchenxu@chinadaily.com.cn

OVERSEAS TRAVELERS SNAP UP CHINESE BRANDS

Perceptions have shifted from 'made in China' to 'designed in China'

By **HE QI** in Shanghai
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On an August afternoon in Shanghai, Mara-Kristin Lutz stepped out of the Songmont boutique, clutching the coveted tote bag that had topped her city break shopping list.

The Austrian fashion industry veteran — who had previously worked at Louis Vuitton — had researched the brand's latest collections on social media long before touching down in China. It was the bag's understated craftsmanship and thoughtful design language that won her over.

She was now dressed almost entirely in Chinese brands with her jacket and sun mask both from Chinese sports brand Anta. She also carried a bottle of perfume she had just purchased the day before from Chinese aromatherapy brand To Summer, and has placed other orders on Chinese online shopping platform Taobao.

Lutz's carefully curated shopping list is no longer an isolated quirk — it has become a hallmark of the surging wave of international visitors to Shanghai. As China's expanding visa-free policies fuel an inbound tourism boom, shopping for quality products from the country's homegrown brands has emerged as a cultural trend for global travelers.

According to the State Taxation Administration, the number of foreign travelers claiming departure tax refunds surged 366 percent year-on-year in the first half of the year, while the value of refunded goods and payouts grew 69 percent. From January to May, Shanghai Customs verified 201,000 tax refund applications, with sales reaching 1.92 billion yuan ($285 million) — year-on-year increases of 300 percent and 62 percent, respectively.

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INDEPTH

China's booster shot for drug innovation

Robust regulatory reforms, greater investment and growing talent pool propel global biotech ascent

By **WANG XIAOYU**
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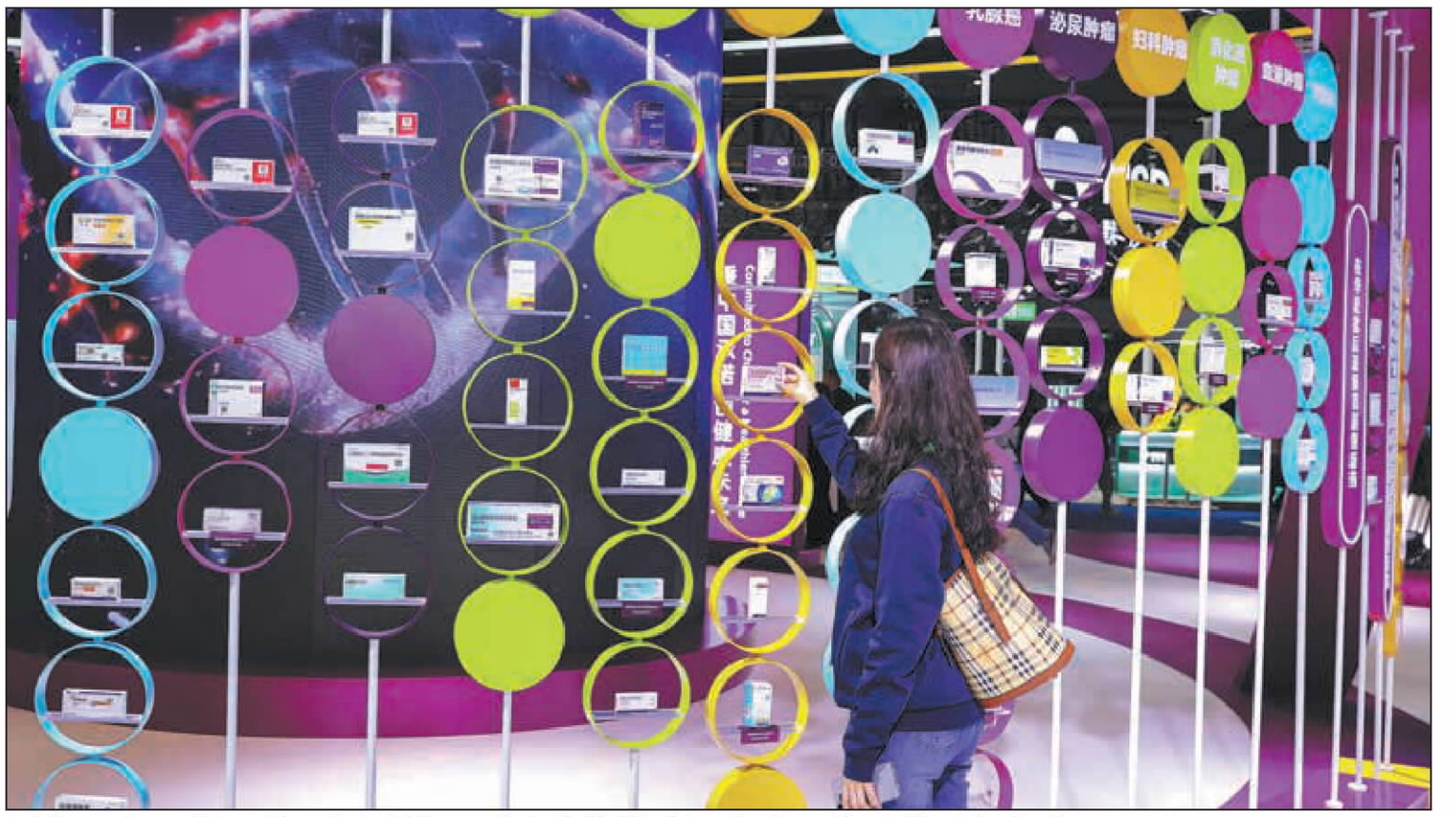

A visitor examines medicines at the product exhibition area during the 8th China International Import Expo in Shanghai on Nov 9. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

China has emerged as a global powerhouse in drug innovation, and industry experts expect the rapid growth to continue in the years ahead.

Official data showed that China approved 38 new drugs in the first half of this year, 31 of which were developed domestically. All 11 drugs, featuring new molecular targets and mechanisms of action, were produced in China.

The approvals, combined with a record $110 billion in innovative drug out-licensing deals during the same period, have demonstrated that "China's pharmaceutical industry has achieved a systemic leap forward in innovation quality", Tao Qing, a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said at a recent news conference.

China's progress is also reshaping the global R&D landscape. Worldwide, the volume of early-stage drug development nearly doubled from 2015 to 2024, while the traditional United States-led model is giving way to a two-hub system centered on both the US and China, according to a study headed by health policy experts at Georgetown University in Washington.

The US share of early-stage programs during the period fell to 37 percent from 48 percent, while China's share surged to more than 32 percent from just 8 percent, said the study published online in the Journal of the American Medical Association in late March.

"China's drug development pipeline increasingly includes innovative and transformative therapies, moving beyond the older programs that succeeded in developing follow-on products," Richard Pazdur, former director of the US Food and Drug Administration's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, wrote in an opinion piece accompanying the study.

"In some areas, including antibody-drug conjugates, bispecific antibodies and cell therapies, China now rivals or surpasses the US in scale and, in some areas, innovation. Regulators must prepare for an environment in which some therapies with substantial patient benefit may be studied primarily, or even exclusively, in China," he added.

Li Haiyan, chief director of the Drug Clinical Trial Center at Peking University Third Hospital, told an industry conference in July that while China ranks first globally in the volume of innovative drug molecules under development, only about 7 percent of the pipeline currently targets entirely new treatments, pointing to considerable untapped potential for first-in-class breakthroughs.

"We have strong momentum going forward, and the next five years are poised to see a surge in innovative drugs with truly novel targets," she said.

Reasons for rise

Robust regulatory reforms since 2015, combined with rising investment and a growing talent pool, are regarded as the key forces propelling China's biotech ascent. After more than a decade, "a virtuous cycle fostering domestic pharmaceutical innovation has fully taken shape", said Jin Chunlin, director of the Shanghai Institute of Medical Science and Technology Information.

Jin said that a thriving innovation ecosystem features a strong investor appetite for early-stage, high-risk R&D, supported by a track record of solid returns, alongside upgraded drug review and approval standards that are now fully in line with international regulatory frameworks.

"Clinical data generated in China have increasingly gained recognition from overseas regulators, including the US Food and Drug Administration, which has laid critical groundwork for the industry's global expansion," he said in a recent interview with People's Daily.

Jin also pointed out that domestic drugmakers have gradually shifted away from homogenized research efforts, moving instead toward more differentiated and higher-value target portfolios.

Among the key engines powering the growth is the national healthcare security system, which has steadily expanded coverage for innovative drugs and bolstered corporate profits.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, China added 516 medicines to the national medical insurance drug list, including 167 innovative drugs, Zhang Ke, director of the National Healthcare Security Administration, said in a recent article.

The average time for a novel drug to progress from market approval to the list has been shortened from five years to about one year, Zhang said.

As of May 2025, national medical insurance funds had spent 410 billion yuan ($61 billion) on drugs — typically innovative medicines — that were added to the list following price negotiations with drugmakers, according to official data. Their inclusion on the list is estimated to have generated more than 600 billion yuan in pharmaceutical sales.

InnoCare Pharma, founded in 2015 and headquartered in Beijing, reported its first full-year profit in 2025 and continued to post gains in the first quarter of this year. The financial turnaround was fueled by rising product sales and proceeds from global business development agreements, the company said.

Chang Jinghua, head of market access at InnoCare, said the company's core product, orelabrutinib — a novel therapy for cancers and autoimmune diseases — has had all four of its indications, the legally defined use for a drug, covered by the national reimbursement list. Since its inclusion in 2021, sales of the drug have climbed at an annual rate of nearly 50 percent.

"A number of domestic drugmakers, including us, have started turning a profit," Chang said.

"Healthcare reimbursement policy has helped create a closed-loop ecosystem that nurtures innovation. The cycle starts with heavy R&D spending, leads to better patient access and lower out-of-pocket costs, and then channels back to companies to fuel the next wave of R&D," he said.

InnoCare secured another crucial funding source from a licensing deal with global pharmaceutical company Zenas BioPharma late last year. The deal, worth more than $2 billion, grants Zenas global rights to develop and commercialize orelabrutinib.

A defining moment for China's biotech innovation came in 2024, when ivonescimab — a lung cancer drug developed by China-based Akeso — outperformed Merck & Co's immunotherapy heavyweight Keytruda in head-to-head trials. The drug gained its first market approval in China in May 2024 and was added to the reimbursement list the same year.

Xia Yu, chairwoman and CEO of Akeso, said the reimbursement listing means Chinese patients can promptly access world-class, homegrown therapies that are affordable. For domestic drugmakers, commercial returns are now increasingly tied to expanded patient access.



Medical technicians work in a research laboratory of Simcere Pharmaceutical Group in Haikou, Hainan province, on July 1. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Left: A leader of Youcare Pharmaceutical Co inspects its products in Beijing on Feb 14. Its nebulized inhaler has received clinical trial approval from the United States and Australia. MAO JIANJUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Below: A Chinese innovative drug is on display at the Zhongguancun Exhibition Center in Beijing on July 25. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



> "In some areas, including antibody-drug conjugates, bispecific antibodies and cell therapies, China now rivals or surpasses the US in scale and, in some areas, innovation. Regulators must prepare for an environment in which some therapies with substantial patient benefit may be studied primarily, or even exclusively, in China."
>
> **Richard Pazdur,** former director of the US Food and Drug Administration's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research

Last year, the company generated 3.056 billion yuan in revenue, with product sales reaching 3.033 billion yuan, up 51.5 percent year-on-year.

Different approach

Sunshine Lake Pharma, a Guangdong-based drugmaker that began as a generic medicine producer, offers a different insight into the industry's maturation.

Zhang Yingjun, chairman of the company, said innovative drug R&D is now largely bankrolled by revenues from its generic drug business, supplemented by pre-IPO shareholder backing, platform-based financing and government grants.

The inclusion of its insulin products in the nation's centralized bulk-buy procurement program has secured large supply contracts with public hospitals, providing a stable profit stream. Last year alone, insulin sales generated 244 million yuan in revenue, up about 78.7 percent year-on-year.

"The strong cash flow feeds back into R&D, creating a virtuous cycle that sustains long-term growth," he said.

That revenue is expected to climb further, buoyed by overseas market penetration. The company has passed multiple on-site Good Manufacturing Practice inspections conducted by US and European Union drug regulators, and its insulin product officially received FDA clearance this year. The company projects sales of $30 million by year-end and more than $500 million by 2030.

Innovation and overseas expansion are now seen as two pillars for future growth, according to company executives. The company has so far secured regulatory approval for four novel drugs from China's National Medical Products Administration, three of which were authorized over the past year.

Given the intensifying competition in the biotech sector, Zhang said it is crucial to differentiate products in the pipeline. The three recently approved drugs all fall within the company's traditionally strong therapeutic areas of infectious diseases and diabetes, while four novel candidates in late-stage Phase III trials are focused on chronic respiratory diseases and oncology.

"We have steered clear of overcrowded segments such as lung cancer and breast cancer. Instead, we are actively exploring tumor types with large patient populations but limited effective treatment options, including colorectal, pancreatic, liver and kidney cancers," he said.

Li Baiyong, chief science officer at Akeso, said the favorable external environment will continue to foster innovation in the sector.

He said that the high execution efficiency of R&D in China, combined with relatively low costs for personnel, equipment and manufacturing facilities, are key draws for multiple international pharmaceutical companies seeking partnerships with Chinese firms.

Ensuring oversight

Sun Hao, a lung cancer specialist at the Guangdong Provincial People's Hospital, said clinical studies in China are moving at a faster pace than in many other countries. In global multicenter trials, data from Chinese sites often come in substantially earlier.

Sun said regulators have been stepping up oversight to keep pace with the accelerating R&D activity.

In June, the country issued a new edition of the Good Clinical Practice for Drugs guidelines, placing greater emphasis on defining clear boundaries of responsibility, risk identification, and quality management throughout trials.

In May, the nation released a data protection regulation for drugs — an important component of the pharmaceutical innovation framework. The document provides a six-year protection period for clinical trial data on innovative drugs.

"In the field of lung cancer, the volume of research focused on the Chinese population already ranks first in the world," Sun said. "Looking ahead, it is expected that both the market and the primary impetus for drug development will increasingly originate from China."

Huang Huiqiang, a professor at Sun Yat-Sen University Cancer Center, said the growing number of oral presentations delivered by Chinese researchers at international meetings reflects increasing recognition from the global medical community.

He said that for homegrown companies seeking overseas expansion, challenges persist — including high clinical trial costs abroad and a lack of familiarity with foreign markets.

"It is important to recruit talent familiar with overseas drug manufacturing and regulatory rules, and build cooperation with foreign companies for long-term development," he said.

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TOP NEWS

US set to reduce drills with ROK

Washington announces decision to scale back joint exercises in move seen as overture to DPRK

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong
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Protesters rally to oppose joint military exercises between the United States and the Republic of Korea outside the US embassy in Seoul, capital of the ROK, on Monday. AHN YOUNG-JOON / AP

United States President Donald Trump said on Sunday that he has ordered the Pentagon to "substantially reduce" joint military exercises with the Republic of Korea, announcing the decision just before the two countries' annual drill kicked off.

Observers said the abrupt message might be interpreted as the Trump administration's intention to engage with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for future talks, while some said it could also be an attempt, driven by domestic pressure, to shift the focus from the prolonged Iran conflict, in which the US has been mired.

"These exercises are not only costly, with much of these costs paid for by the United States of America (as usual), but send a signal that is totally inappropriate and hostile, to a country that, as long as Donald J Trump has been President, has been unthreatening and respectful," Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social, referring to the DPRK as he cited his "very good relationship" with the country's top leader Kim Jong-un.

During Trump's first term, the US and the ROK had postponed or scaled back their combined exercises to create the conditions for dialogue with the DPRK. In 2018, Trump suspended the annual exercise after his first meeting with Kim in June that year.

When asked if China would support renewed dialogue between the US and the DPRK, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said during a regular news briefing on Monday that maintaining peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula and advancing the political settlement of the Korean Peninsula issue serve the common interests of all parties.

The ROK's presidential office said on Monday that friendly relations between DPRK and US leaders will lead to meaningful dialogue between the two countries and discussions aimed at advancing peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula.

The ROK has also been closely coordinating with the US on the joint exercises, it said, according to Yonhap News Agency.

Trump's announcement was posted at 5:04 pm US Eastern Time on Sunday, or at 6:04 am ROK time on Monday, the date of the start of the annual Ulchi Freedom Shield, or UFS, joint drill.

The ROK's military authorities said later that the UFS combined exercise, running through Aug 27, is being carried out normally and there has been no specific request from the US side regarding adjustments to the scale of the exercise, according to Yonhap.

The DPRK has condemned the US-ROK joint military exercise, criticizing it as "a rehearsal for an aggressive war" and posing "a grave threat" to the security of the DPRK as well as the region, the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency reported on Friday.

Pyongyang also vowed to respond to a new level of threat with a new level of deterrence.

Since taking office in June last year, ROK President Lee Jae-myung has repeatedly made reconciliatory gestures toward the DPRK. On Saturday, the ROK's Liberation Day, Lee said in a speech that he hopes to begin discussions with the DPRK to formally end the Korean War as the directly involved parties, refraining from unnecessary confrontation and replacing the unstable armistice with a peace regime.

"There was an indication that he (Trump) might make some overtures toward the DPRK," Lee Sangho, a professor of political science and diplomacy at Daejeon University in the ROK, told China Daily.

Though Trump mentioned the costs paid by the US for the joint military drills and the ROK's refusal to join the US in the "denuclearization" of Iran in his post, Lee, who is also president of the Korea Association of National Intelligence Studies, said the main reason for the announcement was that Trump is looking for measures to boost his popularity as he faces challenges from the conflict with Iran and the upcoming US midterm elections in November.

Noting that Trump also posted a photo showing him standing side by side with Kim at the demilitarized zone between the ROK and the DPRK in 2019, Lee said the announcement to reduce military exercises with the ROK can be seen as something that was offered to reengage with the DPRK.

"I don't think this was fully discussed with the ROK side before the announcement was made," Lee said.

Kim Dong-yup, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, in a commentary published on the online news publication Pressian on Monday, said that Trump's instruction may not be the result of a carefully designed peace strategy for the Korean Peninsula, but rather a decision driven by a mix of frustrations over cost-sharing complaints, his personal relationship with Kim and transactional sentiments toward the ROK.

Reform: Industrial productivity substantially improved

From page 1

Under Jiang's leadership, the concept of a socialist market economy, officially endorsed at the 14th CPC National Congress in 1992, became China's primary guiding principle for modernization. This strategy demonstrated that market forces could function effectively within socialism, strengthening the Party's central role in the nation's development.

Jiang's rich professional background influenced his leadership style. Trained as an electrical engineer and experienced as a factory manager, he brought technical discipline and administrative pragmatism to governance. Serving as mayor and Party secretary of Shanghai gave him firsthand knowledge of urban development, international trade and technological progress.

Fluency in English and a strong grasp of international affairs enabled him to engage confidently with global leaders as China's international influence grew.

One of his most significant contributions was turning reform from a tentative experiment into a lasting institutional framework. Alongside Zhu Rongji, who would later serve as premier, he initiated a series of structural reforms that reshaped the national economy.

The 1994 fiscal and taxation reform greatly enhanced the financial power of the central and provincial governments through the adoption of a modern tax-sharing framework. This change substantially boosted central revenue, equipping Beijing with the fiscal resources needed to pursue national development plans and sustain macroeconomic stability.

State-owned enterprise reform represented another historic milestone. Under the principle of "holding on to the large while letting go of the small", China retained public ownership in strategic sectors such as energy, telecommunications, transportation and finance while restructuring thousands of inefficient enterprises. Although these reforms involved difficult adjustments, including the restructuring of tens of millions of jobs, they substantially improved industrial productivity and strengthened the competitiveness of China's State-owned champions.

Housing reform between 1997 and 1999 marked another decisive turning point. The transition from administrative housing allocation to a market-based housing system created one of the world's largest real estate markets, stimulated domestic demand, accelerated urbanization, and created an important engine of economic growth for the following two decades.

Among the major milestones of the period, China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001 stands out as a historic milestone. After 15 years of negotiations, China successfully entered this multilateral trading system. It further advanced reform and opening-up, modernized trade legislation, and harmonized thousands of regulations with international standards. The WTO accession accelerated China's integration into global value chains and subsequently firmly established the country as the "factory of the world".

During this period, the Chinese government also actively promoted a "going global" strategy, encouraging Chinese enterprises to acquire advanced technologies, invest abroad and participate more actively in international markets. This strategic vision anticipated China's eventual emergence as a major country with increasing global influence.

Jiang's contribution to the nation's political culture was no less significant. His contribution to the Party's theoretical development was reflected most prominently in the Theory of Three Represents, which was incorporated into the Constitution of the Communist Party of China at the 16th CPC National Congress in 2002, and it enriched the Party's theoretical foundation by stipulating that the CPC should always represent the development trends of China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of China's advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.

This theory reflected the ongoing evolution of Chinese society. It allowed successful private entrepreneurs to become Party members, integrating new productive forces into the development of socialism while maintaining the CPC's leadership. This adaptation strengthened the Party's ability to govern a rapidly modernizing country.

President Xi Jinping, speaking at a gathering in Beijing to commemorate Jiang's birth centenary, praised Jiang's political conviction, dedication to the people, innovative spirit, far-sighted strategic thinking and extraordinary courage.

Jiang also made enduring contributions to China's international standing. During his presidency, Hong Kong successfully returned to the motherland in 1997 under the principle of "one country, two systems". China won the right to host the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, expanded diplomatic engagement worldwide and pursued a foreign policy emphasizing peaceful development, cooperation and mutual benefit.

His leadership also extended to national defense modernization. Jiang promoted the modernization of the People's Liberation Army, advanced military professionalism and required the armed forces to withdraw from commercial business activities, strengthening their focus on national defense.

The CPC regards Jiang as a distinguished Marxist, a prominent proletarian revolutionary, an esteemed statesman, a military strategist and a diplomat. These characterizations highlight both his personal virtues and the important role of his leadership in history.

China's remarkable achievements did not happen overnight. Continuous reform from one generation to the next, economic modernization, social stability, technological progress and strong Party governance combined to help China confidently and strategically enter the 21st century. Jiang's successor Hu Jintao further advanced reform and opening-up, while under the leadership of President Xi, socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era.

China's development proves that socialism with Chinese characteristics can evolve with change while ensuring stable institutions.

Jiang therefore occupies an important place in the history of China's reform and modernization. His tenure represented an important stage in a broader process of continuity and renewal, in which successive generations of the Party's leadership built on what had been achieved, addressed new challenges and laid the foundations for further progress.

The author is a former prime minister of the Kyrgyz Republic. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Shopping: Chinese brands win with design and quality

From page 1

Like Lutz, a growing number of foreign tourists touch down with meticulously curated shopping lists already in hand.

Russian traveler Evgeniya Azarenkova did extensive research before coming to Shanghai. She said she believes that Chinese brands have their own design identity. "The silhouette is different. It always has this character that makes it different."

Lutz also praised the exceptional quality of Chinese products. "There is still a stigma in Europe that it's only bad quality in China, and this is totally not the case anymore," she said. "(In some cases) it's even higher quality compared to Europe, and the pricing is more affordable."

The price advantage is clear. According to Jiefang Daily, a pair of sneakers from popular domestic footwear brand Pane costs around 800 yuan, about 30 percent lower than comparable styles from top international brands.

According to Pane, its overseas social media following surged from just over 30,000 in September 2025 to more than 140,000 by June, with overseas visitors accounting for roughly 30 to 40 percent of foot traffic at its Shanghai store.

The final push to purchase, however, rarely comes from social media or brand promotion, but from the tactile experience of seeing and touching the product firsthand.

Another Russian traveler, Irina Rudometova, bought Pane sneakers as souvenirs. "They're comfortable and I like the design," she said, highlighting the shopping experience itself. "I like the lights and geometric forms inside (the store) — the atmosphere and the smell. For me, it's about atmosphere, not about the stuff."

More important, beyond the transactions, visitors' perceptions are rapidly shifting from "made in China" to "designed in China".

"When we were growing up, seeing something 'made in China' meant something cheap, but right now it's changing a lot. It may be the same price as a well-known foreign brand, but the quality is different, the style is different — very authentic," said Azarenkova, the traveler from Russia.

Zhang Zihan, founder of An Action A Day, a domestic activewear brand launched four years ago, views this shift in a broader context.

"Chinese brands are gradually entering the global mainstream — not only through affordability, but through core product strength, culture and aesthetics. This trend is also expanding from traditional categories, such as automobiles and consumer electronics, to everyday consumer goods," she said.

Zhang noted that markets in Europe and the United States account for 85 percent of the brand's cross-border sales.

Industry insiders said the biggest edge that Chinese brands have is the all-around competitive strength they've built up in the country's massive, fast-moving local market.

"We have accumulated experience interacting with a vast and dynamic base of Chinese consumers, and we have already withstood the most direct and rigorous scrutiny from them," Zhang added.

Chen Tianyi contributed to this story.



Customers line up outside the Songmont boutique in Shanghai on Saturday, waiting for their turn to enter the shop.
GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Centenary: Foresight of Jiang highlighted

From page 1

Xi called for adhering to a people-centered development philosophy, maintaining close ties with the people and making solid steps in promoting the all-around development of the people and common prosperity for all.

Highlighting Jiang's innovative spirit, Xi said the late leader had continuously advanced innovations in theory, institutions, science and technology, culture and other fields in response to the evolving needs of the times and practice.

Xi called for further deepening reform and opening-up, modernizing China's system and capacity for governance and unleashing creativity across the Party and society to generate sustained momentum for economic and social development.

Jiang's far-sightedness and strategic thinking were highlighted by Xi. With an international perspective and a vision for the future, Jiang advanced the cause of the Party and the country with a slew of major decisions and measures, Xi said.

Jiang made arrangements with foresight for building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and put forward a series of thoughts on foreign affairs and international strategies to advance the development of a multipolar world and economic globalization in the right direction.

Looking ahead, it is essential to fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, accelerate efforts to create a new development pattern and make solid headway in promoting high-quality development, Xi said, calling for further efforts to build a community with a shared future for humanity and add more positive energy to world peace and development.

Xi also highlighted Jiang's extraordinary courage and vision. Jiang made resolute decisions at key historical junctures and critical moments, and responded calmly to risks and challenges, securing the steady advancement of China's reform and opening-up as well as socialist modernization, Xi said.

In particular, Jiang led China to successfully withstand the impact of the Asian financial crisis and secure complete victory in the battle against the severe floods in 1998, Xi said.

"On the new journey, we should stand ready to withstand high winds, choppy waters and even dangerous storms, resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests, and continue to write a new chapter in the miracles of fast economic growth and long-term social stability," Xi said.

About 6,000 people were present at Monday's commemoration, which was presided over by Li Qiang and attended by Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi — all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee — as well as Vice-President Han Zheng.

Also on Monday, a symposium on the life and thought of Jiang Zemin opened in Beijing and will run through Wednesday. Cai Qi attended and addressed the opening ceremony.

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ASIAFOCUS

Editor's note:
In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.

1.5m families in Indonesia lose aid over gambling

JAKARTA — The Social Affairs Ministry of Indonesia has suspended the distribution of social assistance to nearly 1.5 million beneficiary families enrolled in the basic food program after data cross-referencing the Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center, or PPATK, flagged their accounts for online gambling transactions.

Social Affairs Minister Saifullah Yusuf confirmed earlier in August that around 1.5 million beneficiary families had been identified in the latest data sweep.

Among them, 794,475 families were also recipients of the Family Hope Program, or PKH, a conditional cash transfer scheme aimed at the country's poorest households.

Aid disbursement to all flagged recipients has been temporarily frozen pending a verification process.

"There are 1,494,652 beneficiary families flagged for online gambling, based on data we received from the PPATK. We are currently investigating and examining the matter further," Saifullah said, as quoted by Bisnis.com.

The staggering figure marks a sharp increase over the 2025 data-matching exercise, which identified approximately 600,000 beneficiary families with transactions linked to online gambling.

The ministry now faces mounting pressure to tighten oversight of the multitrillion-rupiah social protection programs.

The Financial Services Authority has revealed that, based on reports submitted by lenders to the PPATK, activities with suspected links to online gambling surged 260 percent last year.

The share of suspected online gambling activities among all reported suspicious transactions rose from 18.37 percent in December 2024 to 48.83 percent in December 2025, while the figure stood at 35.28 percent as of the first quarter last year.

The probe will also form part of a broader effort to update the national integrated social economic data, a centralized database designed to improve the accuracy of social assistance targeting.

"They may no longer meet the criteria for receiving social assistance. There is evidence that the aid is being used for online gambling. We are investigating this further, which also serves as part of our data-updating process," he said.

Digital literacy

Saifullah stressed the importance of digital literacy and personal accountability among aid recipients, warning against negligence that could enable account misuse.

"People must not be careless, for instance, by letting others use or exploit their accounts. We consistently provide outreach, education and support to beneficiaries through these social support workers. We are doing this continuously," he added.

The crackdown underscores the government's growing concern over the rampant spread of online gambling, which has increasingly penetrated low-income communities.

Questions are mounting over the key figure behind the sponsorship of a Jakarta-based online gambling network, following early May's raid that uncovered hundreds of people operating across 75 domains and gambling websites from an office building in the heart of a business district in West Jakarta.

Lawmakers have urged the police to deepen their investigation into the network's funding flows as investigators are scrambling to find the financiers behind the gambling ring.

THE JAKARTA POST, INDONESIA



World feels the heat

Farmers struggle to secure water for irrigation amid prolonged drought, at the Donam Reservoir in Daegu, South Korea, on Aug 11. YONHAP

El Nino is expected to trigger extreme weather conditions across globe

A global insurance firm warned on July 30 of the growing risks from a predicted strong El Nino, which forecasters fear will trigger extreme weather conditions in many regions of the world, including Asia.

Insurance company Munich Re said the El Nino climate pattern that is already strengthening in the Pacific Ocean will push up global temperatures. Europe and North America have witnessed record temperatures, heat waves and wildfires since May.

The extreme summer heat, which scientists say is being fueled by climate change, comes as natural disasters caused worldwide losses estimated at nearly $112 billion in the first half of 2026, Munich Re said in its half-yearly global update on natural catastrophes.

Among the costliest disasters were twin earthquakes in Venezuela and a series of storms in the US, with both sets of disasters causing an estimated loss of $30 billion each.

Looking ahead, it is El Nino that worries insurers.

"Asia-Pacific is likely to be the region which will suffer most from El Nino. We must brace ourselves for a higher typhoon risk in Japan and Korea as well as for heat waves, drought and wildfires in other regions like Southeast Asia, India and Australia," said Achim Kassow, a member of Munich Re's board of management responsible for the Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Africa division.

El Nino is part of a natural cycle. It is a periodic warming of surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, triggering worldwide changes in winds, atmospheric pressure and rainfall patterns.

It occurs every two to seven years and typically increases global temperatures by releasing heat stored in the ocean. But stronger, or "super", events that lead to very warm surface waters occur once every one to two decades and can trigger deadly and costly extreme weather.



People use umbrellas and electric fans to cool themselves in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Aug 9. ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

El Nino is the flip side of La Nina, a periodic cooling of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. La Nina events typically cause cooler and wetter weather in Southeast Asia and eastern Australia.

The US government's Climate Prediction Center said on July 9 that the current El Nino has continued to build and is likely to be one of the strongest in more than 75 years.

Malaysia could experience temperatures of up to 40 C in early 2027 as El Nino intensifies, the Malaysian Meteorological Department said on July 7.

The department's deputy director-general of operations Ambun Dindang said El Nino was expected to peak between November 2026 and January 2027, with rainfall expected to decrease across most parts of Malaysia.

Tobias Grimm, Munich Re's chief climate scientist, said El Nino intensifies many weather extremes and shifts the global risk profile.

"While some regions may experience fewer extreme weather events, others, like parts of Asia-Pacific, face a higher likelihood of severe weather. At the same time, climate change is increasing the intensity, duration and loss potential of many weather-related hazards," he told The Straits Times.

For instance, in East Asia, the risk of typhoons is generally higher, with potential changes in storm tracks and intensity. Southern and eastern China typically receive above-average rainfall, increasing the risk of flooding, he said.

Likelihood of drought

Other regions, including parts of India, often experience below-average rainfall, raising the likelihood of drought and water stress.

"The key takeaway is that El Nino shifts the distribution of weather-related risks across Asia. Many parts of Asia-Pacific are subject to elevated natural catastrophe risks in the second half of 2026," he said.

Munich Re is a reinsurer, providing "insurance for insurance companies". For instance, such firms may help to cover large catastrophic losses.

Munich Re said that of the worldwide losses from natural disasters, estimated at nearly $112 billion from January to June, only $44 billion in losses was insured.

In the Asia-Pacific, total losses amounted to about $8.7 billion, significantly lower than in previous years, with the 10-year average losses for the same period, adjusted for inflation, at $32 billion. Just over $1 billion was insured.

Severe flooding in central and southern China in May and a large bushfire in Australia triggered major financial losses.

In Europe, severe winter storms caused extensive damage. In just over a month, nine storms affected Portugal and Spain at the start of 2026, Munich Re said.

The most destructive was Storm Kristin in late January, which caused losses of about $7.7 billion, of which around $1.8 billion was insured.

In the US, tornado outbreaks and winter storms killed scores of people and caused damage totaling $47 billion, of which $34 billion was insured.

Munich Re also pointed to growing risks from severe heat, noting that record-breaking heat waves dominated the first half of the year in North America and Europe.

"Studies show a clear link between heat waves and climate change," it said. "Heat waves are the natural hazard that claims the most lives.

"It is difficult to quantify the financial impact of heat waves, as they do not usually result in any direct damage to property."

Pointing to the risks of increasing temperatures globally, it added: "Instead, the damage is chiefly caused by falling productivity and production standstills, but also by damage to infrastructure, transportation breakdowns and crop failures."

THE STRAITS TIMES, SINGAPORE

Vietnam becomes ASEAN's 2nd-largest aviation market

BANGKOK — UK-based aviation data provider OAG reported that total airline capacity in Southeast Asia fell by 1.2 percent from July 2025 to 50.4 million seats in July 2026.

Vietnam has overtaken Thailand to become Southeast Asia's second-largest commercial aviation market, as overall airline seat capacity across the region declined, OAG said.

In Southeast Asia, domestic airline capacity declined by 1.3 percent and accounted for 45 percent of the region's commercial aviation market, while international capacity fell by 1.5 percent and represented the remaining 55 percent.

The contraction was attributed to rising fuel costs driven by tensions in the Middle East, which prompted several Southeast Asian airlines to reduce international services.

Indonesia retained its position as Southeast Asia's largest commercial aviation market, with 10.9 million seats in July, up 0.3 percent from the same month last year.

Vietnam moved ahead of Thailand into second place after recording 7.4 million seats, an increase of 5.6 percent year-on-year.

7.4
million seats
Vietnam moved ahead of Thailand into second place after recording 7.4 million seats in July, an increase of 5.6 percent year-on-year.

Vietnam Airlines, the country's national full-service carrier, also became the largest airline in Southeast Asia by seat capacity. It offered 2.81 million seats during the month, up 0.1 percent from July 2025.

Thailand, previously the region's second-largest aviation market, fell to third place with 6.9 million seats, down 3 percent year-on-year.

Malaysia ranked fourth with 5.2 million seats, down 8.3 percent, followed by the Philippines with 4.9 million seats, down 4.1 percent.

OAG data showed that Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines all recorded declines in commercial airline capacity.

The reductions were linked to disruption caused by the conflict between Iran and the United States, as well as renewed tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz.

Jet fuel prices rose sharply and remained elevated as the situation intensified, increasing operating costs for airlines.

As a result, several carriers reduced or suspended direct and connecting services between the Middle East and the three Southeast Asian countries.

THE NATION, THAILAND

Poll to decide Malaysia's national fruit

KUALA LUMPUR — The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security of Malaysia is proposing that the Department of Statistics Malaysia conduct a nationwide survey to gather public views on the choice for national fruit.

This will provide the government with a reference point before deciding which fruit should get the title, says Chan Foong Hin, deputy minister of agriculture and food security.

Currently, Malaysia does not have an officially recognized "national fruit".

Replying to a question on Tuesday on the option of a national fruit in Dewan Negara, or the upper house of the Parliament of Malaysia, Chan said the ministry has so far received two applications: one from the Durian Manufacturer Association nominating the durian, and another from the Malaysian Pineapple Industry Board nominating the pineapple.

"The government will not directly select one over the other, as all fruit industries must be treated fairly. Therefore, we propose conducting a survey so that the people can vote for their preferred national fruit," he said.

He explained that the survey aims to comprehensively understand the people's choices and analyze the factors influencing their preferences — including national identity, cultural value, popularity, and economic value.

He cited the example of India which chose the mango as its national fruit, while Bangladesh selected the jackfruit.

When asked by Sin Chew Daily when the nationwide survey would commence, Chan later clarified that the Agriculture Ministry is leaving the exploratory work to the Department of Statistics, and that the initiative remains at a very preliminary stage.

SIN CHEW DAILY, MALAYSIA



A worker arranges durian fruits for sale inside a shop in Shah Alam, Malaysia, on June 23. FAZRY ISMAIL / EPA

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WORLD



Palestinians salvage iron from the rubble of buildings destroyed by Israeli airstrikes, in Gaza City on Sunday. JEHAD ALSHRAFI / AP

Hamas urges pressure on Israel

Group calls on key players to press for ceasefire road map

CAIRO/JERUSALEM — Palestinian militant group Hamas on Sunday urged mediators and guarantors to press Israel to approve the road map for the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement.

The call was made in a statement issued following a meeting in Cairo between a Hamas delegation — led by Khalil al-Hayya, head of the group's political bureau — and representatives of the mediators and guarantors of the ceasefire agreement.

The delegation urged the mediators and the United States-led "Board of Peace" to push Israel to implement all its commitments under the first phase of the agreement, halt killings and ground incursions, and approve the road map for the second phase of the agreement, the statement said.

Hamas also said it had accepted the road map, citing its aim to secure a permanent ceasefire, full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, sustained humanitarian aid, and the start of work by the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, according to the statement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said earlier this month that Israel rejected the US-backed road map and would not withdraw its forces from Gaza until Hamas was fully disarmed.

The "Board of Peace" published a 15-point road map on July 31 for implementing the next phase of the Gaza agreement.

It includes an end to military operations, the transfer of civilian governance to the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, and the decommissioning of heavy weapons, weapons stockpiles, military production facilities and tunnels, alongside arrangements for an Israeli withdrawal.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump's envoy Jared Kushner met Netanyahu on Monday after holding talks with Hamas leaders.

A diplomatic official confirmed to Agence France-Presse that the meeting had begun late on Monday morning.

Kushner — Trump's son-in-law — met al-Hayya in the Egyptian city of El-Alamein on Sunday, sources with knowledge of the discussions told AFP.

Kushner demanded that Hamas verify it is giving up its weapons, a key sticking point for Netanyahu, and that the group renounce any future role in governing the Palestinian territory, the sources said.

Netanyahu is expected to meet behind closed doors with Kushner and Nickolay Mladenov, the high representative for Gaza on the "Board of Peace".

Awaiting response

A Hamas official said the group told Kushner it was committed to the Gaza plan and wanted pressure on Netanyahu.

"Hamas is awaiting the US administration's response regarding Israel's position on the agreement," the official told AFP.

Netanyahu, who is facing elections in October that polls show will be tight, has increasingly been willing to defy Trump, whose support he once highlighted in his campaign.

After initially voicing muted criticism of the Gaza plan, Netanyahu last week told his cabinet that he rejected it and vowed not to pull troops from the Palestinian territory.

In an interview, Itamar Ben-Gvir, a far-right national security minister in Netanyahu's cabinet, called for mass killings in Gaza.

"I think targeted eliminations should be carried out in Gaza every night. Take out 30 or 40," Ben-Gvir said in comments that surfaced on Sunday on a podcast with a former Gaza hostage.

Until recently, Israel was striking Gaza nearly every day, attacks that have killed more than 1,250 people since an October truce deal came into effect, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

On Sunday, the foreign ministers of eight Muslim-majority countries condemned Israel's declared rejection of the road map.

"Such rejection confirms that Israel now bears responsibility for obstructing the efforts to bring peace in Gaza," the foreign ministers of Egypt, Qatar, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkiye and Saudi Arabia said in a joint statement.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Beijing slams Takaichi's remarks for blurring war crimes

By JI HAISHENG
jihaisheng@chinadaily.com.cn

China has condemned Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's address at the National Memorial Ceremony for the War Dead, saying her remarks shunned reflection on historical lessons and blurred Japan's responsibility for its acts of aggression.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian made the comment on Monday at a regular news briefing following Takaichi's speech at the ceremony held in Tokyo over the weekend.

Takaichi avoided the words "remorse" and "lessons learned", spoke ambiguously about Japan's war crimes, and attempted to turn back the wheel of history, Lin said.

"This once again exposes the sinister attempt of the Takaichi administration to cover up, distort and reverse the verdict on Japan's history of aggression, which has drawn strong condemnation and widespread opposition from all parties," he said.

On the day marking Japan's defeat and surrender in World War II on Saturday, Takaichi made a monetary offering to the "shrine honoring war criminals", while Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi and other senior officials and politicians went to pay homage in person, Lin said.

Such moves have further heightened the vigilance of Asian neighbors and the international community over Japan's future trajectory, he said.

Lin cited Japanese observers as saying that a country unable to reflect on its past cannot earn trust, and that the defense minister's actions amount to supporting the war of aggression.

As this year marks the 81st anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the World Anti-Fascist War, as well as the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Tokyo Trials, Lin underscored the importance of fostering a correct view on history.

"Only by facing up to history and drawing lessons from it can people avoid repeating mistakes made in the past and straying down the wrong path again," he said.

"We once again urge the Japanese authorities to listen earnestly to the voices of justice from within Japan and the international community, deeply reflect on their war crimes, and make a complete break with militarism, rather than going further down the wrong path," he added.

China's zero-tariff policy boon for Zimbabwe trade

By LAWRENCE PAGANGA
in Harare, Zimbabwe
For China Daily

Zimbabwean exporters to China have received a major boost after Beijing implemented a zero-tariff policy, opening vast opportunities for Zimbabwean products in one of the world's largest markets.

Early this year, China announced the zero-tariff policy on goods from Zimbabwe and 52 other African countries from May 1.

Archford Mabuka, a Zimbabwean analyst, said the move comes as China has emerged as one of Zimbabwe's most dynamic export destinations.

"The facility provides duty-free access for a wide range of products, including agricultural commodities, processed foods, horticultural products, textiles, leather goods, industrial inputs and selected manufactured products," Mabuka said.

"The growth in exports over the past five years demonstrates both the strength of demand in the Chinese market and the potential for further expansion under the new arrangement," he said.

"This remarkable growth reflects China's increasing appetite for Zimbabwean products and underscores the strategic importance of market diversification."

The development aligns well with Zimbabwe's industrialization agenda, which seeks to move beyond raw commodity exports toward greater value addition and beneficiation, he added.

ZimTrade, the national trade promotion organization, launched a practical guide last week to help exporters navigate China's zero-tariff policy and meet Chinese market requirements.

The guide outlines applicable rules of origin for exported products, as well as compliance with China's sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, product standards and customs procedures.

It also highlights the need to strengthen logistics systems to ensure goods can be moved into the Chinese market reliably and cost-effectively, while encouraging exporters to move beyond raw commodities toward value-added products that capture a larger share of the value chain.

ZimTrade assured exporters that it would support them "from origin certification to market intelligence and buyer linkages" in China.

"This is one of the most significant trade openings Zimbabwean exporters have been offered in recent years," said Allan Majuru, the organization's CEO.

"Understanding exactly what is required will determine their success in utilizing the benefit of this window," he said.

"The zero-tariff treatment is an opportunity to change that picture and to bring new products into the Chinese market that previously faced tariff barriers, diversifying Zimbabwe's export base beyond raw materials," he added.

Zimbabwe's minister of information, publicity and broadcasting services, Zhemu Soda, described the zero-tariff policy as "low-hanging fruit" for Zimbabwean businesses.

"Those who are into agriculture and other sectors should take advantage of it to increase trade with China. It's a good opportunity for expanded trade," he said.

Strategic opportunity

Jimmy Psillos, chairman of Zimbabwe's Competition and Tariff Commission, said the policy presents a strategic opportunity for the country's export sector.

"By allowing qualifying products to enter the Chinese market duty-free, the initiative opens access to one of the largest and most dynamic consumer markets in the world," he said.

The arrangement is unilateral and reflects China's broader commitment to strengthening economic cooperation with Africa, creating "a critical window for Zimbabwean firms to position themselves in the Chinese market", he added.

As Africa's third-largest blueberry producer, Zimbabwe has already begun taking advantage of the policy, recently exporting its first shipment of blueberries to China.

Trade between Zimbabwe and China reached a record $4.4 billion last year, up 15 percent from 2024, according to the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce.

"For Zimbabwe, this is more than a trade concession — it is an industrialization opportunity," the chamber said.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Off to the races



Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva speaks at a rally at a stadium in Sao Bernardo do Campo on Sunday, kicking off his campaign. Lula, 80, is seeking a fourth and final term as voters in Latin America's largest economy head to the polls on Oct 4.
ADRIANO MACHADO / REUTERS

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Briefly

CHINA

Chile's foreign minister to pay 5-day official visit

Chile's Foreign Minister Francisco Perez Mackenna will begin a five-day official visit to China on Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian announced at a regular news conference on Monday. Over more than half a century since the two countries established diplomatic ties, China-Chile relations have stayed at the forefront of China's relations with Latin American and Caribbean countries, Lin said. China looks forward to using this visit to have in-depth exchange of views with the Chilean side on bilateral relations and international and regional issues of mutual interest, so as to carry forward friendship, expand consensus, deepen cooperation and push bilateral relations to a new level, he added.

DR CONGO

Ebola outbreak now nation's deadliest ever

A fast-spreading Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now the country's deadliest ever after killing more than 2,300 people in three months, government figures showed on Monday. The United Nations says the Ebola outbreak is "the fastest-growing on record" and is killing a victim every 30 minutes in the DR Congo. Declared on May 15, the outbreak is thought to have already been spreading for several weeks by that point. In its latest toll on Monday, the Congolese authorities said that 2,325 people had died in the current outbreak, from 4,945 confirmed cases. The deadliest Ebola outbreak ever hit western Africa in 2013-16, killing more than 11,300 people.

CHINA DAILY—AGENCIES—XINHUA

The People's Republic of China
The People's Court of Shaodong City, Hunan Province

Public Notice

LE DIEM THUY,

Notice is given hereby that this Court has accepted the divorce petition filed by the Plaintiff, Zeng Yongyang, against you. Given that you are currently absent and your address remains unknown, we are hereby providing you, in accordance with the law, with copies of the Civil Complaint, the Notice of Response, the Notice for Evidence Submission, and the Court Summons via a public notice. These documents will be considered served 60 days after the date of the said public notice. The deadline for submitting a statement of defense and presenting evidence will be 30 days following the end of the aforementioned public notice period. This case is scheduled for a public hearing at 10:00 a.m. on December 21, 2026 in the Fourth Trial Courtroom of this Court. You are requested to attend the court hearing punctually. If you fail to do so, the case will proceed to trial by default in accordance with legal provisions.

The People's Court of Shaodong City, Hunan Province
The People's Court of Shaodong City, Hunan Province (seal)
August 7, 2026

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COMMENT

Editorials

Unswervingly advancing cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era

A grand gathering was held on Monday in Beijing to commemorate the birth centenary of the country's late leader Jiang Zemin.

President Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the gathering in which he recalled the "indelible contributions" Jiang made to safeguarding the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics and successfully advancing it into the 21st century by breaking new ground in reform and opening-up in all respects and achieving overall moderate prosperity in people's lives.

Jiang's political career unfolded during a period of profound changes. The country faced complicated domestic and international circumstances following the end of the Cold War, and it was navigating the difficult transition toward a socialist market economy and deeper integration with the world economy. Against that backdrop, Jiang demonstrated a rock-solid political conviction, profound dedication to the people, an innovative spirit, farsighted strategic thinking and extraordinary courage in addressing risks and challenges.

These qualities are still relevant today.

Jiang had remained unswervingly firm in communist ideals, utterly loyal to the Communist Party of China and the people, and resolutely committed to the cause of the Party and the people. He emphasized the importance of strengthening the Party's leadership and effectively improving Party building as the country advanced reform and opening-up and developed its economy.

Xi highlighted Jiang's view that the farther the country advances along the path of reform and opening-up and the more its economy develops, the more crucial it becomes to strengthen the Party's leadership and improve Party building.

Jiang also demonstrated a profound love for the people, always standing with them, caring about their well-being and stressing that development ultimately serves the people. Under his leadership, major initiatives, including the large-scale development of the country's western regions and poverty alleviation, helped improve people's living standards and contributed to the country's historic transition to moderate prosperity.

Today, learning from that people-first approach means adhering to the philosophy of development centered on the people, helping them resolve difficulties and promoting common prosperity through the country's modernization.

Lauding Jiang's achievements, Xi hailed his efforts in continuously advancing innovations in theory, institutions, science and technology, culture and other fields.

By pooling the wisdom of the whole Party, Jiang created the Theory of Three Represents, which further answered the questions of what socialism is and how to build it, and creatively addressed what kind of Party to build and how to build it.

The establishment of the socialist market economy as a reform objective and China's accession to the World Trade Organization reflected the innovative and pragmatic spirit of adapting to changing circumstances while firmly pursuing development. The same spirit is indispensable today as China confronts a rapidly changing world marked by technological transformation, economic restructuring and geopolitical uncertainty.

We must now properly respond to the questions facing China, the world, the people and the times, and constantly break new ground in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times, Xi said.

Jiang's farsightedness and strategic thinking were highlighted by Xi. With an international perspective and a vision for the future, Jiang advanced the cause of the Party and the State with a slew of major decisions and measures.

That strategic vision is also necessary today, when it is essential to fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, accelerate efforts to create a new development pattern, and make solid headway in promoting high-quality development.

Jiang's courage in critical moments is equally instructive. He made resolute decisions at key historical junctures and critical moments, and responded calmly to risks and challenges, securing the steady advancement of China's reform and opening-up as well as socialist modernization.

The commemorative gathering can help the country effectively draw strength from Jiang's legacy to face new challenges.

"On the new journey, we should stand ready to withstand high winds, choppy waters, and even dangerous storms, resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests, and continue to write a new chapter in the miracles of fast economic growth and long-term social stability," Xi said.

In the process, it is imperative to uphold the overall leadership of the Party and the centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee, unswervingly strengthen full and rigorous Party self-governance, and ensure the Party remains the strong leadership core in the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

'China push' in Asia fabricated alarmism

A New York Times article, titled "As China Pushes to Expand in Asia, Trump Focuses on Iran", published on Saturday, encapsulates a typical trope among the political circles and media in the United States: when in trouble, blame others.

The piece attempts to paint an alarmist picture of the region trembling under the shadow of "Chinese ambition" as the US administration focuses its attention on the Middle East.

Beneath its surface concern for the US' Asian allies are dialectical currents that are logically flawed, historically selective and dangerously misleading. It serves less as a report on regional sentiment and more as a projection of US anxieties masquerading as analysis.

Its reasoning is built on the bedrock of breathtaking ironies: It is the US that launched the conflict with Iran that has become another costly quagmire in which the US finds itself trapped. It is Washington that is seeking to cultivate a Cold War-like division in Asia by pushing a narrative of bloc competition and pressuring countries to choose sides, often at the expense of their economic interests. And it is the US that is resorting to economic coercion, tariff wars and technological "decoupling" in a bid to restructure the global supply chains in its favor, harming the very economies it claims to protect.

It is the misjudged self-serving US foreign policy that is the source of instability in the region, not so-called Chinese "expansion".

The New York Times article's primary "evidence" for the so-called "Chinese expansionism" is a recent incident at Ren'ai Reef in the South China Sea. Here, the reporting is not just flawed but deliberately obfuscating and biased.

While it did admit that for decades the Philippines has sought to claim the reef in the disputed waters by rotating troops to a World War II-era ship it grounded there, it fell short of criticizing Manila for its ploy to occupy the Chinese reef.

Manila's illegal grounding of its warship at Ren'ai Reef in 1999 is the root cause of tensions between China and the Philippines. An objective analysis of the current situation would inevitably trace the current frictions to that unilateral provocation instigated by the Philippines.

Instead, the article deliberately presents the current frictions as the result of unprovoked Chinese "acts of aggression". This is a clear case of agenda-driven journalism, where the historical context is dismissed to fit a preordained narrative of "Chinese bullying".

Yet the most manipulative aspect of the article's narrative is its claim of palpable "Asian anxiety". While there may be concerns in capitals such as Tokyo and Manila, these are not representative of the broader Asian sentiment. In fact, the findings of a Pew Research Center survey in July reveal a starkly different picture.

The poll found that in a majority of the 36 countries surveyed, favorable views of China have surpassed those of the US, including in key US allies such as Canada and Australia. This shows that it is the US that suffers from a lack of trust, not China.

The true intent of the article is to express dissatisfaction with the Donald Trump administration's entanglement in the Iran conflict, and to raise concerns that Washington may be too distracted to focus on the Asia-Pacific region, thereby allowing China's influence there to surpass its own. This is typical US sleight of hand.

The article is simply projecting Washington's anxieties about its declining influence and costly misadventures in Asia. By fabricating and selectively using facts and viewing China through a biased lens, it constructs a narrative of a new Cold War that serves its own ideological agenda.

While some politicians in Tokyo and Manila are betting on the US for political gain, in general, Asian countries hope to achieve development together. The anxiety the article tries to sell is not germane to the majority of people in Asia. Instead, it is a fiction manufactured for political purposes.

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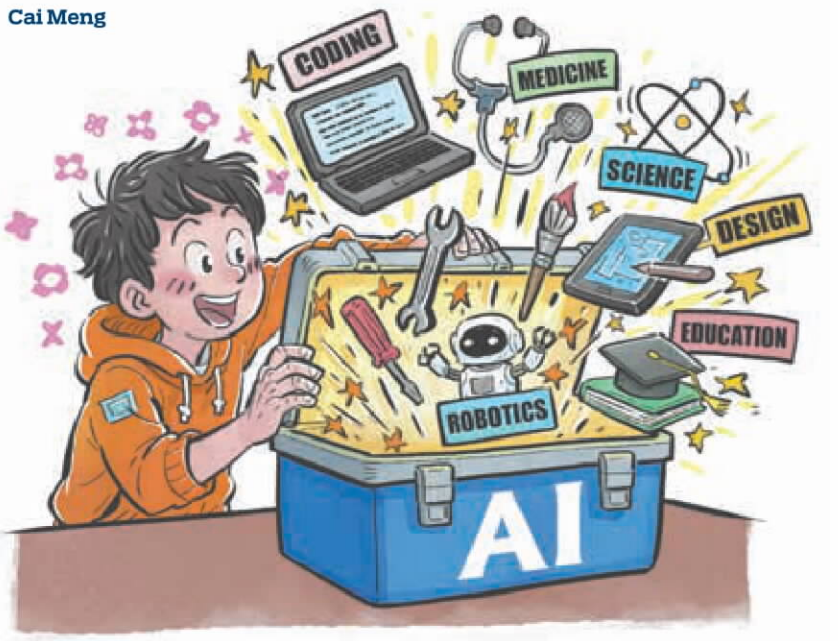
Cai Meng



Opinion Line

US' endless science frontier risks receding to 'golden age' of a few

In November 1944, as Allied armies pushed across Europe and the United States raced to develop nuclear weapons, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt asked Vannevar Bush, head of the US Office of Scientific Research and Development, how wartime science could serve peace. Bush's answer, *Science: The Endless Frontier*, became one of the most consequential policy documents of the modern era. Its premise was simple: let the federal government fund basic research, give scientists room to follow curiosity and trust that discoveries would eventually produce prosperity, health and national strength. For over eight decades that bargain helped define science in the US.

Now, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Director Michael Kratsios' *Science: A New Golden Age* proposes something different. Where Bush trusted institutions, Kratsios distrusts "legacy" ones. Where Bush emphasized exploratory research, Kratsios emphasizes national missions. Where the postwar system tried to protect scientific judgment from political direction, the new model places science more explicitly in the service of national competition.

The contrast reflects two different countries. Bush wrote from a position of confidence. The US had emerged from World War II with its industrial base intact, its universities ascendant and a flood of European scientific talent arriving at US laboratories.

Kratsios writes out of anxiety. Manufacturing has migrated overseas. China is viewed by Washington as a scientific and technological competitor. Artificial intelligence is compressing the distance between discovery and application. The proposed revolution in the government's policies on research is driven by the anxiety that the US invents while others manufacture.

The report published last month argues that federal money is too concentrated in elite universities. It proposes directing more money toward individual researchers, start-ups, focused research organizations and industry-linked laboratories. Peer review is portrayed as too conservative. In its place would come challenge prizes, Advanced Research Projects Agency-style programs, "golden tickets", longer-term grants, and mission-driven initiatives in AI, quantum computing, nuclear fusion, robotics and advanced manufacturing.

The postwar system worked because authority was distributed among government, universities, industry and philanthropy. It was inefficient, competitive and sometimes maddening. Yet its "looseness" created room for discoveries whose uses nobody could foresee. The transistor, the internet, biotechnology and countless advances in medicine did not arrive because a government mission statement correctly predicted them.

Science is not an assembly line. A government can announce a mission to build a fusion reactor; it cannot order the next transistor or modify the DNA of living organisms.

The geopolitical stakes are even larger because the report is ultimately a response to China, as some observers said. But it is here that the change of approach becomes self-defeating. China is not the Soviet Union. China combines extensive public support with powerful companies, enormous manufacturing capacity, market scale and deep integration into global trade and scientific networks.

Consider Apple. Washington has reportedly pressed the company not to source memory chips from Chinese suppliers. Apple may ultimately comply. But finding alternatives can cost more.

This is the paradox of the new strategy. In trying to compete with a comprehensive Chinese system, Washington risks technically nationalizing a science enterprise whose greatest strength has been its openness.

Political priorities can also make collaboration more difficult. US allies and partners may increasingly be asked to align their research, supply chains and standards with Washington. China, meanwhile, will have incentives to deepen its own international networks. The world could gradually develop two parallel scientific ecosystems.

Bush's frontier was endless because it was open. Kratsios' frontier risks becoming fortified, directed and inward-looking.

The reform of the US' research system should make it more open not merely more obedient to political missions; more connected to industry, without sacrificing basic science; and more resilient, without confusing openness with weakness.

The first golden age of US science was built on confidence that the future could not be completely planned. The danger of the new one is that, in trying too hard to plan the future, Washington may close off the very frontier it is trying to conquer.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Enhancing safety equipment industry critical

Editor's note: *China has released a five-year plan for the development of the safety and emergency equipment industry. Xinhua News Agency spoke to Ao Li, vice-president of the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, and Gao Hong, vice-chair of the China Safety Industry Association, about the country's emergency response capabilities. Below are excerpts of the interviews. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The plan outlines 15 specific tasks in four key areas of the industry: fostering innovation, promoting the use of safety and emergency equipment, nurturing industry players and enhancing the industry ecosystem.

Among these, innovation is prioritized, with dedicated sections highlighting the need for breakthroughs in critical technologies and the integration of emerging technologies. The plan calls for leveraging artificial intelligence, embodied intelligence, brain-computer interfaces and satellite remote sensing to drive the development of safety and emergency equipment.

Standards serve as an important bridge between technological innovation and practical application, while also providing the foundation for the safe and orderly development of the industry.

The plan calls for the rapid development and implementation of a range of essential standards, including those for technologies and equipment that are adaptable for both routine and emergency use. It also places emphasis on international technical exchanges and cooperation on standardization.

Its forward-looking approach to building a standards system provides clear guidance for the industry's development. Authorities are accelerating work on standards for emerging and integrated fields, including AI-enabled applications and safety and emergency response robots. The development of a system of standards will be advanced in parallel with technological research and development, testing and verification, and demonstration projects. China will also actively participate in the formulation of international standards, translating its extensive engineering expertise into an advantage in standard-setting.

Ultimately, the value of equipment lies in its performance in real-world operations. The plan calls for developing a number of key application scenarios for safety and emergency equipment and promoting the wider adoption of equipment featuring advanced technologies and proven effectiveness in practical applications.

The household and community safety and emergency response sector, along with urban and rural fire protection, has strong market potential. The plan aims to increase the penetration of household and community safety and emergency products at the grassroots level.

Demand for products such as electrical fire monitoring equipment and rapid-response systems for fires involving new energy vehicles is growing rapidly, driving the growth of the fire protection market.

The plan outlines measures for upgrading fire protection infrastructure, promoting the iteration and upgrading of smart firefighting equipment, and supporting urban renewal. These measures will help sustain market momentum in the fire protection sector and expand the application of safety and emergency equipment.

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VIEWS

Robert Lawrence Kuhn

Jiang's engineering of a nation endures

Centenaries invite the long view. They ask, looking backward, what changed because that person lived and led. Aug 17 marks the 100th anniversary of former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin's birth, and my answer is both historical and personal. The reforms he consolidated and the scientific ambition he envisioned have come to full fruition in President Xi Jinping's new era. At a gathering commemorating Jiang's birth centenary on Monday, Xi called for learning from Jiang's extraordinary courage and vision, his dedication to and profound love for the people.

I should declare a personal interest. I spent several years writing Jiang's biography. When I woke up to the news of his death on Nov 30, 2022, I felt as though I had lost a member of my own family — the occupational hazard of biography, and also its privilege.

When historians explain how China moved from the margins of the world economy to its center — the ascent that defines the new era under Xi — part of the explanation will run through the 13 years in which an electrical engineer from Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, led a country he was called upon to lead.

Xi's "new era" has its own historical circumstances, priorities and methods. Yet it rests on foundations consolidated during Jiang's leadership. Deng Xiaoping launched reform and opening-up in 1978 and revived its momentum through his southern tour in 1992. Jiang's indispensable achievement was to preserve, institutionalize and extend that course when domestic uncertainty and international pressures placed China's future direction in doubt. He and his successor Hu Jintao helped make reform and opening-up the irreversible operating system of the country.

The turn did not come easily. When Jiang said "I now understand that the market economy is critical for China" that admission was revelatory. He possessed an engineer's respect for results and an intellectual's ability to revise his understanding. Under his leadership, the socialist market economy became established doctrine. State-owned enterprises were restructured under the then premier Zhu Rongji. Zhu passed away on Aug 12.

During that era, fiscal, banking and regulatory institutions were rebuilt; foreign investment expanded; and China entered the World Trade Organization in 2001, the act that welded China's productive capacity to global demand. Ideologically, Jiang's Theory of Three Represents brought entrepreneurs and other emerging groups into the Party framework, modernizing the Party and enabling it to lead a diversifying economy.

Jiang's most deeply held strategic conviction, however, concerned science and technology. As an engineer and minister of the electronics industry, he believed national strength ultimately depended on scientific capacity, education, industrial upgrading, and mastery of advanced technology. "Rejuvenating the nation through science and education" became State strategy. He called for Chinese universities to be world-class and helped cultivate the institutions and talent from which China's contemporary technological capabilities have blossomed.

Nowhere was the conviction bolder than in space. In 1992, when China's GDP per capita was under $400, Jiang approved China's human spaceflight program and its patient three-step design: spacecraft, then orbital laboratory, then space station. Jiang named the spacecraft himself — Shenzhou, or "divine vessel". On Nov 30, 2022, Shenzhou-15 docked with the Tiangong space station, and for the first time six Chinese astronauts were in orbit together, completing the handover that finished the station's construction. Jiang passed away that afternoon. Thirty years from the vision to its fulfillment.

It is this inheritance that Xi's new era has carried to fruition, and well beyond. The economy Jiang bound to world trade is now, by purchasing power parity, the largest on earth, and China is the foremost trading nation, producing roughly 30 percent of global manufacturing value added.

The industrial-scientific ecosystem, begun under Jiang, strengthened by Hu and championed by Xi, now supports leadership in electric vehicles, batteries, renewable energy, high-speed rail, and is a formidable competitor in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and biotech. And the military modernization Jiang began has accelerated under Xi into forces of another order, with a large navy and reaching into cyberspace.

The continuity is structural and institutional. In Jiang's era, China sought entry into the international system, while in the new era, China is helping to shape it and contributing to global governance. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China fused science, education, talent, development, and security into a unified program of Chinese modernization; Xi's "new quality productive forces" and the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) call for advanced manufacturing, green transition, and technological self-reliance.

A centenary tribute should not become hagiography. The Jiang era's rapid growth was not without cost, and China's arrival at the center has drawn friction as well as admiration. A serious accounting holds both sides in superposition. The enduring logic is adaptation: learning from experience, correcting what fails, safeguarding stability without allowing it to become stagnation, and opening to the world while strengthening indigenous capability.

Jiang deserves to be remembered whole. He loved languages — serviceable English, Russian and Romanian, fragments of others — and delighted in using them in diplomatic exchanges.

At one private dinner he decreed that only English be spoken, teasingly instructing the interpreter not to translate for a minister who had neglected to learn it, and chiding another who kept his excellent English quiet for fear of embarrassing his leader. "You wouldn't embarrass me," Jiang told him. "You would help me improve." Then he confided that he had been secretly studying Spanish for a year, to prepare for a trip to South America.

I chose to write Jiang's biography because I was convinced that his life offered a singular way to tell China's story across eight historic decades of transformation. The book's Chinese edition became one of China's bestselling books of 2005. When Jiang passed away in 2022, the biography briefly returned to number one. History, I wrote then, will be kind to Jiang Zemin.

History is kind not because it forgets imperfections. It is kind when distance permits perspective — when personality is separated from caricature, consequences from slogans, and durable achievement from transient fashion.

Jiang did not initiate reform and opening-up, but he made them irreversible. He did not invent China's technological ambition, but he made science, education and human spaceflight pillars of national strategy.

Xi's new era has brought those long investments to their fullest fruition, moving China decisively toward the center stage of the world. On Jiang's centenary, I remember the leader, the engineer, the insatiably curious man — and I remain confident that history will be kind to him.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn is the author of The Man Who Changed China: The Life and Legacy of Jiang Zemin (2005)*, and the creator and host of Closer To Truth on science and philosophy. He received the China Reform Friendship Medal in 2018. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

Abdul Wahed Jalal Nori

Connectivity keeps global trade on even keel

The tensions around the Strait of Hormuz are often viewed through the familiar lens of Middle Eastern geopolitics. While this is understandable, it misses the broader picture. The real issue lies in a structural weakness that has quietly been building for decades: the world economy has become extraordinarily efficient, but remains dangerously dependent on a handful of strategic corridors. The lesson from Hormuz is therefore not about a single waterway, but about the future of globalization itself.

For much of the post-Cold War era, globalization was based on the assumption that deeper economic interdependence would gradually reduce geopolitical risks.

As production networks expanded, trade volumes surged and supply chains stretched across continents, many believed that disrupting global commerce would be too costly for any rational actor. Yet recent events suggest that interdependence has merely changed the nature of vulnerability rather than eliminating it.

This paradox has become more visible over the past five years. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of concentrated manufacturing networks. The 2021 Suez Canal blockage revealed how a single incident could disrupt global commerce. Attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea forced vessels to take longer and costlier routes, while the recent tensions in Hormuz reminded the world that even the perception of disruption can trigger higher insurance premiums, volatile energy prices and renewed inflationary pressures. These are not isolated events. Together, they reveal a common structural reality: the arteries of globalization have become its biggest strategic vulnerability.

History offers a valuable perspective. Civilizations have seldom thrived solely due to abundant resources or superior military power. Their influence rested equally on securing the routes through which goods, technology and ideas moved. The ancient Silk Road connected civilizations across Eurasia. Venice flourished by protecting Mediterranean commerce. Britain's maritime supremacy opened the door to global trade. While the strategic geography has changed, the underlying principle has not. Today's shipping lanes, energy corridors, undersea communication cables and digital networks perform the same function. They are the invisible infrastructure upon which modern prosperity depends.

What distinguishes the present era is the unprecedented degree of interdependence. Businesses pursued efficiency by minimizing inventories, concentrating production and relying on just-in-time delivery. Governments encouraged open markets, assuming that commercial integration would naturally reinforce stability. This model generated remarkable growth, lifted millions out of poverty and accelerated technological progress. But resilience was sacrificed in pursuit of efficiency. The more optimized the system became, the less capable it was of absorbing unexpected shocks.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

This marks a profound shift in international politics. During much of the 20th century, strategic competition revolved around territory, ideology and military alliances. Today, it increasingly revolves around the resilience of connectivity. Maritime chokepoints, ports, logistics hubs, semiconductor supply chains, energy infrastructure and digital networks have become strategic assets whose uninterrupted functioning is essential not only to economic prosperity but also to national security. The central question is no longer who controls the largest territory, but who can sustain the networks upon which global commerce depends.

For Asia, the implications are especially significant. The region has become the center of global manufacturing, innovation and trade, yet its success remains closely tied to secure maritime connectivity. Energy imported through the Strait of Hormuz fuels industries in Asia. The Strait of Malacca is one of the world's busiest commercial arteries. Disruptions in the Red Sea affect exports from East Asia to European markets. Geography has once again emerged as a decisive factor in economic strategy — not because borders have become more important, but because connectivity has become indispensable.

This changed environment calls for a different strategic mindset. Instead of viewing resilience as the opposite of efficiency, policymakers should recognize that resilience is now a prerequisite for sustainable growth. Diversified transport corridors, robust regional logistics, digital infrastructure, strategic reserves and supply-chain flexibility are no longer optional economic policies; they are essential components of long-term national security.

China's long-term emphasis on connectivity should be seen within this broader context. Initiatives to strengthen infrastructure, expand transport corridors and improve regional connectivity are often discussed primarily in terms of trade and development. But they also help build a more resilient international trading system. In an era characterized by geopolitical uncertainty, diversified connectivity reduces systemic risk, bolsters regional stability and supports continued economic integration.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is equally central to this evolving landscape. Positioned at one of the most strategically significant locations in the global economy, ASEAN's significance extends beyond facilitating trade. It can play a larger role in strengthening maritime governance, improving regional information sharing, coordinating emergency shipping arrangements and promoting practical cooperation on supply-chain resilience. Such initiatives would reinforce ASEAN's long-standing commitment to dialogue, openness and regional stability while contributing to the security of global commerce.

Looking ahead, three priorities deserve greater attention. First, governments should diversify critical transport and supply networks so that no single corridor becomes an overwhelming point of failure. Second, strategic foresight should become a core function of economic governance through regular stress-testing, scenario planning and horizon scanning. Third, major trading nations should deepen cooperation on protecting the global commons — from shipping lanes to digital infrastructure — because the stability of these systems serves a shared international interest rather than the interests of any one country alone.

The Strait of Hormuz is not simply another geopolitical flashpoint, but a reminder that globalization is entering a new phase. The first era of globalization rewarded efficiency above all else. The next will reward resilience, diversification and strategic foresight. Nations that recognize this transition early will be better equipped to navigate an increasingly uncertain international environment.

The defining competition of the 21st century will not be determined solely by military capabilities or economic size. It will also be shaped by the ability to keep the world's essential arteries open, resilient and trusted. In that sense, the real lesson from Hormuz is not about the Middle East. It is about how the international community chooses to safeguard the future of globalization itself.

The author is an assistant professor at the International Islamic University Malaysia.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Kang Bing

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Rural schools promise to leave no single kid behind

For the past month, my wife and I have been living in my village in Fuyuan, China's easternmost city, in Heilongjiang province, to escape Beijing's summer heat. During our routine daily walks, we often passed a village school, a few hundred meters from Wusulijiang, a river along the China-Russia border.

As a former researcher of comparative education, my wife suggested we go in and take a look.

The campus was empty as the summer vacation was on. The only faculty member present there was friendly. He not only allowed us in but also showed us around. The school has a four-story academic building with about a dozen classrooms.

It has a football field covered with artificial turf and surrounded by a synthetic 200-meter racetrack apart from a playground for basketball and other sports.

"Guess how many students we have," our guide asked us with a smile. We knew that the number of students in China's rural schools had been dwindling for some years now, and the dip could be sharper in this sparsely populated frontier area.

Before I could say there might be around 100 students, our guide answered his question himself: "Nine students in nine grades from primary to junior high. And we have more than 20 faculty members."

The next second, I found myself shutting my eyes and mouth as I did a quick mental calculation to conclude that the local government was spending a few million yuan each year to cover the faculty's salary and operational costs to ensure the nine students got their compulsory education.

Such a big investment in the few students' education displayed the people-centered approach of the Chinese government. No one should be left behind.

On the other hand, to speak honestly, maintaining rural schools for a shrinking student population is becoming a significant challenge for many local governments in the country.

These governments need to adopt practical, down-to-earth measures to reduce education costs and ensure sustainability.

These governments need to adopt practical, down-to-earth measures to reduce education costs and ensure sustainability.

In the past three decades or so, about 300 million rural residents have moved to the cities and counties in search of better-paying jobs. Many of them took their children along for better educational opportunities in the cities and counties.

As a result, the rural schools are seeing a dramatic outflow of students. Statistics show that from 2018 to 2023, the number of rural primary school students decreased by 31 percent. That means millions of rural students have left their rural schools.

The school we visited, for instance, once hosted several hundred students from nearby villages. Now that about one-third of the households in the village have moved to the urban areas with their children, the dwindling of the village school was anything but unexpected.

Most of the villagers I spoke to said they would rather send their children to boarding schools in the headquarters of Fuyuan city 50 kilometers away rather than the next-door village school.

If the children are too young, they even arrange to rent an apartment in the city and send the mother or grandparents to stay with the kids.

For many years now, an increasing number of village schools have been shutting down as students move to the so-called central schools — the school in my village being one of them — for compulsory education. Now, even these central schools are finding it difficult to survive as fewer students enroll each year.

The No. 1 Central Document released in February 2026 has emphasized the need to strengthen the coordinated provision of basic public services in county areas.

The document calls for the careful optimization of the layout of rural primary and secondary schools and kindergartens, ensuring the retention and effective operation of necessary small-scale rural schools and kindergartens.

It also proposes the implementation of a county-level high school revitalization action plan, the promotion of urban-rural school community construction, and the strengthening of coordinated allocation of teachers within counties.

Additionally, it encourages the online sharing of quality classes between urban and rural schools and calls for comprehensive measures to increase efforts in preventing school dropouts and ensuring education retention in rural areas.

The document points the right direction.

Effective problem-solving measures — such as teacher-exchange programs, long-distance education, and predesigned small-scale rural school models — should be studied and implemented to get rural schools out of the condition they find themselves in now.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

CAI CUIHONG

Widening scope of digital and AI governance

China and the US can expand communication channels to mitigate shared risks and help build a constructive relationship of strategic stability



In July, China submitted its position paper on global cyber governance in the digital intelligent age to the Global Mechanism on Information and Communications Technologies in the Context of International Security, the first plenary meeting of which opened at the United Nations headquarters in New York. The paper identifies rising artificial intelligence-related cyber risks, growing threats to critical infrastructure, a lower threshold for cyberattacks and interstate cyber conflict, and the deliberate fragmentation of global digital industry and supply chains. It calls for peace and stability in cyberspace, respect for digital sovereignty, inclusive development and multilateralism. It also proposes that countries should promote the establishment of global standards for assessing cybersecurity risks associated with large AI models and principles for cross-border data flows. The document offers a new perspective on the next phase of major countries' motivations in digital and AI governance.

First, China's move from cyber sovereignty to digital sovereignty reflects the widening scope of global technology governance. Its 2010 white paper, The Internet in China, placed the internet within China's sovereign jurisdiction. The 2017 International Strategy of Cooperation on Cyberspace identified peace, sovereignty, shared governance and shared benefits as principles of international cooperation. Building on these positions, the 2026 paper argues that states have the right to choose, according to their national conditions, their development paths in AI and other digital technologies, as well as the technologies, products, and services they adopt.

This extends sovereignty beyond cybersecurity, jurisdiction, and internet governance to include AI development, technological choice, data security, supply chains and participation in international rulemaking. In practice, digital sovereignty comprises autonomy in development, freedom of technological choice and equal participation in rulemaking.

That sovereignty, however, requires material capacity. According to the International Telecommunication Union, about 2.2 billion people remained offline in 2025. Although 5G covered 55 percent of the global population, coverage reached 84 percent in high-income countries but only 4 percent in low-income countries. Weak infrastructure, limited digital skills and unaffordable technologies mean that autonomy remains more a principle than a reality for many developing countries.

China and the United States are major providers of digital technologies and infrastructure. Their technological pathways, export policies and standards shape the options available to other countries. Their influence will therefore depend not only on technology and standards, but also on whether they can offer reliable, affordable and sustainable solutions without foreclosing alternatives. Narrowing the digital divide will be an important measure of the appeal of their governance models.

Second, China-US competition and cooperation in the AI sector is expanding beyond individual technologies into a broader contest over technological ecosystems and governance rules. Chips, computing power and foundation models remain central, but long-term advantage will increasingly depend on three capabilities: building an integrated ecosystem that links hardware, cloud services, models, applications and digital infrastructure; shaping rules for safety testing, data governance, conformity assessment and technical standards; and encouraging other countries to adopt cost-effective technologies and governance frameworks.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Both countries' policies reflect this shift. China's position paper stresses each state's right to choose its development path and technologies, while opposing forced alignment, exclusionary arrangements and supply-chain fragmentation. In July 2025, the US released Winning the AI Race: America's AI Action Plan, centering on innovation, AI infrastructure and international leadership. A related executive order in July 2025, Promoting the Export of the American AI Technology Stack, called for an "American AI Exports Program" offering allies and partners full-stack packages covering hardware, data center storage, cloud services and networking, AI models, systems and standards.

As the performance gap between leading Chinese and US models narrows, the next phase of China-US digital and AI governance is likely to exhibit four interrelated trends: persistent structural competition; further divergence between their technological ecosystems; continued but limited interdependence; and growing selective cooperation.

Third, institutional differences do not remove the need for joint risk management. AI can strengthen cyber defense, but it can also amplify risks arising from malicious-code generation and exploitation, online fraud, deepfakes and disinformation.

Drawing on the AI Incident Database, Stanford University's 2026 AI Index Report states that recorded AI-related incidents rose from 233 in 2024 to 362 in 2025, an increase of about 55.4 percent. Together with weak responsible-AI benchmarking and disclosure — which refer to systemic gaps where tech companies publish vague ethical principles or superficial test scores that fail to measure real-world safety, operational fairness, or human rights impacts — this rise is placing greater pressure on safety testing, incident reporting, and governance mechanisms. Neither country could easily contain the consequences of a major attack on electricity grids, financial systems, hospitals, or transportation networks, or the cross-border spread of severe AI risks.

The two countries already have a foundation for dialogue. On May 14, 2024, they held their first intergovernmental AI dialogue in Geneva. At the May 2026 China-US presidential meeting, they discussed AI and agreed to hold further intergovernmental dialogue. AI governance thus remains one of the areas in which official communication can survive strategic competition. Cooperation need not wait for broad strategic trust; it can begin with their common interest in preventing major risks.

A practical agenda could proceed on three fronts. At the operational level, the two sides can strengthen emergency communication, information sharing, technical verification and crisis de-escalation for major cyber and AI incidents, especially those affecting critical civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, electricity grids, water systems, financial networks and civil aviation.

At the regulatory level, China and the US can seek basic compatibility in terminology, thresholds and procedures for large AI model safety testing, severe-incident classification, vulnerability disclosure, risk notification, and low-sensitivity cross-border data flows serving the public interest.

At the multilateral level, both countries can work through the United Nations to help developing countries strengthen digital infrastructure, emergency-response systems, governance capacity and multilingual safety tools, without tying such assistance to political alignment or exclusionary procurement.

The aim is not strategic convergence, but to preserve the communication channels and risk-reduction mechanisms needed to manage competition, mitigate shared risks and help build a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability.

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SHEN YUJING AND DONG JIMENG

Dividends not division

The two major countries should work together to address risks posed by AI and ensure the technology is harnessed for the global good



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

A new round of the artificial intelligence revolution driven by large language models is accelerating at a rapid pace. AI has evolved far beyond a purely technical issue to become a core strategic variable reshaping the global competitive landscape. As a transformative technology spearheading the new scientific and industrial revolution, AI is comprehensively reshaping modes of production and industrial structures. Competition and collaboration centered on AI will help shape the balance of power among major countries in the 21st century.



Shen Yujing



Dong Jimeng

While pursuing healthy competition, China and the US should deepen practical cooperation to enable AI technologies to serve the well-being of people across the world. This serves the fundamental interests of both countries and meets the shared expectation of the international community.

Over the past two years, major economies have stepped up efforts to formulate top-level national AI strategies, embedding AI in national development blueprints and mobilizing nationwide resources to sustain their competitive edges in this field. In July 2025, the United States released Winning the AI Race: America's AI Action Plan, charting a decisive course to cement US dominance in AI. In November 2025, the US launched the Genesis Mission, described as a historic nationwide initiative comparable in urgency and ambition to the Manhattan Project during World War II. It integrates supercomputing resources, research datasets from several national laboratories and private-sector large-scale model capabilities to build a unified computing platform. In July 2026, the White House published the report Science: A New Golden Age, advocating an overhaul of the US research system.

China and the US are leading the global development of AI. According to core AI indicators in Stanford University's 2026 AI Index Report, China and the US account for the vast majority of global resources and outputs in computing capacity, industrial application and high-impact academic papers — a lead unlikely to be challenged by other nations in the near term. In computing supply, both countries maintain advantages in high-end chip reserves and the scale of computing hubs. An Oxford University study titled AI Compute Sovereignty: Infrastructure Control Across Territories, Cloud Providers and Accelerators, found that major AI computing clusters are concentrated in the two nations: 26 in the US and 22 in China.

Stanford's report also indicates that the US retains an edge in developing top-tier frontier models, yet China is closing the gap rapidly. While the US leads in quantity, Chinese models are catching up fast in quality. The comprehensive performance gap between leading Chinese and US frontier models stands at just 2.7 percent, with models from both sides alternating at the top of rankings since early 2025, marking a phase of parallel technological progress. Regarding supporting factors such as AI talent and data, the US still hosts the world's largest pool of elite AI researchers and retains advantages in attracting top original innovators. According to China's National Development and Reform Commission, China possesses one of the biggest cohorts of AI engineers, producing more than 5 million STEM graduates every year. In 2025, according to the National Data Resource Survey Report (2025) released by China's National Data Administration, China generated 52.26 zettabytes of data, accounting for 27.44 percent of the global total and ranking among the world's largest data resource holders. These scale advantages in talent and data lay a solid foundation for sustained long-term AI growth.

AI is a shared endeavor of humanity, and its sound development bears on the common well-being of all. As the two major forces driving global AI progress, China and the US can transcend zero-sum competition, strengthen their collaboration, jointly address global challenges arising from AI and advance the ethical and beneficial development of AI.

First, China and the US can work together to support AI cooperation between the Global North and the Global South as well as South-South cooperation to build an open and inclusive global AI governance system. Severe imbalances persist in global AI development, with many developing countries facing bottlenecks in computing power, data, talent and technology. Both sides should abandon zero-sum thinking, uphold the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, and help developing countries build their AI capacity through technology transfer, capacity building and talent training.

Second, China and the US can jointly guard against AI risks. While rapid AI innovation unlocks enormous opportunities, it also brings risks including algorithmic bias, privacy breaches and ethical conflicts, with potential implications for international security and global stability. Faced with these transboundary risks, China and the US can deepen dialogue and cooperation on AI safety governance, ethical norms and standard-setting, and jointly improve early-warning and response mechanisms to ensure AI evolves along a secure and reliable track.

Finally, the two countries can jointly harness AI to benefit humanity and tackle global challenges. AI offers new tools to address climate change, public health emergencies, food insecurity and energy shortages. The two nations can pursue pragmatic cooperation in AI-enabled low-carbon transition, pharmaceutical research and equitable access to quality education, turning AI into a powerful instrument for resolving shared challenges facing humankind.

History shows that the dividends of technological revolutions can reach all humanity only through positive interaction and responsible leadership among major countries. While pursuing healthy competition, China and the US should deepen practical cooperation to enable AI technologies to serve the well-being of people across the world. This serves the fundamental interests of both countries and meets the shared expectation of the international community.

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BUSINESS

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CIFTIS set for heavy turnout in Beijing

Services sector fair confirms some 300 Fortune Global 500 firms will attend

By **REN QI**
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The 2026 China International Fair for Trade in Services, which is scheduled to be held from Sept 9 to 13 in Beijing, has entered its final preparation stage with a strong focus on facilitating enterprises' overseas expansion.

Since its inception, CIFTIS has resonated with the development of global trade in services, becoming an important platform for countries to showcase innovative achievements in the services sector, promote policy exchanges and foster trade cooperation, said Wei Mingqian, deputy general manager of Beijing North Star Co Ltd.

Wei said the successful hosting of the event relies heavily on media attention, recalling that the 2025 CIFTIS attracted over 3,200 registered journalists and achieved record-high coverage, fully demonstrating the innovative achievements of China's high-quality services sector.

This year's event will feature exhibitions, promotional negotiations, achievement releases and support activities, Wei added.

Demonstrating a continuously rising level of international engagement, nearly 300 Fortune Global 500 companies and industry-leading enterprises have confirmed their on-site participation.

For the first time, the 2026 CIFTIS will debut a "going global services promotion roadshow area".

This innovative section will feature professional institutions and enterprises related to finance, law, accounting, intellectual property, advertising and human resources to conduct promotional pitches and information sharing.

Centered on key themes such as the commercialization of achievements, open cooperation and new quality productive forces, the area aims to provide enterprises with one-stop services geared to help them expand overseas. More than 40 related roadshow activities have already been scheduled.

"The registration of exhibitors is drawing to a close, with those from nearly 70 countries, regions and international organizations having confirmed their participation to set up exhibitions," Wei said. He highlighted that Norway, as the guest country of honor, and Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, as the guest provincial region of honor, will be setting up dedicated pavilions.

The upcoming fair will also highlight major debuts. More than 80 enterprises and institutions — including Alibaba, Schneider Electric and GE Healthcare — plan to release over 180 innovative achievements covering artificial intelligence, healthcare, cultural exports and green development.

"Relevant countries, international organizations and provinces will host over 190 forums, conferences and promotional activities," Wei said.

Highlighting long-term cooperation, the fair has expanded its sponsorship roster to include new partners like Beijing Data Group. Furthermore, the event will launch 28 new cultural and creative products, including co-branded chocolates, Wei said.

To provide an immersive consumption experience, the 2026 CIFTIS will feature over 70 support activities, extending beyond the main venue to multiple areas across the city.

Furthermore, the fair is prioritizing technological integration to upgrade its service quality.

"We are fully integrating digital technology into the entire process of the exhibition," Wei said, adding that the event will utilize AI translation devices, intelligent recommendation platforms and AI itinerary assistants to help participating enterprises efficiently connect with global partners.

Catering services have also been upgraded, with fixed seating tripled to accommodate up to 10,000 visitors, complemented by smart coffee and ice cream machines, while optimized shuttle buses will feature smart positioning and real-time information.

Ticketing for the 2026 CIFTIS has officially opened to the public via its official website, app and mini-programs, Wei added.



A humanoid robot performs for media during an event relating to 2026 China International Fair for Trade in Services at a robot training center in Beijing. AP

Dow eyes growth in multiple sectors

By **ZHENG XIN**
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Dow, a United States-based materials science company, sees massive opportunities in China in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, data centers, new energy, mobility and circular economy solutions, and vows to continue expanding its investment as the country deepens its transition toward high-quality development.

Amid a complex global economic landscape, this steadfast commitment underscores the country's enduring appeal to foreign investors, driven by clear policy direction and rapid industrial upgrading, said a senior Dow official.

For Crystal Huang, president of Dow Greater China, the nation stands out for its policy clarity, industrial resilience and long-term commitment to innovation-driven growth. These factors, she noted, are providing global businesses with greater confidence to invest, innovate and grow alongside China's economic transformation.

"China combines scale, a highly integrated manufacturing ecosystem, world-class infrastructure, and increasingly sophisticated customer demand," Huang said. "This is critically important for materials science companies like Dow, which seek to carry out localized research and development, manufacturing and application-driven innovation."

China currently represents Dow's second-largest market globally and its largest outside the US. Despite global headwinds, Huang highlighted that the country's economic performance this year has demonstrated remarkable resilience, characterized not just by the pace of growth, but by an ongoing pivot toward higher-value development.

As China's innovation ecosystem becomes an increasingly vital engine of growth, frontier technologies are fundamentally reshaping industrial capabilities, she said.

"AI and other high-end technologies are becoming powerful catalysts for productivity growth and industrial upgrading in China," Huang said. "For multinational companies like Dow, this creates opportunities to accelerate collaborative innovation on next-generation solutions and achievement transformation with our Chinese customers."

To capitalize on these shifts, Dow is actively reinforcing its local footprint. Last year, the company launched its first global cooling science studio in Shanghai, designed to deliver sustainable cooling solutions for booming industries like AI, the internet of things, robotics and automation. By March 2026, Dow had already expanded this lab to support key industry trends including vehicle electrification, autonomous driving and smart technologies across the mobility value chain.

The company is simultaneously upgrading its manufacturing network to match the country's industrial ascent. Following the completion of a major silicone expansion in Zhangjiagang, Jiangsu province, last year, Dow announced last month a fresh series of targeted investments to expand its global specialty silicones capabilities.

New liquid silicone rubber, or LSR, manufacturing expansions in Zhangjiagang are expected to begin operations in 2027, catering to high-performance applications in mobility and healthcare.

Amid significant shifts in international commerce and capital flows, China is fortifying its manufacturing and supply networks, said Li Xingqian, vice-chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

Simultaneously, the nation is deepening its global integration by lowering market entry barriers, optimizing the corporate climate and implementing targeted policies to stabilize foreign investment, Li said.

"China's dual emphasis on expanding domestic demand and pursuing high-standard opening-up is strengthening its long-term economic resilience and cementing its role in global value chains," said Huang.

Looking ahead to the second half, Dow remains highly optimistic about sectors aligned with the country's development priorities. "We believe China's strengths — including its innovation ecosystem, manufacturing capabilities, talent pool and market scale — will continue to support high-quality development," Huang said.

Luxury brands shine bright in China

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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A growing number of international fashion and footwear brands are posting robust sales growth in China as affluent consumers continue to spend on brands with distinctive positioning and disciplined retail strategies.

Ralph Lauren Corp, Tapestry Inc and Birkenstock Holding all reported double-digit growth in the Chinese market in their latest quarterly results, suggesting demand remains resilient for brands that combine premium positioning with localized marketing and product offerings.

The results contrast with a broader luxury sector that has struggled with softer consumer spending in China over the past two years.

Ralph Lauren delivered one of its strongest performances globally in the first quarter ended June 27, with revenue in China surging more than 40 percent from a year earlier. Asia revenue increased 24 percent, driven by growth across all major markets, while North America also posted double-digit gains.



View of a Ralph Lauren shop in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Ralph Lauren executives said during an earnings call that they do not expect quarterly growth above 40 percent to continue, but forecast low double-digit growth in China for the full fiscal year, underscoring the market's increasing strategic importance.

The Chinese market accounted for about 10 percent of Ralph Lauren's global revenue in the latest quarter, compared with roughly 2 percent before COVID-19.

The New York-based company attributed the performance to strong demand for womenswear and handbags, brand marketing and a disciplined retail strategy focused on six key cities. Management also confirmed Ralph Lauren will participate in the China International Import Expo for the first time later this year, signaling further investment in the market.

The company has also invested heavily in brand building. Recent campaigns have included a Beijing polo tournament, Wimbledon-themed marketing as the tournament's official outfitter and Ralph's Coffee shops inside select stores, offering consumers a lower-cost entry point into the brand.

Women's apparel, outerwear and handbags all grew by more than 20 percent globally during the quarter, outperforming the broader business.

Tapestry Inc, the New York-based owner of Coach, Kate Spade and Stuart Weitzman, also reported another strong quarter in China. The company said Asia-Pacific revenue rose 19 percent in both the fiscal fourth quarter and full year ended June 27. Sales in China increased 28 percent during the quarter and 35 percent for the full year.

Coach remained the group's primary growth engine, posting double-digit revenue growth in every quarter of fiscal 2026. Demand for leather goods remained particularly strong, helping lift average handbag selling prices by the mid-double digits.

The company added more than 2.5 million new customers globally during the quarter and about 11 million during the fiscal year, with Generation Z accounting for about 35 percent of new customers.

German footwear maker Birkenstock also continued to outperform in China despite weakness across parts of the global footwear sector.

For the fiscal third quarter ended June 30, revenue increased 13 percent to 720 million euros ($835 million), while Asia-Pacific sales rose 18 percent, or 23 percent on a constant-currency basis.

Revenue in China surged 50 percent from a year earlier, making it Birkenstock's largest market in the Asia-Pacific.

The results suggest that international brands with differentiated positioning continue to find growth opportunities in China, even as discretionary spending remains uneven.

"Demand for quality fashion has not disappeared," said Cheng Weixiong, a fashion industry analyst.

Cheng said Ralph Lauren's classic aesthetic, broad price architecture and disciplined discount strategy resonate with the country's middle-income consumers seeking versatile, premium apparel without the volatility seen in the broader apparel market.

Briefly

Inclusive loans to small firms rise

China's inclusive loans to small and micro enterprises maintained steady growth in the second quarter, said the National Financial Regulatory Administration. Outstanding inclusive loans to small and micro enterprises reached 38.9 trillion yuan ($5.73 trillion) at the end of the second quarter, up 8 percent year-on-year.

Moves to ensure rail safety amid rains

Chinese railway operators have bolstered measures to better safeguard the safety of rail transport amid heavy rainfall. In Shanxi province, the Taiyuan High-Speed Railway Engineering Section strengthened manpower, physical and technical defenses to solidify such efforts. Prior to forecasted downpours, the section utilized aerial drone inspections, manual foot patrols and dynamic observations to enhance hazard identification capabilities. Post-rainfall, it sent staff to check tracks, bridges, tunnels and drainage systems, with timely repairs executed. It shifted its flood prevention from reactive measures to proactive forecasting, ensuring the safe operation of high-speed railways.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Etihad to expand China flights

By **WANG YING** in Shanghai
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With high expectations for China's long-term growth, Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, has unveiled plans to increase its passenger services to China to 35 flights per week by the end of March, up from the current seven flights per week, making China its fastest growing market in 2027.

The airline is further expected to double capacity in China in the coming five to seven years, which would make the country the group's top three market in terms of revenue, said the top executive of the Abu Dhabi-based carrier.

"We have very big expectations. Our vision is to have at least two flights a day per destination in China together with China Eastern," said Antonoaldo Neves, chief executive officer of Etihad Aviation Group, during an exclusive interview with China Daily.

"I don't see any reason why our capacity of 35 weekly flights, together with China Eastern, can't double over the next five to seven years. We're really excited about the opportunities in the Chinese market," said Neves, adding that the group's growth in China is strengthened by its two partners, China Eastern Airlines and SF Airlines.

"We're currently flying only to Beijing, but we'll soon add services to Shanghai as well as to Shenzhen and Guangzhou (Guangdong province), Hangzhou (Zhejiang province) and Chengdu (Sichuan province). Expanding our passenger network will also increase the belly cargo capacity," he said.

According to the CEO, the carrier transports 2,600 metric tons of cargo every single week from the Chinese mainland to Abu Dhabi, with about 40 percent of that cargo being exports from China to Abu Dhabi, and 60 percent going beyond Abu Dhabi.

Although China currently accounts for only two of Etihad's roughly 300 daily flights, the planned capacity expansion is expected to make it one of the airline's three fastest-growing markets.

"In terms of both cargo and passenger revenue, China will become one of our five largest markets next year, and it won't take long before it ranks among our top three," said Neves.

The decision to launch the new services was driven by several factors, including growing tourism between China and Abu Dhabi, rising demand for both passenger and cargo transport, and the need to strengthen the carrier's partnerships through additional capacity.

"I truly believe that the world is getting more connected. Aviation grows two times the GDP in markets like China, like the UAE. So if GDP in China is growing 5 percent, aviation is going to grow 10 percent. If GDP in the UAE is growing 5 percent, it's going to grow 10 percent," he added.

According to the CEO, robust demand continues to underpin the aviation industry's growth, with Etihad's passenger capacity now 20 percent higher than a year ago. He said the biggest challenge facing airlines was the limited availability of new aircraft, as delivery lead times have stretched to three or four years. Even so, he said the long-term trend remained firmly positive.

The executive said he remained strongly bullish on the country's long-term prospects. He pointed to China's advances in information technology, artificial intelligence, the digital economy, robotics, automation, electric vehicles and renewable energy as evidence that the country's growth still has significant room to run.

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BUSINESS

Balancing green power, grid stability

Solar capacity on track to surpass coal-fired capacity in third quarter

By ZHENG XIN
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Driven by the surging electricity demands of high-end manufacturing and a rapidly expanding digital economy, China's energy landscape is witnessing a historic paradigm shift.

Solar power capacity is on track to officially surpass coal-fired capacity in the third quarter, driven by an explosive surge in electricity demand from new quality productive forces such as high-end manufacturing, artificial intelligence and electric vehicle infrastructure.

According to a comprehensive mid-year report released by the China Electricity Council, the nation's power sector is accelerating its green and low-carbon transition during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), entering a new stage characterized by scaled-up quality and systemic modernization.

China's total installed power generation capacity reached 4.01 billion kilowatts by the end of May, making it the first country to cross the 4-billion-kW threshold, said the CEC's recently released report on the analysis and forecast of the national electricity supply and demand situation in the first half.

By the end of June, total solar power capacity had caught up with coal, effectively tying it as the country's largest power source. New energy sources have now firmly established themselves as the undisputed main body of newly added power capacity, the CEC said.

"In the first half, total nonfossil energy power generation grew by 8.5 percent year-on-year, accounting for 44.5 percent of total power generation — an increase of 1.4 percentage points from the same period last year," said Hou Wenjie, director of the statistics and data intelligence department at the CEC. "More remarkably, the incremental growth of nonfossil energy power generation accounted for 70.7 percent of the total incremental power generation nationwide."

Conversely, traditional fossil fuels are seeing their dominance wane. Coal-fired power generation accounted for 49.7 percent of total power generation in the first half, dropping below the 50 percent mark for the first time in the nation's modern industrial history, Hou added.

Industry experts believe that China's installed power structure is seamlessly continuing its green and low-carbon transformation, a shift that is generating immense dividends not just domestically, but also globally.

Lin Boqiang, director of the China Center for Energy Economics Research at Xiamen University, said the continuous climb in installed capacity has significantly boosted overall power generation performance.

The incremental output from nonfossil energy already accounts for 70 percent of the country's total power generation increase, Lin said.

"China's massive manufacturing scale and technological innovation have reduced the global levelized cost of solar and wind power by more than 60 percent and 80 percent, respectively, over the past decade," Lin added.

High-quality Chinese new energy products have significantly enriched global supply and accelerated the world's low-carbon transition in recent years, according to a document titled "China's Position on the So-called Excess Capacity Issue" by the Ministry of Commerce.

China's green and low-carbon transformation serves as both a vital cornerstone of its high-quality development and a landmark contribution to global sustainability, the document said.

In terms of newly installed capacity, the first half saw the nation add 160 million kW of power generation capacity. Wind and solar power combined accounted for 110 million kW of the total, representing a staggering 70 percent of all new capacity added to the grid, said the CEC.

While the supply side of the grid goes green, the demand side is undergoing an equally profound structural transformation. The CEC said electricity consumption driven by the digital and smart economy is experiencing "explosive growth".

"In recent years, China has accelerated the development of new quality productive forces," said Jiang Debin, deputy director of the statistics and data intelligence department at the CEC. "New growth drivers represented by high-end manufacturing and the digital-intelligent economy continue to expand rapidly ... The robust growth in power consumption in these related industries has become the core engine driving the overall electricity consumption growth of the entire society."

The CEC report shows that electricity consumption in high-tech and equipment manufacturing stood out remarkably in the first half, surging 9.8 percent year-on-year. The growth rate was 6 percentage points higher than that of the same period last year, contributing to 32.8 percent of the total growth in industrial electricity consumption.



A power maintenance worker inspects the system's operation at the lower end of the distributed photovoltaic array installed on the roof of cattle and sheep pens in a modern agricultural industrial park in Zhangye, Gansu province, on July 28. WANG JIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



A worker is busy fulfilling orders for solar photovoltaic modules at Ronma Solar Technology (Jinhua) Co in Jinhua, Zhejiang province, on July 28. SHI KUANBING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Notably, every single subsector within this category recorded positive power consumption growth, the report said.

Simultaneously, within the digital economy, emerging business models — particularly internet data services such as AI data centers and EV charging and battery-swapping services — are exhibiting exponential power demand.

"In the first half, the combined monthly incremental electricity consumption of internet data services and battery swapping and charging services remained between 5.5 billion and 8.5 billion kilowatt-hours. These two sectors consistently accounted for 15 percent to 25 percent of the total societal incremental electricity consumption each month," said Jiang.

From January to June, these two sectors accounted for 59.3 percent of the total increase in electricity consumption in the tertiary industry, acting as the critical force driving that growth.

The EV sector's power appetite is particularly striking. The number of new energy vehicles on the road has surged. In the first half, the national EV charging and swapping service sector consumed 81 billion kWh. In June alone, power consumption hit 14.8 billion kWh, representing a year-on-year growth of 57.1 percent.

Internet data services are following a similar upward trajectory. The explosive boom in AI applications drove the sector's power consumption to 49.4 billion kWh in the first half, nearly matching the total consumption recorded for the entirety of 2024.

"Currently, the AI industry is shifting from a 'training-centric' phase to a phase where 'training and inference are equally important,'" said Jiang. "The volume of AI token calls remains in an exponential climbing channel, meaning the related electricity consumption will continue its high-speed growth for the foreseeable future."

Overall, high-tech manufacturing, data centers and EV infrastructure are rapidly evolving from marginal contributors into the "core increment" of China's power consumption, he added.

Despite the massive strides in renewable deployment, experts warn that the transition is not without operational hurdles.

"The power system is currently facing multiple pressures encompassing security of supply, renewable consumption and economic viability," Zhang said. "There is an urgent need to enhance the reliable output, active grid support and coordinated regulation capabilities of new energy during critical periods of peak system demand."

To address this, the recently drafted plan for renewable energy development during the 15th Five-Year Plan period has, for the first time, incorporated reliable substitution and peak power generation capabilities into its target system.

The plan proposes that by 2030, the average reliable capacity value of wind and solar power should be increased to 8 percent. Furthermore, it aims to increase the share of wind and solar electricity during summer and winter evening peaks to 20 percent, and to boost the newly added reliable peak power generation capacity of renewables by 300 million kW.

"At present, achieving these targets presents certain challenges," Zhang said.

To enhance the reliable substitution capability of new energy, she urged the industry to accelerate the construction of "grid-friendly" new energy stations, while upgrading older legacy wind and solar plants, encouraging capacity expansion and the rational pairing of energy storage systems to steadily improve their grid-connection performance.

"On the technical level, we must increase research, development and application of advanced technological equipment, such as grid-forming technologies, high-precision power forecasting and integrated dispatch systems, while also significantly increasing the proportion of long-duration energy storage," Zhang said.

Looking ahead, the CEC forecasts that as new quality productive forces continue to expand, related industries will see their share of power growth in the industrial sector and the tertiary sector climb even higher, pushing China's electricity consumption structure toward a more technology-intensive and green direction.

The report projects that newly added power generation capacity for 2026 will reach 400 million kW.

By the end of this year, total installed capacity will reach approximately 4.3 billion kW. Of this, nonfossil energy capacity is expected to hit 2.7 billion kW, accounting for about 63 percent of the total. Wind and solar power will officially comprise half of the nation's total capacity, while coal power's share will shrink to roughly 31 percent, the report said.

Hou projects that total electricity consumption will grow by 5 to 6 percent year-on-year in the second half, with the maximum unified grid load reaching between 1.57 billion and 1.63 billion kW.

Looking toward 2030, the CEC anticipates a fundamentally restructured grid characterized by growth in green power and stabilization of coal power.

"By that time, the power industry will have formed a completely new paradigm where new energy serves as the main body of installed capacity, and clean energy dominates actual electricity generation," said Ye Jing, director of the power supply and demand analysis division under the CEC's statistics and data intelligence department.

Under this new framework, solar power will firmly hold its position as China's largest single power source. Concurrently, legacy coal assets will be strategically optimized. Rather than serving as traditional baseload power, coal will be relegated to a supporting role, providing vital safety backup, flexible peak shaving and gap-filling support when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing.

This dual approach is designed to ensure the grid can handle the explosive demand from emerging technologies without sacrificing stability.

By successfully balancing this massive green expansion with rigorous grid stability, China is actively engineering a clean, low-carbon power sector — one fully equipped to fuel the nation's next wave of technological and industrial innovation, Ye said.

Energy storage bolstering nation's electricity system

By ZHENG XIN

China continues to maintain the world's largest installed capacity in new energy storage, marking a historic transition for the technology from a supplementary role to a critical backbone supporting the nation's modern power system, according to a newly released official report.

Surging past previous records, the country's installed capacity of new energy storage reached 136 gigawatts by the end of 2025, marking an 84 percent increase year-on-year and a massive 40-fold expansion compared to the end of 2020, said the China New Energy Storage Development Report (2026) issued by the National Energy Administration.

The sector's rapid growth has delivered immediate operational benefits to the national grid, the report said.

In 2025, new energy storage capacity broke the 100 GW milestone for the first time — more than double the total capacity of traditional pumped-hydro storage. Over the year, these facilities successfully absorbed more than 30 billion kilowatt-hours of renewable electricity, boosting the national renewable energy utilization rate by approximately 2 percentage points.

Investment in new energy storage, together with charging and battery swapping infrastructure, hydrogen energy, and integrated source-grid-load-storage systems, has also been rising in recent years, according to the NEA.

Xu Jilin, deputy director-general of the NEA's Department of Energy Conservation and Technology Equipment, said during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), China's new energy storage sector progressed from early-stage commercial application to a new phase of large-scale development, building a solid foundation for high-quality industry growth and multi-dimensional value creation.

In addition to rapid volumetric growth, the sector has demonstrated deepening technological innovation. A diversified development model has taken shape, led by lithium-ion battery storage while incorporating various advanced technological routes, according to the NEA.

Concurrently, the operational effectiveness and regulation capabilities of these storage systems have steadily improved.

The annual equivalent utilization hours for new energy storage nationwide rose from 611 hours in 2023 to 911 hours in 2024, and reached 1,195 hours in 2025, reflecting its expanding role in balancing power supply and demand, said the report.

This enhanced storage infrastructure played a pivotal role during recent summer electricity demand spikes driven by sustained economic growth and hot weather, during which national electricity loads broke historical records three times.

According to the report, storing energy during normal operations allows the system to stand firm at critical moments.

For instance, in July 2025, when national peak electricity demand exceeded 1.5 billion kW, major industrial provinces such as Jiangsu and Shandong mobilized centralized dispatch of new energy storage facilities during peak hours. Peak discharge power reached 7.14 GW in Jiangsu and 8.04 GW in Shandong — equivalent to operating seven to eight 1,000-megawatt coal-fired units at full capacity — with a simultaneous dispatch rate exceeding 95 percent.

This reliable performance was further supported by broader grid infrastructure upgrades, including the commissioning of the Shaanxi-Anhui ultra-high voltage direct current project, bringing the total number of operational UHV corridors nationwide to 46, with a cross-regional transmission capacity exceeding 340 GW.

Looking ahead, the report outlines key tasks for 2026 and plans for the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30). Key initiatives include supporting breakthroughs in core technologies, planning the construction of national energy research and development innovation platforms in the new energy storage domain, standardizing project management, and promoting efficient and value-driven market competition.

Energy storage, coupled with auxiliary systems such as smart microgrids and vehicle-to-grid networks, plays a critical role in maintaining grid stability, said Zhu Gongshan, chairman of GCL Group, China's largest private power enterprise.

These technologies are indispensable for swiftly balancing power output against shifting demand. "By offering dependable backup electricity, they help forge a highly resilient and adaptable energy network," Zhu said.



Technicians from State Grid Chuzhou Power Supply Company conduct an inspection at a smart energy storage sharing station in Chuzhou, Anhui province, on Aug 2. SONG WEIXING / FOR CHINA DAILY

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CHINA

Guangxi's courts bank on mediation

AI also plays key role in expediting intl commercial dispute resolutions

By **CAO YIN** in Nanning
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Courts in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region are making significant strides in establishing themselves as a preferred venue for resolving international commercial disputes, with mediation and artificial intelligence playing key roles in the effort.

As China's gateway to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Guangxi shares a dynamic border with Vietnam. Each day, trucks laden with tropical fruits and a steady flow of traders and travelers cross the border for business and family visits. Such frequent exchanges naturally give rise to disputes.

Between January 2020 and June 2026, courts across Guangxi handled 3,250 foreign-related civil and commercial cases involving 75 countries, including the United States, Vietnam, Japan and Canada. The cases covered a wide range of issues, from divorce and private loans to trademark infringement and contract disputes. In 2025 alone, courts in the region handled 1,059 such cases, with the number rising annually, according to the Guangxi High People's Court.

To position itself as a preferred destination for resolving international commercial disputes, the region's judiciary has made mediation a cornerstone of its approach, tailoring it to the distinctive nature of cross-border cases.

> "Our goal is to prevent commercial conflicts from escalating."
>
> **Liu Qiangqiang,** a border police officer in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region

At Youyiguan, or the Friendship Pass, in Pingxiang, a city on the Vietnam border, local judges work with police, market regulators, officials from the border economic zone and trade associations to address commercial disputes. When a cross-border trade dispute arises, police often first stabilize the situation and identify the key issues. If the dispute involves border trade, they alert the local court to conduct joint mediation.

"Our goal is to prevent commercial conflicts from escalating," said Liu Qiangqiang, a border police officer, highlighting how expedited mediation keeps trade flowing and prevents minor misunderstandings from becoming major disputes.

Zhou Meichu, head of the Puzhai community in Youyi township, also underscored the importance of mediation in resolving disputes involving perishable goods such as durians and jackfruits.

"Some businesses can wait, but fruit cannot. Time is money," he said. "Quick resolutions do more to ensure the stability of cross-border trade between China and Vietnam than simply announcing verdicts."

With years of experience in international trade and community management, Zhou has earned the trust of many merchants, both Chinese and foreign. He subsequently became a civilian mediator, assisting judges in resolving foreign-related commercial cases. To better understand the needs of Vietnamese traders, Zhou has enlisted three Vietnamese nationals with a strong grasp of cross-border business practices as his colleagues.

"Mediation only works when it stays within the legal framework. That's what gets to the heart of a dispute and keeps business relationships alive in the long run," he added.

In Dongxing, another city in Guangxi, Du Yimiao serves as one of the region's bilingual, business-savvy mediators. Located just across a narrow river from Vietnam, Dongxing sees daily cross-border trade. Since a circuit judicial team was established in the border area in 2014, it has resolved more than 1,400 border trade disputes, with a mediation success rate of nearly 50 percent.

Du, an overseas Chinese, holds positions in the local chamber of commerce and women's federation, giving her deeper insight into business practices and cultural norms on both sides of the border. Over the past four years, she has participated in 57 dispute resolutions.

"Language barriers and cultural differences may easily turn minor disagreements into major conflicts," she said, describing her role as a bridge between the two sides.

"The law sets the baseline — I make sure both sides understand their legal standing while reminding them of the long-standing business relationships we have built across the border," she added.

To strengthen the institutional framework for mediation, the Guangxi High People's Court has issued guiding documents to support the Belt and Road Initiative and improve the business environment. The region has also established the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area Nanning International Commercial Tribunal, further helping foster an institutional system for standardized mediation in cross-border cases.

The tribunal is also turning to AI to address one of the key challenges in international commercial disputes: identifying and applying foreign laws where applicable.

In 2025, the Guangxi Department of Justice and Guangxi Minzu University launched an artificial intelligence-powered legal service assistant. The platform has since incorporated more than 100,000 legal texts from ASEAN member countries, covering 100 core laws in seven languages. It provides legal consultation, policy interpretation and risk assessment, along with multilingual translation and cross-jurisdictional services.

Dang Shu, director of the rule of law research center at the Guangxi Department of Justice, said that compared with other AI tools, the dedicated legal assistant draws on official data sources from ASEAN countries and follows a rigorous translation process to ensure judicial accuracy.

Wu Xiaofan, president of the Guangxi Commercial Mediation Association, praised the platform's reliable database, saying it helps parties reduce the costs and time involved in mediation.

In a late-2025 durian contract dispute, for instance, the tribunal used the AI tool to retrieve, cross-reference and translate applicable Vietnamese laws for the litigants, resolving within minutes a dispute over the characterization of the business relationship that had long eluded consensus.

Since its establishment in September 2022, the tribunal's caseload has grown from 438 cases in 2023 to 610 in the first half of this year. Yang Ding, deputy chief judge, said she and her colleagues are embracing the technology to improve judicial efficiency and quality.

"We hope to build a fully integrated, digitally empowered dispute-resolution system tailored for ASEAN partners to advance the region's goal of becoming a preferred venue for international commercial disputes and supporting high-level opening-up," she added.

Precious painting



Visitors appreciate a T-shaped silk painting unearthed from Mawangdui Han Tombs during an exhibition titled *A House of Nobility: Aesthetics and Cultivation of Life in the Mawangdui Han Tombs* at the Shanghai Art Museum on Monday. Open from July 3 to Oct 7, the exhibition features precious artifacts excavated from the tombs in Changsha, Hunan province, which date back more than 2,000 years. ZHANG HENGWEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Generational efforts turn desert green

By **ZHAO JIA** in Beijing and **MA JINGNA** and **HU YUMENG** in Lanzhou

At Babusha Forest Farm on the southern edge of the Tengger Desert in Gulang county, Gansu province, 41-year-old Guo Xi can now use a drone to patrol 5,000 hectares of farmland for fire risks and pests, a once laborious task his grandfather's generation did on foot.

The transformation is just as striking when it comes to irrigation.

"My grandfather's generation hauled water on donkey carts, my uncles switched to farm vehicles, and by our generation we had 15-metric-ton water trucks. Now we have drip irrigation," said Guo, a third-generation desert-control worker whose grandfather, Guo Chaoming, was one of the founders of the farm.

Water trucks once struggled to reach remote stretches of sand. Today, Guo said, smart drip-irrigation systems can be managed remotely, making water delivery more precise and efficient.

"Desert control today is no longer simply about hard physical labor. We have to use technology to make desert control and forest management more efficient," he said.

Guo has observed the transformation since childhood.

"When I was young, wherever you looked, there was yellow sand," he said. "Now, wherever you look, it is green. The previous two generations worked for decades to leave us this oasis."

Now a father of three, Guo hopes one of his children will eventually return to Babusha after receiving a good education.

"I hope the next generation can use more professional and advanced technology to protect Babusha," he said.

The generational relay began in 1981, when six villagers from Tumen township — Guo Chaoming, He Falin, Shi Man, Luo Yuankui, Cheng Hai and Zhang Runyuan — all aged 50 or older, banded together to manage 5,000 hectares of shifting sand. They began planting trees and stabilizing dunes as desertification crept closer to villages and farmland.

As the original founders aged, their children took up the mantle. Guo Wangang, Communist Party of China secretary and head of Babusha Forest Farm, stepped in as a second-generation worker to continue his father Guo Chaoming's work.

For Guo Wangang, now 74, carrying on his father's legacy requires persistence.

"The most valuable thing in desert control is perseverance," he said. In summer, he still gets up at 5 am to arrange the day's irrigation and forest maintenance.

"There is a saying in desert afforestation: one part planting, nine parts tending," he said. "Planting a tree is only the beginning. What matters more is keeping it alive over the long term."

Since 2019, Babusha Forest Farm has completed desert control and afforestation on 13,900 hectares and restored about 10,587 hectares of degraded forest, according to local authorities. Vegetation coverage in the front-line areas under its management has exceeded 70 percent, forming a green windbreak about 10 kilometers from north to south and 8 km from east to west.

Water remains one of the farm's biggest challenges.

"A big tree takes decades to grow. Without water, it can disappear just like that," said Guo Wangang, gesturing with his hand.

In 2024, as a deputy to the provincial people's congress, Guo Wangang submitted a motion to address Babusha's water shortage. To resolve the issue, a 500,000-cubic-meter reservoir was constructed alongside an accompanying drip-irrigation network, ensuring a stable water supply source for the entire forest farm.

"One of the biggest worries on my mind has finally been lifted," he said. "The survival of the trees now has a fundamental guarantee."

The forest farm's progress is also reflected in the lives of the people who have worked there.

Reflecting on decades of labor, He Zhongqiang, another second-generation desert-control worker, said the work has brought a deep sense of fulfillment.

A severe sandstorm had earlier convinced him and his peers that controlling desertification on Babusha's original 5,000 hectares was not enough. They also needed to tackle surrounding sources of sand, he said.

They later expanded treatment to another 7,600 hectares of desertified land and, from 2003, spent a decade carrying out desert-control work around Wudaogou village.

"Seeing the land improve and people's lives become more secure makes all the hardship worthwhile," he said.

Ma Shengrong, a forest ranger at the farm, remembers how wind and sand once threatened local harvests.

"When I was a child, crops we had worked hard to plant were often buried in the sand or destroyed by strong winds, and a whole year's harvest could be lost," Ma said. "That no longer happens."

Another witness to Babusha's transformation is Liu Wancheng, 57, who joined the farm in 1991 after moving from the mountainous southern part of Gulang.

"It used to be 'sand advances, people retreat'. Now it is 'people advance, sand retreats'," Liu said. "When I first arrived, I earned just over 40 yuan ($5.93) a month. Now I can make more than 50,000 yuan a year through farm wages, seasonal desert control, and harvesting cistanche."

"We have not only brought the sand under control — but people can also earn an income from it," he said, adding that watching the desert turn green gives him a deep sense of achievement.

Today, Babusha's green economy goes far beyond individual harvesting. A free-range chicken farm sells more than 10,000 birds annually, generating more than 1.2 million yuan in output, while six Babusha-branded products — including cattle, sheep, goji berries and vegetables — are helping expand local agricultural industries.

For Wang Jiguo, deputy director of Gulang county's forestry technology center and a senior engineer, Babusha's core lesson is that desertification control must respect natural laws and local conditions.

"First make the land green, then help people prosper," Wang said, emphasizing that long-term restoration requires giving local people a direct stake in protecting the environment.

What species to plant and how to develop supporting industries, he noted, must be tailored to local soil, rainfall and climate.

"Restoring desertified land is not a short-term project," Wang said. "It demands a long-term commitment so that ecological protection becomes a mission passed from one generation to the next."

Offering a broader legal guarantee for such generational efforts, China's Ecological and Environmental Code, which took effect on Saturday, includes a dedicated section on desertification prevention and control.

Tong Yunshan contributed to this story.

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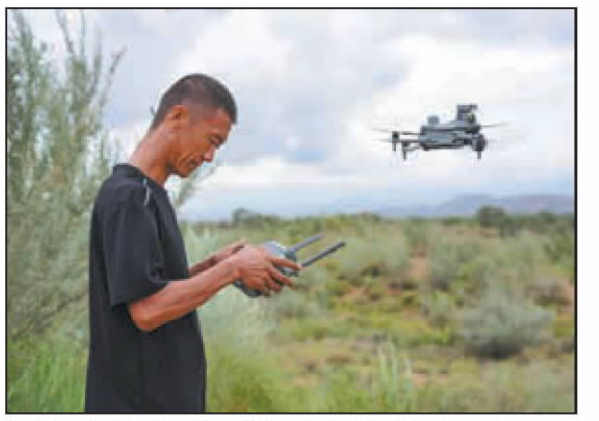

Desert-control worker Guo Xi controls a patrol drone at the Babusha Forest Farm in Gulang county, Gansu province, on Aug 11. LANG BINGBING / XINHUA

Carnivorous plant find validates Darwin

By **LI MENGHAN**
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Scientists have confirmed the discovery of the first carnivorous plant in the Saxifragales order — a group of non-woody flowering plants widely spread across temperate and cold mountain regions. The breakthrough validates a prediction made by British naturalist Charles Darwin in 1875.

The findings were published in the international journal Nature Communications on Aug 4. The study was conducted by a joint team of researchers from the Kunming Institute of Botany of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Yunnan province, the CAS Wuhan Botanical Garden in Hubei province, Jishou University in Hunan province, and the University of Florida in the United States.

The plant, *Saxifraga candelabrum*, grows in rock crevices located between 2,500 and 3,300 meters above sea level across the Hengduan Mountains on the southeastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Its entire body is covered in dense, sticky hair-like structures called glandular hairs that trap small insects.

In his 1875 book *Insectivorous Plants*, Darwin studied two European species from the same family and noticed their sticky hairs could catch insects. He suggested that some species in the group might actually feed on their prey. However, the analytical tools of his era were not advanced enough to test his theory, leaving the question unanswered for nearly 150 years.



An insect is captured by *Saxifraga candelabrum's* sticky hairs. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The discovery began during fieldwork in Shangri-La, Yunnan province, when researchers noticed *Saxifraga candelabrum's* sticky hairs were packed with bugs — averaging 71 insects per plant.

To prove that insect trapping was a permanent evolutionary trait rather than an accidental event, the team surveyed 45 historical plant samples collected between 1888 and 2016. Forty-three of them still had insects stuck to their hairs, proving the plant has been preying on insects for well over a century. Scientists also discovered that the plant uses floral scents to lure insects. However, its sticky traps mostly catch midges — small flies that do little to help fertilize the plant. Larger and more effective pollinators, such as hoverflies and wild bees, rarely get stuck. This smart tactic allows the plant to hunt for food without accidentally killing the insects it relies on to reproduce.

Many plants use sticky hairs purely to keep harmful bugs away. To prove *Saxifraga candelabrum* actually digests its catch for nutrients, researchers tested for digestion-aiding proteins. They found phosphatase — an enzyme that breaks down animal matter — right inside the plant's sticky hairs. They then used chemical tracking with nitrogen isotopes, which are special elemental markers, to confirm that the plant absorbs nitrogen from the digested bugs to fuel its flowering and fruit growth.

In addition, the research team mapped out a complete high-precision genome of the species.

Zhang Xinjian, first author of the study and a postdoctoral researcher at the Kunming Institute of Botany, noted that the findings challenge long-held botanical assumptions.

Zhang explained that while most known carnivorous plants use dramatic, specialized traps like pitchers or snapping jaws, this discovery serves as a reminder that quieter insect-eaters exist in nature. Sticky hairs traditionally viewed as simple self-defense mechanisms may actually double as feeding tools.

This suggests that insect-eating behavior among flowering plants may be far more common than previously realized, opening the door for the discovery of many more carnivorous species in the future.

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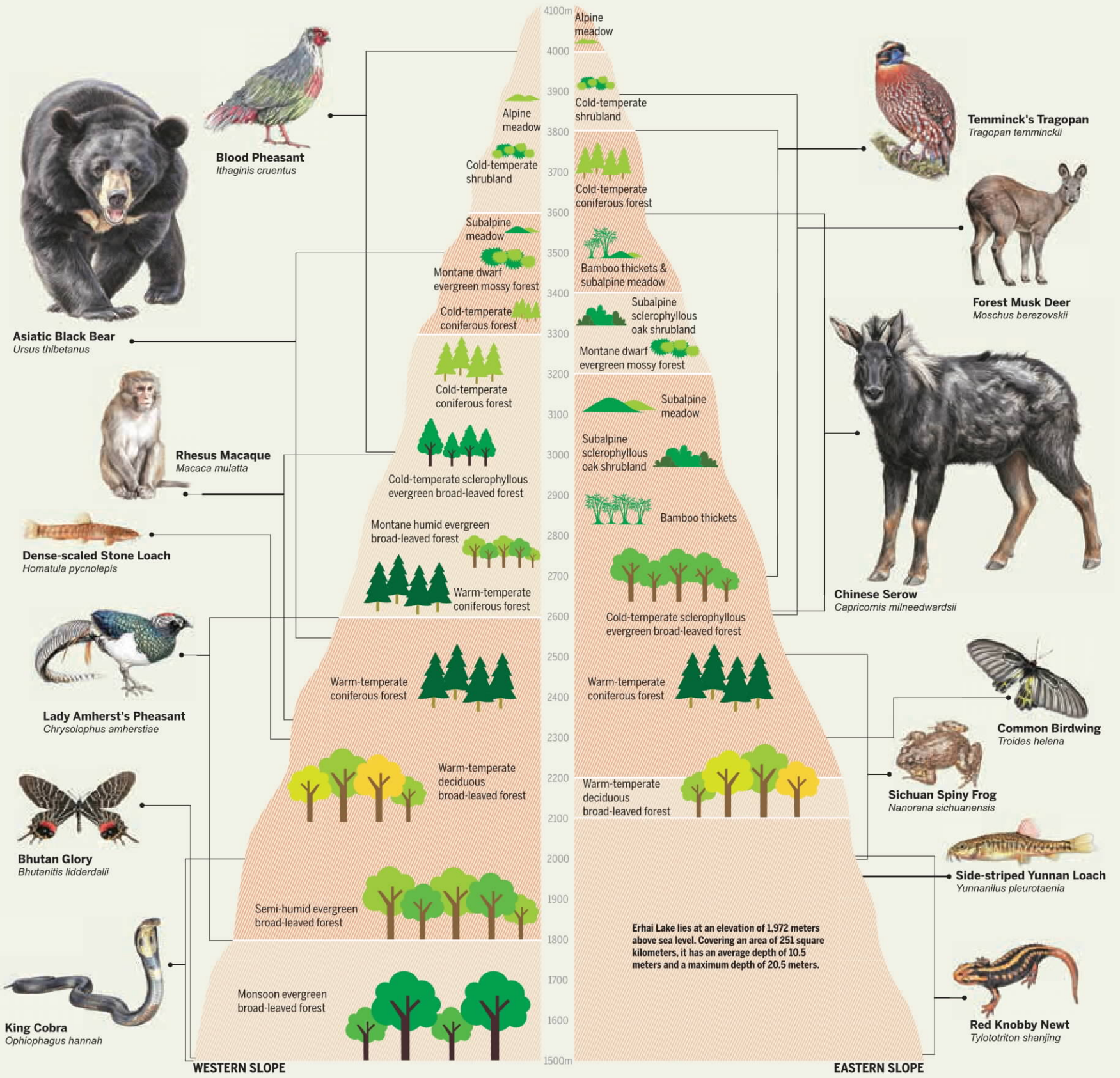
Editor's note: *As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.*

Uncovering a soaring scale of biodiversity

Survey of the Cangshan Mountains reveals wildlife paradise. **Yan Yujie** reports from Dali, Yunnan, with **Zheng Jinran** in Beijing



The Cangshan Mountains in Southwest China's Yunnan province have long been known as one of the country's richest reservoirs of biodiversity, home to forests, alpine meadows and thousands of animal and plant species.

After the results of a comprehensive three-year survey were released in April, the true and expanded scale of the mountains' biodiversity and intertwined ecosystems has been uncovered.

The scientific expedition, which featured some 4,000 visits by researchers from eight institutes at the national and provincial levels, covered an area of 966 square kilometers — roughly the size of New York City.

Surveying flora and fauna across elevations ranging from 1,360 meters to 4,122 meters, the researchers documented ecosystems, plants, fungi, wildlife and land use across the mountain.

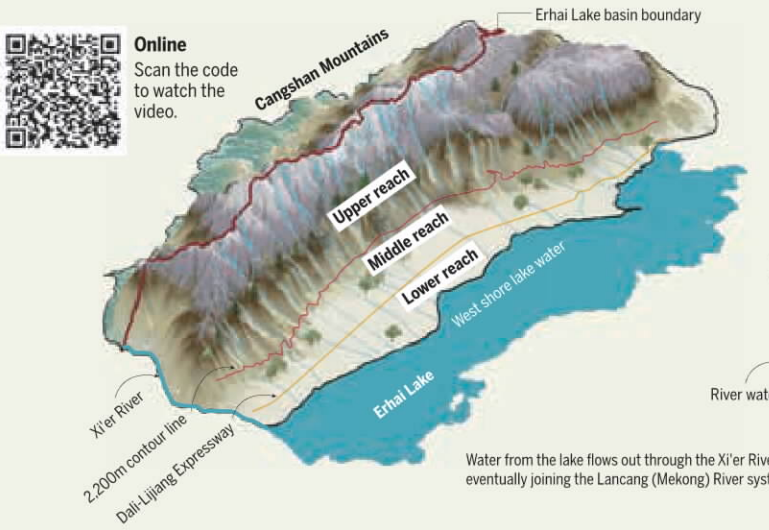
For Chai Yong, project secretary and head of the vegetation research team at the Yunnan Academy of Forestry and Grassland, the expedition was as much about humility as discovery.

"The mountain constantly reminds us how little we know," Chai, 50, said.

In 2023, Chai and three colleagues were conducting vegetation surveys near Xieyang Peak, the southernmost of Cangshan's 19 peaks, when they strayed from their planned route and became trapped in dense shrubs.

"We could see the city below us, but we couldn't find a way down," Chai recalled.

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.



Water from the lake flows out through the Xi'er River, eventually joining the Lancang (Mekong) River system.

The team eventually found a narrow gully and followed it to safety. The experience reinforced a lesson Chai now often shares with younger researchers: understanding nature begins with respecting it.

That respect has been matched by a growing understanding of the mountain's complexity.

Researchers on the survey established Cangshan's first comprehensive vegetation classification system, identifying 10 vegetation types, 20 subtypes, 79 formations and 131 plant communities. They also documented 10 previously unrecorded plant communities and discovered the distribution of monsoon evergreen broad-leaved forests on the mountain.

The expedition recorded 4,600 species of higher plants and 418 large fungi, as well as 578 vertebrate and 787 invertebrate species.

"Cangshan is not a collection of separate ecosystems," Chai said. "It's a living system in which forests, water and wildlife are deeply interconnected."

The expedition also shed new light on Cangshan's relationship with nearby Erhai Lake, an iconic attraction of Dali city.

Using stable isotope analysis, researchers traced the movement of water across the region and found that surface water and groundwater originating from Cangshan contribute more than 65 percent of Erhai's west shore water supply in the rainy season, confirming the mountain's role as a critical ecological barrier and natural reservoir.

The findings have provided important scientific evidence for conservation efforts in the area.

Researchers found that vegetation cover on Cangshan has generally increased since the late 1980s, while protected areas within the Cangshan-Erhai National Nature Reserve consistently outperformed unprotected regions in ecological health, highlighting the long-term benefits of conservation.

For those involved in the project, however, the expedition's significance extends beyond scientific papers or statistics.

The findings will help guide future conservation, ecological restoration and environmental education, ensuring that the mountain's forests, rivers and wildlife continue to thrive.

After years of trekking across ridges and valleys, Chai said he now sees Cangshan differently. "People often admire it for its scenery," he said. "But the more you study it, the more you realize its greatest beauty lies in the connections that hold the whole system together."

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CULTURAL HERITAGE



Dunhuang Academy's protection techniques have been successfully applied to the Jiaohe Ruins in Turpan, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.





Left: Mural restoration is carried out in one of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, Gansu province. **Right:** Guo Qinglin (second from right), director of the Dunhuang Academy, checks a multi-field coupling environmental simulation laboratory. **Below:** A distant view of the Mogao Caves. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Part of a mural restored in Dunhuang.

Taking Silk Road science global

Experts use advanced research to protect fragile earthen ruins and assist overseas partners, report **Wang Ru** and **Ma Jingna** in Dunhuang, Gansu.

Guo Qinglin still remembers a visit to Yumen Pass not long after he joined the Dunhuang Academy in 1999, in Dunhuang, Gansu province. He had followed senior colleagues to inspect the strategic Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) fort, a vital gateway on the ancient Silk Road, and nearby sections of the Great Wall in Gansu. As he watched the crumbling fortifications, he noticed the expression on Li Zuixiong's (1941-2019) face grow increasingly grave.

"We cannot let such heritage disappear on our watch. We must accelerate research and development of conservation techniques for earthen sites," he recalls Li, then deputy director of the academy, saying.

That moment set Guo on a path from geology graduate to one of the world's leading experts in the conservation of earthen sites. Now 50, Guo is director of the academy which oversees the Mogao Caves — a UNESCO World Heritage site comprising hundreds of Buddhist caves adorned with murals and statues dating from the 4th to the 14th centuries. Over the years, he has watched the academy's conservation capabilities steadily evolve. Today, he leads his colleagues in sharing their expertise abroad, helping safeguard treasures that belong to all of humanity.

Guo's entry into the field was almost accidental. After graduating with a degree in geology from Lanzhou University in Gansu, Guo was introduced to the Dunhuang Academy by his teacher. At the time, he had only a vague sense that cultural heritage protection was something "sacred".

"I remember I told Wang Xudong, who worked as a staff member recruiting graduates from my university and later became director of the academy, that I didn't know much about cultural heritage conservation," Guo recalls. "He replied, 'That's okay. You can learn gradually.'"

Conditions at the academy were tough in those days. Located on the outskirts of Dunhuang, the institution had limited amenities, and staff members could take a shuttle bus to downtown only twice a week to bathe or make phone calls. At the same time, a lack of domestic expertise in conservation prompted extensive international cooperation. Before Guo joined the academy, cooperation with institutions in Japan and the United States in the 1980s had already brought advanced conservation philosophies and techniques to Dunhuang's conservators.

"Building on that foundation, our professionals made further innovations and eventually developed three major technology systems surrounding the protection and repair of ancient murals, protection and consolidation of earthen remains, and digitization of wall paintings and painted sculptures in cave temples," Guo says.

From a team of four members in the 1960s, the academy's conservation workforce has grown to nearly 200 people.

Mural conservation offers a telling example. China had long possessed traditional techniques, but many relied on artisans' personal experience rather than scientific analysis. Through collaboration with US experts, Chinese professionals gained a deeper understanding of the causes of mural deterioration. They refined their methods through scientific research, transforming experience-based practices into science-based conservation.

The cooperation also helped improve procedures. Overseas experts introduced a value-analysis step that Chinese professionals had previously overlooked, helping establish a comprehensive workflow for cultural heritage conservation: value analysis, on-site investigation, environmental monitoring, deterioration mechanism analysis, plan formulation and final implementation.

"Later, we applied these procedures to more than 300 cultural heritage projects across 21 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, including the restoration of murals at the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Xizang autonomous region," says Guo. "When our methods are scientifically sound, we can largely ensure good outcomes."

Of the academy's three major technology systems, the conservation of earthen relics has posed the greatest challenge and remained a key focus for decades. Of China's 767,000 immovable cultural heritage sites, about one-third are earthen relics, many of which have been listed as World Heritage sites.

"Made of earth, such relics are relatively fragile, as they are often exposed outdoors and can easily collapse or weather, leading to their fast disappearance, along with the precious historical information they carry," Guo says. "Protection of earthen sites is a world-class challenge."

The academy's attempt to protect such sites started in 1992. Early attempts involved adding chemical consolidating materials. Later, geotechnical engineering techniques, such as grouting reinforcement, were introduced, gradually evolving into a comprehensive system. The system has been successfully applied to the Jiaohe Ruins in Turpan, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, since 2006, and the Xixia Imperial Tombs in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, since 1999, both of which are on the World Heritage List.

As protection techniques matured, the next frontier was understanding long-term effects of the environment. In 2020, the academy launched a multi-field coupling environmental simulation laboratory for mural and ruin protection.

The lab can simulate temperature ranges between -30 C and 60 C and relative humidity from 10 to 90 percent, as well as various climatic conditions across all four seasons, including wind, rain, snow, and sunlight for experimental testing. This allows researchers not only to understand a site's present condition, but also to glimpse its past and future, says Guo.

With these systems now well established, the Dunhuang Academy is increasingly taking its conservation expertise abroad. "Cultural heritage is a witness to a country's history, so every nation wants to protect it," says Guo. "Having benefited from international cooperation ourselves, we feel a responsibility to share our experience with counterparts abroad, to help them safeguard their heritage, which actually belongs to all of humanity."

In 2024, the academy signed memoranda with cultural heritage institutes in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia, covering joint site protection, exchanges of theories and techniques, cultural exhibitions, academic activities, and professional training. In 2025, the China-Kyrgyzstan Belt and Road Joint Laboratory on Cultural Heritage Conservation was approved for construction to advance these efforts. "Local people understand their own culture best," says Guo. "We offer techniques and discuss protection ideas together. In this way, we cooperate to protect their cultural heritage."

This year, academy professionals arrived at the ruins of the ancient city of Suyab in Kyrgyzstan, a key city on the ancient Silk Road that is now recognized as a World Heritage site, to establish a comprehensive experimental platform for heritage protection.

Aisin Duishanalieva, director of the Republican Inspectorate for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments of the Ministry of Culture of the Kyrgyz Republic, told Global Times earlier that the lab, built under the Belt and Road Initiative, has established systematic research capacity and will continue to develop. "Through this joint collaboration, we can study and excavate cultural relics along the Silk Road and better popularize them in our two countries," she said.

Guo says: "Our academy will remain engaged in domestic and international cooperation, protect grottoes and share their art with an increasingly open approach, and attract more scholars, especially young ones, to join us.

"We will conduct comprehensive, multidisciplinary research on Dunhuang sites in the broader context of human civilization, dig deep into their historical, artistic and scientific value, and contribute to the cultural diversity of the world," he adds.

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Living history book opens at Jingzhou city wall

By DENG ZHANGYU
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The ancient city wall of Jingzhou in Hubei province stands like a living history book. More than 2,000 years old, it has quietly "grown taller" in virtually the same location through successive dynasties, with its position shifting by less than 50 meters.

The Exhibition Hall of the Archaeological Site of Jingzhou City Wall, which opened earlier this year, offers visitors a clearer and more intuitive view of the wall's historical evolution and construction techniques over the past millennium.

Inside, the city wall is presented almost as a cross-section of history. Layers of brick and rammed earth dating from the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960) through the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties are stacked one upon another, recording the passage of time as clearly as tree rings.

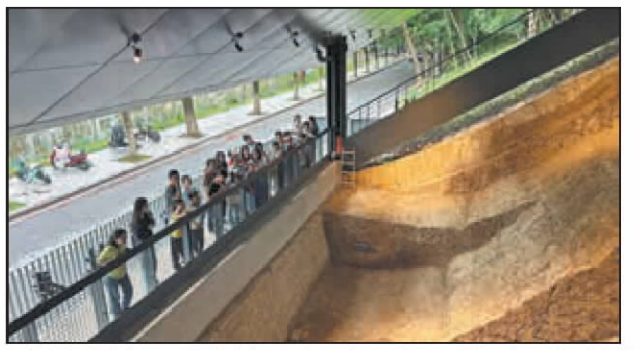
"The city wall is the only city defense and flood-control system in southern China that has remained in continuous use for more than 1,000 years. This exhibition hall turns an archaeological site into vivid history that can be understood at a glance," says Tian Yong from Jingzhou Museum.

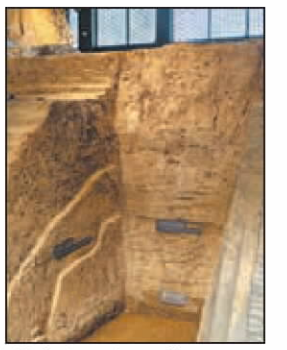
The exhibition hall was carefully built around the archaeological excavation site of Horse-face (*mamian* in pinyin) No 11. In 2019, during the restoration of the structure, archaeologists discovered an earlier brick wall beneath the Ming Dynasty wall. Since then, the archaeological team led by Tian has conducted three excavations at the site.

According to Tian, *mamian* is a specialized structural term for rectangular bastions projecting from a city wall. They reinforce the wall, enhancing its defensive capabilities. The Jingzhou City Wall stretches 11.28 kilometers, and has six ancient city gates and 25 horse-face-shaped bastions. Horse-face No 11 is located in the northern section of the wall.

Tian says archaeologists had never previously excavated deep into the wall out of concern for its structural integrity. Historical records show that the city wall existed during the Three Kingdoms (220-280) period, but there is no rigorous archaeological evidence.

The excavation has traced the wall back to the late Tang Dynasty (618-907). A rammed-earth wall from the Tang period was followed by a brick wall built during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, making it the earliest brick city wall discovered through archaeological excavation in China.





Left: The Exhibition Hall of the Archaeological Site of Jingzhou City Wall in Hubei province offers a close-up view of history. **Right:** The interior of a rectangular bastion shows various building techniques from different periods in history. PHOTOS BY LIU QING / FOR CHINA DAILY

The bricks of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period are quite distinctive. They were salvaged from aristocratic tombs dating from the Han (206 BC-AD 220) to the Tang dynasties and are carved with images of maids and floral patterns. Historical records note that the ruler of the local kingdom at the time ordered nearby tombs to be excavated for their bricks, which were then used to build the city wall.

By the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the wall served both military and flood-control functions. Its exposed interior reveals a well-preserved brick drainage ditch, built with a carefully calculated slope to channel rainwater away quickly and prevent the wall from becoming waterlogged and collapsing.

Above this layer are blackened bricks and earth left by fires during the war-torn Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). The main body of the wall visible today dates from the Ming Dynasty. Its most distinctive feature is the inscribed bricks, each bearing detailed information about its manufacturing date, place of origin, and the officials responsible for its manufacture. If a brick was found to be of poor quality, responsibility could be traced through the inscription.

"These inscribed bricks formed a rigorous quality traceability system in ancient China," Tian says.

Horse-face No 11 is about 14 meters high, roughly the height of a three-story building. Historically, Jingzhou's location along the Yangtze River made it vulnerable to frequent flooding, with historical records indicating water levels rose by as much as 17 meters. To withstand floods, the city wall was repeatedly raised, reaching over 30 meters at its peak. Therefore, the wall was not only a military barrier but also a lifeline that protected people from floods, Tian says.

The exhibition hall is free to the public and, unlike a traditional museum, has no enclosing walls. It connects seamlessly with the surrounding streets through gentle slopes and steps. People can stop by while walking or cycling, taking in the views while exploring the history.

"It perfectly combines excavation, protection, display and utilization. Here, history becomes tangible in an instant. People can see a thousand years at a glance and observe the construction periods, evolution process and building techniques of the city wall," says Yang Kaiyong, director of Jingzhou Museum.

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LIFE



Translating for the palate



Chef Cheng shares his experiences interpreting cross-cultural cuisine, bringing his expertise to a cooking show as he joins the judging panel, **Li Yingxue** reports.

A piece of aged fish maw is turned slowly over charcoal until its surface takes on the dark shine of lacquer. Fermented black garlic adds depth, while sand ginger cuts through a buttery French sauce, creating a dialogue between chef Vicky Cheng's favorite dried seafood ingredient and French cooking techniques.

In another kitchen, the same ingredients might have been simmered for hours into a restorative Cantonese soup.

At Estuary by Vicky Cheng, which opened at Galaxy Macau in May, dishes are presented through the lens of contemporary French cuisine: controlled fire, carefully constructed sauces and precise tableside service.

The dish offers a concise portrait of its creator. Hong Kong chef Cheng has spent much of his career moving between culinary languages, searching for ways to make unfamiliar ingredients immediately appealing without erasing their origins.

Cheng's career reflects contemporary Chinese cuisine's growing global recognition.

Through his restaurants and his role as a judge on the cooking show *Chef of China*, Cheng has explored how Chinese cuisine can reach wider audiences without losing its identity.

At VEA, a one-Michelin-star restaurant in Hong Kong, Cheng established his "Chinese x French" cuisine. WING, ranked No 2 on the 2026 Asia's 50 Best Restaurants list, became his expression of "Boundaryless Chinese Cuisine". Estuary now completes the trio with what he calls "Indulgent and Nourishing French Gastronomy" — French cooking reconsidered through an Asian palate.

Estuary is not simply a return to Cheng's early French cooking. Named for where rivers meet the sea, it reflects his Hong Kong roots, Canadian upbringing and French training.

Born in Hong Kong and raised in Toronto, Cheng grew up with Chiu Chow (Chaozhou) food and his grandmother's Shanghai dishes. In Canada, however, his daily life became overwhelmingly Western.

"I grew up on a Western palate, but I am Chinese at heart," he says.

Cheng began cooking professionally as a teenager. During his six and a half years working at a Canadian restaurant, he progressed from novice to working across its kitchen stations.

"Since I was young, I was given many opportunities to compete in culinary contests," he says. He was taught "discipline of time" and "organization" — lessons he believes are unique to such high-pressure settings.

Those early experiences later gave Cheng a personal connection to *Chef of China*, where he joined the judging panel. Moving from competitor to judge allowed him, as he puts it, "to be on the other side of things" and "hopefully be able to help the industry as well".

The program exposed him to chefs from across the mainland and Hong Kong, each drawing on different regional styles of Chinese cooking. Their ingredients, knife skills and techniques were "not just inspiring, but also new and fresh", particularly for "somebody who's been cooking Western cuisine most of his life".

What interested him was what the high pressure revealed: "How quickly they adapt and how well they work as a team and also how well they perform as individuals".

As the field narrowed, judging became more difficult. "You're keeping only the best, and it's at a point where it starts to get very difficult to make a decision," Cheng says. "But in the end, it all comes down to taste. You can have the most creative dishes and the most amazing stories, but if there is no substance, you will not generate deliciousness."

In his early 20s, Cheng moved to New York to refine his skills at Daniel Boulud's three-Michelin-starred Restaurant Daniel. The kitchen quickly challenged his confidence.



Above: Chef Vicky Cheng presents some ingredients for his dishes. **Top left:** House preserved pork, clay pot rice with dried velvet shrimp. **Top right:** Botan shrimp with Chiu Chow sauce. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The restaurant served about 300 guests a night while demanding precision. When he arrived at noon, it left too little time to prepare, so Cheng began coming at 11 am, then 10 am, and sometimes as early as 8 am.

"I went to New York, and I had realized that I was nothing," he says.

It is a lesson he has carried with him: no title or accolade removes the need to improve. "I know that even if I am the best today, I may not be tomorrow," he says. After about a year and a half, colleagues recognized his exceptionally orderly station and willingness to help others.

The missing piece

New York sharpened Cheng's French techniques, but also drew him toward Asia. On days off, he searched for dim sum, sushi and kimchi. "I realized that there's an Asian part of me ... that I had yet to discover," he says. "So I made a decision to come back to Hong Kong."

He continued cooking French food, but as he prepared to open VEA in 2015, he realized that a conventional French restaurant no longer fully represented him. Simply adding soy sauce, wasabi or a Chinese mushroom to a Western dish was not enough, either.

Meaningful fusion requires an understanding of how both cuisines think. A chef using mushrooms from Yunnan province should first understand how local people prepare them and why that tradition exists. Only then can it be reinterpreted rather than used as decoration. "That, for me, is true fusion," Cheng says.

His Chinese education was less formal. At Hong Kong markets, Cheng bought unfamiliar produce, asked vendors how they cooked it, and tested the ideas on friends at late-night suppers.

This education shaped VEA and led to the founding of WING, which opened in 2021. The restaurant takes its name from the Chinese character *yong* — pronounced "wing" in Cantonese — in Cheng's name.

In Chinese calligraphy, the character is traditionally used to demonstrate eight fundamental brush techniques, reinforcing his belief that innovation must begin with a strong foundation.

Launching a Chinese restaurant without training in the traditional Chinese kitchen hierarchy was risky, but it encouraged him to develop his own culinary language.

His Western-raised palate helped him identify where international diners might struggle. Sea cucumber, for instance, can be challenging in appearance and texture. At WING, he placed it inside a crispy spring roll.

"Everybody understands spring rolls," Cheng says. "Everybody understands and loves crispy." He hopes this accessible version encourages diners to try traditional preparation.

This idea reflects his broader hopes for Chinese cuisine. "Food is a universal language," Cheng says. He believes it can evolve only when chefs understand what came before: "Without tradition, there is no innovation."

That foundation, rather than rigid regional boundaries, informs WING. Cheng hopes contemporary interpretations can lead international diners toward traditional dishes. "I hope the world will see Chinese cuisine differently because ... it is for me, one of the most important, most interesting, and tasty cuisines in the world," he says.

Balancing act

At Estuary, the direction of translation changes again. The techniques, service and structure are rooted in French cuisine, but the food is reconsidered through the palate Cheng developed in Asia.

Clear broths, fermentation and extracted oils help him balance indulgence with restraint. Cheng is not re-creating the French food he learned decades ago, but reconsidering it through his years of immersion in Chinese culinary culture, one that nourishes through ingredients.

Food critic Xiong Wei, also known as Teddy Xiong, believes Cheng's greatest achievement at Estuary is his balance of abundance and boundaries. "The most outstanding characteristic of his cooking is that it is generous yet light, following a path that combines nourishment with indulgence," Xiong says. "You finish feeling satisfied, but neither greasy nor uncomfortably full."

For Xiong, the fish maw best captures Cheng's cultural fluency. "It perfectly embodies Vicky's idea of bringing together charcoal grilling, the ingenuity of fermentation and the river-and-sea character of the (Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao) Greater Bay Area," he says.

Estuary may mark a return to Cheng's French roots, but it is not the end of his journey. After more than two decades in kitchens around the world, he continues to search for new ways to let different culinary languages speak to one another. Like the meeting waters that gave the restaurant its name, those languages continue to reshape each other.

For Cheng, cooking is not a search for a final answer but an ongoing conversation between cultures.

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From left: Oma abalone and South African abalone with abalone sauce; beef brisket, clear broth and green Sichuan pepper.





From left: Mackerel with persimmon and Lapsang Souchong; blue lobster with sour cabbage and chili oil.

From caves to cafes: China's 'cool resources' fan summer tourism

GUIYANG — With summer heatwaves sweeping across China, the country's southwestern karst areas are getting creative, offering unique tourism experiences deep within their cool caves.

Following a guide, tourist Chang Ting ducked into a natural cave in Guizhou province. After trekking about 100 meters along a narrow rocky path, her mobile signal disappeared.

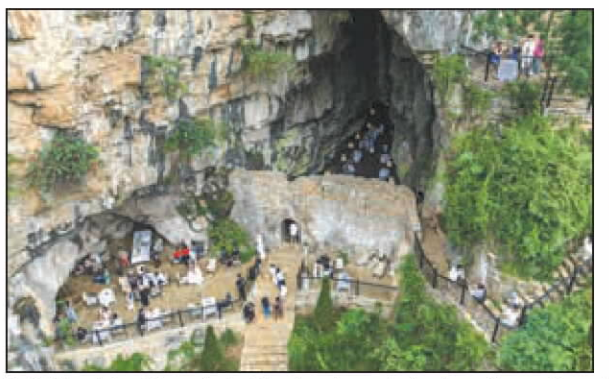
"It felt like stepping back in time, and all the noise faded away," says Chang, from Xi'an, Shaanxi province.

This unique escape has emerged as a new travel fad among young Chinese people during summer vacations. The fresh approach to cave-based sightseeing gives tourists more to explore while boosting summer spending.

Viral videos tagged "Guizhou cave exploration" have gained over 5 million likes on major lifestyle and short-video platforms, with related topics racking up hundreds of millions of views.

Karst landforms cover more than 60 percent of the mountainous province, and a total of 42,800 karst cave entrances have been identified.

Leveraging these resources, Guizhou has developed diverse experiential forms of cave tourism to cater to different types of visitors. Options include outdoor cave adventures with semi-extreme sports, in-depth underground river tours with social media-friendly photo ops, and relaxing cave visits featuring themed dining spaces.





Left: Tourists visit a cafe inside a karst cave in Anshun city, southwest China's Guizhou province, on Aug 8. **Right:** People enjoy the cave cafe's coolness and drinks in the summer. PHOTOS BY CHEN XI / XINHUA

Song Yuanqiao and Zhao Fei, two veteran cave explorers with cave-rescue experience, run an adventure project in Yanzidong, or Sparrow Cave, in Guiding county. Relying on the natural cave passages, they have designed outdoor activities such as zip lines and tightrope bridges.

To turn this niche hobby into a standardized commercial operation, Song and Zhao visited Hungary, Spain, and other countries to learn cave route design, industrial codes and safety management standards.

Song recalls that back in 2018, cave exploration drew little public attention. In 2023, inquiries spiked dramatically as inexperienced tourists began asking about cave routes. "We never imagined it would become so popular," Song says.

A cafe now stands at the cave entrance while thrilling rock-climbing routes stretch deep inside. Since its trial operation in late April, the site has drawn more than 2,000 visitors.

The booming cave tourism trend has brought new job opportunities for young locals. "Sports graduates like me only had jobs as ball coaches before, but now we have more choices," says Lei Yinggui, 23, a cave tour instructor.

The cave exploration trend has also inspired many people to return home and start their own businesses.

Returning from the southern metropolis of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, last year, Peng Wei opened a cave cafe with his former classmates in Xiuwen county. "The longer I was away, the more I missed my hometown's scenery," Peng says.

They left the cave's natural landscape mostly untouched, adding minimal decoration. Now, tourists line up for their unique, waterfall-cooled coffee. The cafe sells up to 600 cups of coffee daily at peak time.

Beyond Guizhou's cave resorts, Heilongjiang province has developed summer forest getaways, and the Xizang autonomous region's plateau area has rolled out high-altitude eco-retreats, translating its distinctive cool-climate resources into sustainable revenue through tourism.

The booming summer tourism aligns with the broader top-level national policy guidelines aimed at boosting consumption.

Last month, China released guidelines to expand consumption for the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), encouraging local governments to enrich distinctive tourism products, such as summer cooling retreats or winter warm-weather getaways.

To balance cave tourism with ecological protection, Guizhou has introduced a new management plan for its karst caves, covering cave classification and filing, ecological red-line setting and full-chain supervision.

"Karst caves are non-renewable geological heritage. Proper resource management is the key to turning underground wonders into local benefits, and we must adhere to development within protection," says Zhang Zaijie, director of the green development strategy research institute at Guizhou University of Finance and Economics.

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CULTURE





Left and center: Scenes from Hong Kong Ballet's *Romeo + Juliet*, which reinterprets Shakespeare's enduring romance within the bustling, cosmopolitan backdrop of 1960s Hong Kong.
Right: Ballet dancer Chun Wai Chan plays the role of Romeo and Hong Kong Ballet's principal dancer Ye Feifei plays Juliet. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

East meets West in HK's *Romeo + Juliet*

Ballet dancer Chun Wai Chan returns to China to play the lead role in Shakespeare's classic tragedy, **Chen Nan** reports.



The iconic love story finds new life in a vibrant 1960s Hong Kong setting, showcasing a fusion of ballet and martial arts.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has been reconsidered and reassembled countless times since it first appeared in print. Its story captures universal truths that transcend time and place, while each new adaptation reveals another facet of this complex play, according to Septime Webre, choreographer and artistic director of Hong Kong Ballet.

The ballet's *Romeo + Juliet* takes that enduring tale and gives it a distinctly local identity, transporting the lovers from Renaissance Verona to the turbulent, cosmopolitan world of 1960s Hong Kong.

On Aug 29 and 30, the production will be staged at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing and will also be performed in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Sept 11 and 12.

In this version, Juliet is the daughter of a tycoon from Shanghai, whose ambitions extend beyond family tradition: he is determined to marry her to a wealthy man in pursuit of greater social advancement. Taipo (Tybalt in the original) is a powerful gang leader from Hong Kong's Kowloon City, who is having an affair with Juliet's mother, a beautiful but cold woman trapped in a loveless marriage.

Against this tangled web of family loyalty, social ambition and forbidden desire, Romeo and Juliet unexpectedly discover the consuming power of love. Their decision to be together becomes an act of defiance, setting them against the people and structures that seek to control their futures.

For Webre, relocating the story is not simply a change of scenery. It is a way of asking how Shakespeare's themes might resonate within another society and another moment in history.

Webre is an internationally recognized ballet director, choreographer, educator and advocate. He joined Hong Kong Ballet as its artistic director in July 2017 after 17 years as artistic director of The Washington Ballet in Washington DC, the United States. Previously, he also served as artistic director of the American Repertory Ballet, based in Princeton, New Jersey, for six years.

"When I first moved to Hong Kong, I knew I wanted to create a ballet that fused Hong Kong and the West. It became a way for me to get to know the city better, to explore its culture and build a world with a distinctly Hong Kong style," he says. "Then *Romeo + Juliet* came along, and the story seemed to lend itself so naturally to that idea. Everything came together very quickly."

The production's Hong Kong identity is reinforced through its visual language. Webre and his creative team drew inspiration from the city's influential cinema from the 1960s through the 1990s, particularly the energetic street scenes and stylized action of Hong Kong films. The stage becomes a bustling, vividly imagined cityscape, filled with neon signs, bamboo scaffolding, noisy Chinese restaurants and crowded markets.

In a rare encounter between kung fu and ballet, martial arts experts trained Hong Kong Ballet dancers extensively in combat and collaborated with Webre to design and choreograph the production's spine-tingling action scenes, infusing modern details into a classic tale of forbidden love.

The costumes similarly reflect Hong Kong's position between the East and the West. Elegant *qipao* (the traditional Chinese dress for women) appear alongside leather jackets, while bold patterns, vivid colors and striking accessories help define the personalities of the characters. The effect is neither a historical reconstruction nor a simple period piece, but a theatrical portrait of a city in transition.

Falling in love with Hong Kong's energy, Webre sees the production as something deeply personal. "This production is a love letter to Hong Kong," he says.

That sense of affection gives *Romeo + Juliet* an emotional dimension beyond its tragic central romance. Through Prokofiev's sweeping score, the physical vocabulary of martial arts and ballet, and the distinctive imagery of Hong Kong, Shakespeare's familiar story becomes a tribute to a city whose identity has long been shaped by encounters between cultures.

For ballet dancer Chun Wai Chan, the invitation to dance Romeo carries an equally personal resonance.

As a principal dancer of New York City Ballet — the first Chinese principal in the company's history — Chan has performed some of the world's most demanding classical roles. Yet when Hong Kong Ballet invited him to join *Romeo + Juliet*, his response was shaped by both artistic curiosity and the opportunity to return closer to home.

"I was very happy when I received the invitation," Chan recalls. He had already seen Hong Kong Ballet perform the production in New York and was immediately drawn to its distinctive interpretation. At the same time, he knew the role would be demanding. He had encountered challenging versions of *Romeo and Juliet* before and initially had to consider whether he could take on another demanding production amid his own international schedule.

Ultimately, the particular character of Hong Kong Ballet's production persuaded him. "I really love this version," he says, adding that the chance to perform it — and to return to his home region — made him excited to accept.

Born in Guangdong province, China, Chan trained at Guangzhou Arts School from 2004 to 2010. A finalist at the 2010 Prix de Lausanne, he earned a full scholarship to Houston Ballet's corps de ballet in 2012 and rising to principal dancer in 2017. Chan joined New York City Ballet as a soloist in August 2021 and was promoted to principal dancer in May 2022.

The significance of his homecoming is not lost on him. Chan has spent much of his professional life overseas and says he rarely gets the opportunity to perform at home. His appearance in Beijing is therefore especially meaningful, even as it comes after a demanding international schedule.

His relationship with Hong Kong Ballet goes back several years. He previously worked with the company in *The Nutcracker* in 2018 and *Swan Lake* in 2019. He remembers the dancers as talented, the repertoire as strong, and the audiences as exceptionally enthusiastic. This time, however, there is another milestone: performing at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, a venue he has never previously visited.

"I'm really looking forward to working together again," he says.

Chan has danced Romeo before, including with Houston Ballet, and will return to the role in other productions in the coming season. But the Romeo created for Hong Kong Ballet is markedly different.

This Romeo is something of a dreamer, Chan says — a young man living partly inside his own imagination, fond of books and romance and somewhat removed from the physical conflicts around him. He may not be naturally suited to fighting or fencing, but loyalty to his friends pushes him into situations beyond his comfort zone.

His romantic idealism also has a particular intensity.

"He is very devoted," Chan says, drawing a connection between Romeo's capacity for love and his own dedication to ballet. "I can really understand why he loves Juliet."

Perhaps the most immediately intriguing element for Chan was the production's incorporation of Chinese martial arts.

Among the details that first caught his attention were the stage design, mahjong scenes and, especially, the fight sequences in which kung fu is integrated into the choreography. The prospect of learning martial arts for the role genuinely excited him.

Chan had taken some kung fu classes before and grew up watching the films of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. As a Chinese dancer who has spent years working within a Western classical tradition, he says he enjoys opportunities to bring aspects of his own cultural background into his performances.

The physical language came relatively naturally. His familiarity with Chinese martial arts imagery gave him an instinctive sense of how the movements should look and feel, even as he worked to adapt them to the discipline and precision of ballet.

His partnership with Hong Kong Ballet principal dancer Ye Feifei, who plays Juliet, is another crucial part of the production.

Their collaboration began in an unexpected way. Ye and members of Hong Kong Ballet traveled to New York two months ago to rehearse with Chan, who was balancing a busy performance schedule. Despite having limited rehearsal time, he joined them and began learning the production's extensive movement material.

The collaboration has particular resonance because Chan and Ye previously worked together in *Swan Lake*. Much has changed since then.

"She has also matured over the years," Chan says. "She has now danced Hong Kong Ballet's *Romeo + Juliet* for six years and has developed an intimate understanding of Juliet that goes beyond technique."

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Imagining the untold story of Zhao Zhuangji through a modern lens




Left: Chinese musical-theater actress Fiona Zhu rehearses for an original one-woman musical *Herstory in History* in London on Aug 3.
Right: Composer Johannes Grosz (left), actress Fiona Zhu (center), and co-director and co-writer Zhang Keyuan in discussion during the rehearsal for the musical. PHOTOS BY JADE CAO / XINHUA

LONDON — In a London rehearsal room, Chinese musical-theater actress Fiona Zhu donned a long, pale costume reminiscent of traditional Chinese opera, taking on the role of an ancient Chinese woman on stage.

The character is inspired by Zhao Zhuangji, a historical figure later associated with Princess Zhao in *The Orphan of Zhao*, one of China's best-known classical dramas.

But Zhu was interested in something beyond the familiar story of sacrifice, loyalty and revenge.

After years of playing different roles, she had noticed that women in historical and theatrical stories were often remembered as wives, mothers or daughters, while less was said about the individuals behind those identities.

Zhao Zhuangji offered one example. Even the name by which she is known today was tied partly to her husband Zhao Shuo and his clan, while her own personal given name has not been clearly preserved.

"Then where is her own name?" Zhu recalled wondering.

That question helped inspire *Herstory in History*, an original one-woman musical set to make its London debut in August before heading to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

The production brings Zhao Zhuangji together with a present-day actress, moving between a historical character and a modern performer trying to understand the different roles she has taken on in her own life.

Herstory in History does not attempt to retell *The Orphan of Zhao* in full or reconstruct Zhao Zhuangji's life as a historical biography, the production team says.

Instead, the creative team takes the gaps around the character as a starting point: what choices might she have faced, and what might be missed when a person is remembered mainly through a few familiar identities?

Zhu says the two women's lives are not meant to be directly compared. The connection lies instead in the experience of taking on identities shaped partly by circumstances and partly by the expectations of others.

Co-director and co-writer Zhang Keyuan says the production is not simply a new version of an old Chinese story, but an attempt to look more closely at the person behind a familiar character.

The same idea of moving between different worlds also shapes the music. German composer Johannes Grosz says his writing is rooted mainly in Western musical traditions. For the production, he worked with the Chinese team to bring traditional Chinese instruments and musical ideas into a chamber score.

One passage uses vocal phrasing inspired by China's Kunqu Opera, while Zhu also consulted performers trained in traditional Chinese opera on singing, costume and movement.

"There is no question of which one is better," Zhu says of the two musical traditions. "If you can bring them together well, it can become something very interesting."

The production is performed in Chinese with English captions. "If it comes from Chinese tradition, why must I use another language to tell it?" Zhu says.

For her, the production is one small attempt to bring Chinese stories and creative approaches into more direct exchange with audiences and theater-makers overseas.

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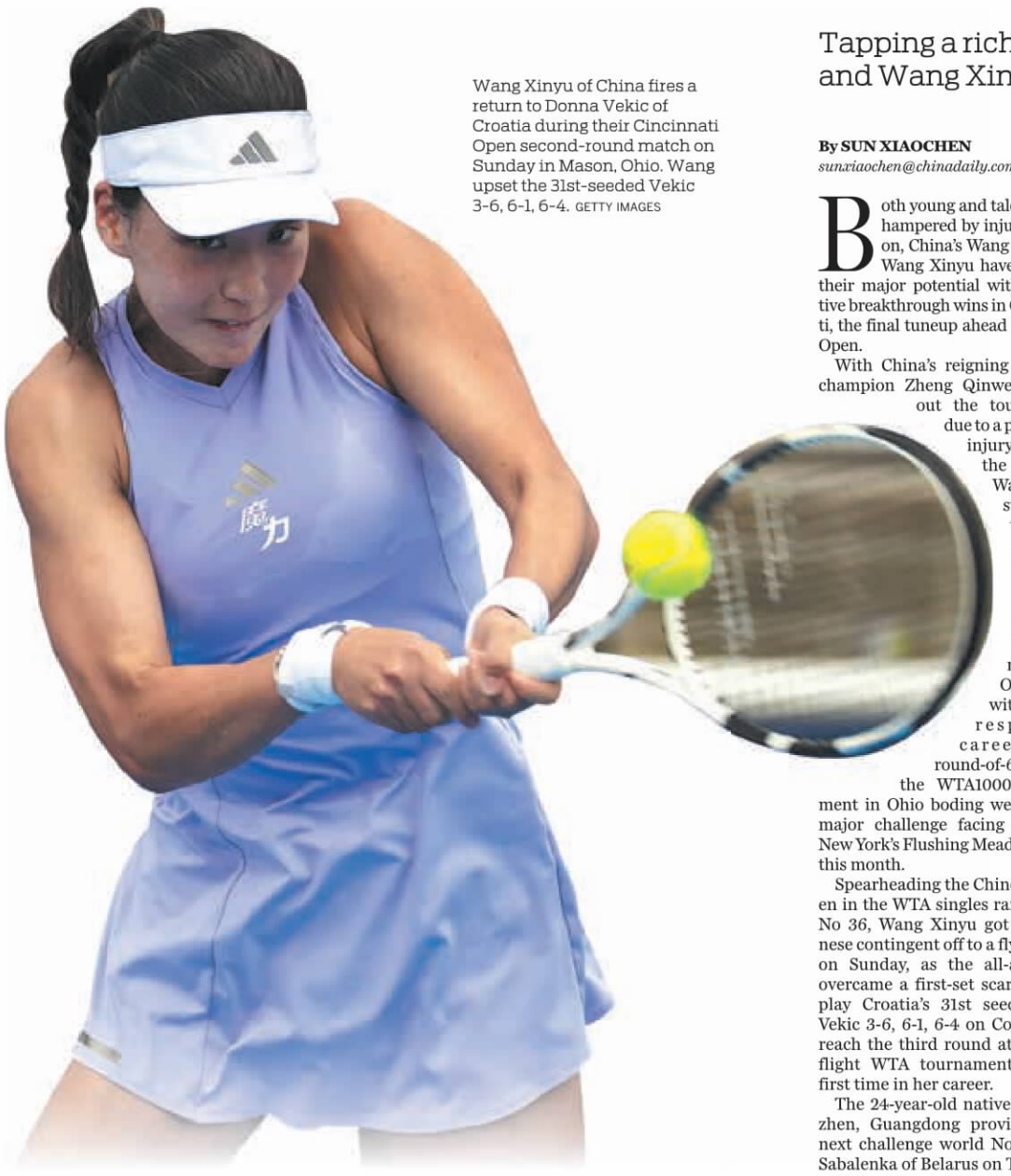
SPORTS

TENNIS

YOUNG GUNS FLY THE FLAG IN CINCY



Wang Xinyu of China fires a return to Donna Vekic of Croatia during their Cincinnati Open second-round match on Sunday in Mason, Ohio. Wang upset the 31st-seeded Vekic 3-6, 6-1, 6-4. GETTY IMAGES

Tapping a rich vein of form ahead of the US Open, Wang Xiyu and Wang Xinyu enjoy breakthrough wins in Cincinnati

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**
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Wang Xiyu in action against Leylah Fernandez of Canada during their Cincinnati Open second-round match on Sunday. GETTY IMAGES

Both young and talented, yet hampered by injuries early on, China's Wang Xiyu and Wang Xinyu have justified their major potential with respective breakthrough wins in Cincinnati, the final tuneup ahead of the US Open.

With China's reigning Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen sitting out the tournament due to a prolonged injury layoff, the in-form Wangs have stepped in to represent the country strongly at this week's Cincinnati Open, with their respective career-first, round-of-64 wins at the WTA1000 tournament in Ohio boding well for the major challenge facing them in New York's Flushing Meadows later this month.

Spearheading the Chinese women in the WTA singles rankings at No 36, Wang Xinyu got the Chinese contingent off to a flying start on Sunday, as the all-arounder overcame a first-set scare to outplay Croatia's 31st seed Donna Vekic 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 on Court 10 to reach the third round at the top-flight WTA tournament for the first time in her career.

The 24-year-old native of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, will next challenge world No 1 Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus on Tuesday.

Riding Wang Xinyu's momentum, the 108th-ranked Wang Xiyu, who battled past two qualifying rounds to make it to the main draw, pulled off an identical comeback win on the same court as the hard-hitting left-hander upset Canada's No 30 seed Leylah Fernandez 3-6, 6-2, 6-2 in a gritty effort to also advance into the round of 32 for the first time.

Their resilient performances, particularly their impressive stamina in the scorching heat over three sets, have provided Chinese women's tennis a much-needed boost amid a testing season for ace Zheng, as lingering injury woes forced the former world No 4 to rest her surgically repaired right elbow ahead of the season's final major.

Wang Xinyu, who also had to pull through a series of injury setbacks early in her career, hailed Sunday's tough test as a perfect tune-up for her battle against the mighty Belarusian, and her sixth main-draw campaign in New York.

"It's so exciting that the draw has put me in front of her, because I've wanted to play her again since our previous meeting in Melbourne," Wang Xinyu said of coming up against four-time major winner Sabalenka, who beat her in three sets in the second round of the 2022 Australian Open.

> "I am always hoping to measure myself against the No 1, and I will, for sure, prepare to the best of my ability."
>
> **Wang Xinyu,** on playing Aryna Sabalenka in Cincinnati

"I am always hoping to measure myself against the No 1, and I will, for sure, prepare to the best of my ability and recover as quickly as I can after this tough match in the heat.

"As difficult as it was, particularly after I lost the first set and got broken first in the second, today's win gave me a lot of encouragement, because I managed to reset myself mentally when I was down and played better, game after game, from there."

Wang Xinyu has reached the round of 16 three times at the majors, her best Grand Slam singles result, while she achieved the highlight of her career in doubles by winning the 2023 French Open trophy alongside Hsieh Su-wei of Chinese Taipei.

"After some ups and downs, I feel like I've found some good form deep into the North American hard-court swing, and, hopefully, it won't be too late," Wang Xinyu said of her expectation for the US Open.

Rising to the elite level of the women's game earlier than her right-handed counterpart, Wang Xiyu, who became China's first girls' major champion at the 2018 US Open, had to wait longer than expected to translate her teen success onto the senior stage, also plagued by multiple physical issues, including right shoulder surgery in October that sidelined her for over half a year.

The 25-year-old former world No 49's improved fitness, and, more importantly, trust in her own body, helped unleash her powerful game facing the agile Fernandez on Sunday, successfully avenging her first-round defeat to the Canadian at the season-opening Hong Kong Open in January.

After struggling with the placement of her shots and dropping the first set, Wang Xiyu regrouped quickly to sharpen her baseline attack, dominating Fernandez with precise and thunderous strikes from both corners to stun the 2021 US Open finalist in a little over two hours.

It served as further encouragement, finding her prime form in time for the US Open, following a deep, round-of-16 run at Roland Garros in May.

"This was a hugely encouraging result for me," said Wang Xiyu, who won her only WTA singles title at the Guangzhou Open in 2023.

"Leylah is a strong opponent who stays consistently within the top 30. So, for me, I just tried to hang in there, be patient and go for every possible chance."

The hard-fought comeback underscores Wang Xiyu's growing adaptability on fast surfaces, a key asset for the upcoming US Open, as well as her improved mental fortitude, which in the past had been criticized by fans following some meltdown losses after falling a set behind.

"I am now just focusing on producing my best effort in every single game, set and match, and progressing one day at a time. Hopefully, I can carry it on," she said.

As well as the right-left singles combo of the two Wangs, Chinese veteran Zhang Shuai was also in action on Sunday, losing out in her singles second-round clash to United States' 28th-seed Ann Li in straight sets.

She'll now switch her focus to the doubles competition in Cincinnati, alongside compatriot Jiang Xinyu, as she looks to build on last Thursday's WTA1000 doubles triumph in Toronto with Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic.



Zhang Shuai (left) of China and Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic pose with the WTA Toronto Open doubles trophy on Aug 13. AFP

EQUESTRIAN

Hua Tian claims record Chinese finish at eventing worlds in Germany

AACHEN, Germany — Alex Hua Tian produced the best World Championship result by a Chinese rider with a 12th-place finish aboard Chicko at the FEI Eventing World Championships in Aachen, Germany, on Sunday.

Hua and the 16-year-old gelding finished on 37.3 penalties, improving significantly over the three disciplines after sitting 37th following the opening dressage competition.

The pair scored 32.5 penalties in dressage before climbing 15 places in the cross-country phase, completing the course without jumping penalties and adding only 4.8 time penalties.

A clear show jumping round on Sunday lifted Hua another 10 places to 12th overall.

"I've had a big grin on my face since about 3:30 this afternoon. I'm so, so happy," Hua told Xinhua while traveling back to Britain.

Hua credited Chicko and the team behind the pair for the result.

"I'm really thankful to the Willis family who own Chicko, to the Chinese Equestrian Association, and most of all I'm just so thankful and proud of my horse," he said.

Hua said Chicko's competitive temperament had been crucial to their success.

"He just knows his job, loves the sport and loves to compete. He has so much heart," Hua said. "To fly the flag for China on this international stage always makes the team and I very proud."

The Aachen result continued a strong summer for Hua and Chicko, who recently won a four-star event at Aston-le-Walls in Britain.

Hua also won a three-star short-format event aboard Manjushri, the horse he plans to ride at this year's Asian Games.

The 36-year-old will head to the Games seeking to defend the individual and team titles he won at Hangzhou 2023.



China's Alex Hua Tian, aboard Chicko, competes at the 2026 FEI World Championships in Aachen, Germany. FEI

"Winning individual and team gold at the Asian Games in Hangzhou in front of a home crowd felt like the right thing at the right time," Hua said. "I was under pressure to win gold there, so winning it was a huge relief."

Chicko will remain in Europe, with Hua instead planning to ride the younger Manjushri, owned by Yi Tianru. Cooley On Ice is his second choice.

"Manjushri is very exciting. His dressage is very strong, which is crucial at the Asian Games level," Hua said.

Manjushri is scheduled to enter quarantine in Aachen on Sept 4 before flying from Liege in Belgium to Tokyo on Sept 14.

"Flying a horse from Europe to Asia is a huge operation," Hua said. "Stable management and the horse's welfare and mental well-being are key. I hope to be as competitive as possible."

China is set to field a partly new eventing team at the Asian Games. Hua said Hangzhou teammate Sun Huadong will return alongside two younger riders.

"It's an exciting stage for Chinese equestrian sport," Hua said. "This will be a great opportunity for them to show their development and composure under pressure."

Beyond the Asian Games, Hua is targeting a fifth Olympic appearance at Los Angeles 2028.

He said individual qualification would become a key focus from 2027, while China would also assess its chances of securing a team place. Hua acknowledged that the team qualification route would be difficult, with Australia and New Zealand among China's regional rivals.

"But regardless, I will aim for individual qualification," he said.

Despite having competed at four World Championships/World Equestrian Games and four Olympic Games, Hua believes he can continue improving.

"I think my career is only just getting started, really," he said. "I now have a world-class team of horses and support network, allowing me to compete consistently at the highest level.

"I hope to continue progressing over the next few Olympic cycles."

XINHUA

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Remarkable drive
Flash memory chip maker clears IPO coaching review
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CHINA DAILY

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Robotics boom fueling nation's tech ambitions

Beijing conference showcases strengths while Unitree debut signals industry's hopes

By **CHENG YU**
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Inside
Editorial, **page 6**

More than 3,000 cutting-edge robots and related products packed the 2026 World Robot Conference, which opened in Beijing on Wednesday, the same day that Unitree Robotics made its debut on the STAR Market in Shanghai and surged 629.44 percent to 1,100 yuan ($163) per share from its initial public offering price.

As the conference showcased China's strength as the world's largest producer of robots and a supply-chain hub for the industry, Shanghai's capital market bet on what comes next — whether that industrial muscle can drive faster innovation, lower costs and, ultimately, expand share in the global robotics market, experts said.

That bet played out vividly on Unitree's first trading day. At its peak, a single winning IPO allotment translated into a paper profit of up to 474,600 yuan. Although the shares retreated, they still closed at 845 yuan, up 460.3 percent, valuing the company at 341.77 billion yuan.

Pan Helin, a member of the expert committee for information and communication economy of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said the surge reflects robust investor confidence in China's embodied artificial intelligence industry. "Despite the share price retreating from its opening high, Unitree's performance far outpaced expectations," he said.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, President Xi Jinping made multiple visits to robotics companies. At the 2026 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai last month, Xi said that AI is moving from the digital world into the physical world, and he called for greater efforts to advance technological innovation, industrial development and scenario-based applications.

Robotics sits at the heart of this transition, serving as the primary vehicle for bringing AI tech into the physical realm. The Beijing conference has brought together more than 300 Chinese and overseas companies with over 3,000 products, ranging from humanoid, industrial and medical robots to core components.

Galbot unveiled a humanoid capable of learning to play tennis. Unitree demonstrated its H1 humanoid, which hit a peak speed of 10 meters per second, rivaling the pace of elite human sprinters.

Xin Guobin, vice-minister of industry and information technology, said that revenue from major robotics companies reached 165.5 billion yuan in the first half of 2026, up 24.5 percent year-on-year.

China will focus on overcoming bottlenecks in core robotics components and embodied AI, he said, adding that the country also aims to expand the integration of robots into agriculture, healthcare, elderly care and emergency response.

Xu Xiaolan, president of the Chinese Institute of Electronics, said embodied AI is entering a key window for large-scale adoption. "Public and commercial services are leading the way," she said. "In China, robots are being deployed in traffic guidance, at tourist attractions, in shopping malls and in education, leveraging capabilities such as autonomous positioning, dynamic obstacle avoidance and question answering."

JPMorgan has forecast that global humanoid shipments will climb from an estimated 18,000 units in 2025 to 60,000 this year, before surging to 1.75 million by 2030. China is expected to account for more than half of global demand, it said.

The National Development and Reform Commission said that eight out of every 10 humanoid and quadruped robots sold worldwide are made in China.

Zhang Yiming, chief analyst for the machinery sector at Guosheng Securities, said humanoids are emerging as a key arena in the tech rivalry between China and the United States, making Unitree's market performance a potential bellwether for the broader industry. "China's advantage lies not just in building sophisticated robots, but in its ability to manufacture them at scale," he said.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said that hard-tech companies such as Unitree reflect a broader shift in how China's capital market values technology. "Investors are now willing to price technological capability and future growth potential over current profitability," he said.

However, an IPO is not the finish line, Wang said, warning that Unitree's elevated price-to-earnings ratio also points to valuation risks. "What ultimately matters is whether a company can deliver technology, products and business models that stand the test of the market," he added.



A technician debugs a robot at the 2026 World Robot Conference, which opened on Wednesday in Beijing. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

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Left: The ZQ 3 Y2 rocket blasts off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China at 7:35 am on Wednesday. Soon after liftoff, the rocket's first and second stages separated, with the latter flying upward to place a satellite into a preset orbit. LONG YUN / FOR CHINA DAILY
Right (from top): The first stage reenters the Earth's atmosphere and is spotted at 7:41 am on Wednesday. The booster continues to make a smooth, speedy descent. It lands on four legs on a concrete pad in Minqin county, Gansu province, 390 kilometers from the liftoff site. XINHUA

Country achieves its first rocket recovery on land

By **ZHAO LEI**
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In a landmark moment for China's space sector, a reusable rocket booster touched down on Wednesday on its predesignated landing site in a northwestern desert, marking the nation's first such controlled recovery on land, following a similar achievement made on a platform at sea last month.

A video clip from LandSpace, a Beijing-based private rocket manufacturer, showed a white speck appearing in the sky above a desert at 7:41 am as the first-stage booster of the ZQ 3 Y2 carrier rocket returned to Earth, descending smoothly and steadily about six minutes after the launch vehicle lifted off from a nearby spaceport.

Footage from surveillance drones flying near the landing trajectory showed that during the final phase of its descent, at an altitude of roughly 3 kilometers above ground, the booster ignited an engine at the center of its base for propulsive deceleration.

Shortly before touchdown, the booster deployed its four legs, which firmly supported the more than 40-meter-tall booster as the engine shut down upon landing on a concrete pad in Minqin county, Gansu province.

The achievement made China the second country in the world, after the United States, to have successfully conducted both land- and sea-based rocket recovery.

LandSpace is the second Chinese enterprise to ever recover a reusable rocket booster.

On July 10, State-owned conglomerate China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp achieved the nation's first such successful recovery when it captured a Long March 10B rocket booster in the South China Sea using a cable system mounted on a special vessel platform off the coast of Hainan province.

On Wednesday, the ZQ 3 Y2 rocket — standing tall at 66.1 meters and primarily made from stainless steel — blasted off at 7:35 am from its dedicated service tower at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China, about 390 km from the predesignated booster landing and recovery site.

The rocket's second-stage booster separated from its first stage about two minutes after liftoff and continued flying upward to transport the Honghu 03 satellite to a preset orbit.

The first stage then entered its return phase following a preprogrammed flight procedure. It sequentially completed a series of critical maneuvers — high-altitude return attitude adjustment, reentry powered deceleration, aerodynamic glide control, pre-landing powered deceleration and deployment of landing legs — before touchdown.

In December 2025, the ZQ 3 Y1 — the first launch vehicle in the ZQ 3 series — became China's first reusable rocket to reach orbit. However, the recovery attempt failed as the first-stage booster burst into a fireball over the landing site in Minqin in the final seconds of descent.

Shen Chao, deputy chief designer of the ZQ 3 variants, said the recovery process for any reusable rocket poses several major technical challenges.

See ***Rocket,*** *page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.

China offers new vision of global diplomacy

WORLD WATCH
By Andrei Chevelev

As a diplomat with 40 years of experience, I have observed Chinese President Xi Jinping's vision of international relations and his contributions to global governance.

Over the past decade, Xi has championed a harmonious approach to international cooperation, bringing new momentum to this traditionally conservative field.

Students of political science would be familiar with Carl von Clausewitz's famous dictum that war is merely the "continuation of policy by other means". But Chinese diplomacy has long advocated a different vision of international relations — one that seeks to prevent conflict through dialogue and mutual understanding before violence begins.

History shows how misunderstandings can escalate into crises, crises into armed conflicts, and conflicts into devastating wars. Diplomacy seeks to interrupt this chain before violence erupts.

Chinese diplomacy offers a renewed vision of international relations itself.

I had the privilege of witnessing Xi's historic first visit to UNESCO. In March 2014, a year after he became president, he visited the UNESCO headquarters in Paris for an in-depth exchange of ideas, presenting his vision of international relations and cultural heritage.

The approach was both novel and unexpected at the time. During the meeting, Xi said he wanted to understand how China could contribute more effectively to UNESCO and the international community.

He then delivered his first address within the UN system to ambassadors from all over the world.

See ***Relations,*** *page 3*

QIXI CUSTOMS SPUR FRESH CONSUMPTION TRENDS

Cultural night tours, heritage crafts and immersive exhibitions boost festive spending

By **LI HONGYANG**
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The Qixi Festival, China's equivalent of Valentine's Day, was celebrated on Wednesday amid a surge in festive spending on cultural night tours, immersive exhibitions and intangible cultural heritage experiences. Experts said the boom reflects a deeper sense of cultural identity and evolving consumer demand.

The festival, which is celebrated on the seventh day of the seventh month on the Chinese calendar, is rooted in the legend of the cowherd and the weaver girl who are separated by the Milky Way, and who meet once a year on this day, spanning the galaxy via a bridge formed by magpies.

In Beijing, the Nanchizi Museum hosted the "Magpie Bridge Night in Garden" ahead of the festival, featuring a special exhibition that blended traditional astronomy with contemporary art.

As part of the festivities, the museum also hosted a fan-making session for visitors on Saturday and has scheduled two more similar sessions on Saturday and Aug 29, from 6 pm to 9 pm.

A Qixi-themed intangible cultural heritage display and experience zone is open to the public at the central hall of the Chinese Traditional Culture Museum until Sunday, featuring eight traditional crafts, including incense making, tie-dye and velvet flower making.

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INDEPTH



The flooded downstream areas of the Liulan reservoir are seen after it was breached due to heavy rains in Hengzhou, Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on July 6. A snake farm was destroyed by the flood and an estimated 800 to 900 snakes escaped. CAO YIMING / XINHUA

THE GREAT SNAKE ESCAPE

Rapid response organized to capture serpents flushed by floodwaters into rural villages

By **ZHANG XIAOMIN**
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As floodwaters receded and the arduous work of post-disaster reconstruction began, an equally urgent and perilous task unfolded in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region last month.

Residents near Hengzhou city, Nanning who had survived the flood faced an unexpected reptilian threat.

When the levee of Liulan reservoir gave way under the onslaught of Typhoon Maysak, the torrential floodwaters destroyed a local snake farm downstream in Dengxu village of Yunbiao. An estimated 800 to 900 snakes including venomous cobras, king rat snakes and non-venomous rat snakes were released into the murky waters.

"Clearing the mud is just a matter of shoveling, but snakes are different. You don't know where they're hiding, or when they might emerge," one villager said.

At least two residents of Dengxu village were bitten by snakes after the flood.

Middle-aged woman Lu Cuilian was bitten by a cobra that was swept into her home by the flood. Her nephew told reporters that the snake first bit her on the neck, and as she tried to pull it away, it bit her arm.

With roads cut off by the flood and the nearby clinic's antivenom supply washed away, she could not reach a hospital in time. She held on for two days, and then died.

The following day, an elderly man surnamed Qin was bitten but survived after being sent to the hospital and receiving antivenom.

The village quickly organized a special patrol team, while multiple official and volunteer snake-catching squads scoured the area, armed with tongs, collection bags and headlamps.

Containing threat

The snakes' escape terrorized the local populace, who for days were afraid to go out at night and constantly scanned their surroundings while cleaning.

In the wake of the snake escape, local authorities moved swiftly to contain the threat.

Under the coordination of Guangxi regional emergency headquarters, regional, municipal, and county-level health commissions implemented a multipronged response encompassing snakebite treatment, hazard checks, and public awareness campaigns.

Experts from across the region and Nanning were sent to assist with snakebite treatment in Hengzhou, and the local hospital's antivenom supply was increased. A special emergency green channel for snakebites was established to minimize treatment time.

Local health authorities also conducted training for front-line medical staff on wound cleaning, proper treatment protocols, rapid assessment and pre-hospital emergency responses.

Meanwhile, officials issued safety advisories through village broadcasts, WeChat groups, and door-to-door notifications, urging residents to avoid nighttime outings, steer clear of grassy areas, ditches, and flooded zones where snakes might hide, and take precautions both indoors and outdoors.

Wu Zhi from the Dengxu village committee told local media that more than 10 villagers from neighboring hamlets that were not affected by the flood had spontaneously formed a civilian snake-catching team.

They ventured into affected areas, going door-to-door to catch snakes and prevent further injuries.

According to Wu, the team members mainly used fishing tools and electrofishing equipment for their operations.

The village committee also issued notices, warning residents without professional skills not to catch snakes themselves and to report sightings to authorities.

Local media outlet "Huaxiang Yinxiang", a WeChat official account of the Hengzhou converged media center, published an emergency guide for snakebite prevention and treatment during the flood.

It warned that the lingering floodwaters had forced snakes like kraits, green pit vipers, and cobras to move into homes, stairwells, and corners, and advised against using incorrect first-aid methods like burning, cutting, or sucking venom from the wound.

The local forestry bureau mobilized its own snake catchers and volunteers, according to the Beijing News.

One local team of seven to eight people reportedly caught over 2,000 snakes in just two days, most of them non-venomous rat snakes. A team member surnamed Zhu said after the flood, snakes mostly hid in corners.

Twenty-a-day man

Among the snake catchers, one volunteer stood out — Chen Peixin, a 33-year-old with more than 600,000 social media followers.

For him, catching a snake with his bare hands is as natural as picking up a rope — he grabs the tail with practiced ease and bags it safely.

Driven by a sense of duty, Chen traveled over 1,000 kilometers from his home in Zhangzhou, Fujian province, to Hengzhou. He spent about two weeks there, catching an average of 20 snakes a day.

"Snakes aren't as terrifying as people imagine," Chen said.

"After the flood, some die. A surviving snake's first instinct is to hide and stay alive," he said, adding most snakes attack only when they feel threatened or provoked.

Chen, a member of the Zhangzhou Liming rescue team and a popular science blogger known as "Yuri" online, first learned of the crisis through news reports. "I'd never been anywhere else to catch snakes before," he said. "But when I saw what was happening, I couldn't just stand by."

He offered to help through his social media account. The response was overwhelming. He received numerous messages and over 10,000 likes.

On July 11, he and an assistant drove for more than 10 hours to Hengzhou, the world's largest jasmine planting base, which had been hit hard by the floods.

Upon arriving in Yunbiao town, he immediately began scouting for snakes by rivers and in jasmine fields, which were now largely destroyed. The small shelters scattered in the fields had become prime hiding spots for snakes.

Following local leads, he focused on Wuzhai village, where there was another snake farm. "Only when I got there did I realize how serious it was," he recalled. "I made up my mind: catch as many as I could, and do everything possible to help the villagers."

Back home, his rescue team usually handles one snake at a time, but this time, there were hundreds, or possibly thousands, Chen said.

The work was grueling. Wading through thick mud in boots, he had to clear debris, not just wood and bamboo, but vines, thorns, and broken tiles, before he could even get to the snakes.

His mission had an early setback when a thorn pierced his left hand. He initially ignored it, but the wound became infected. "The bacteria in the floodwater caused it to swell, and I couldn't bend my thumb. It's impossible to catch snakes with one good hand," Chen said.

He was forced to return home to recover.

But his followers were not willing to let the effort end. After he confirmed he would return, they raised over 3,000 yuan ($445) to support his trip back. His rescue team also contributed.

Four days later, on July 17, Chen was back in Yunbiao.

One video he posted on July 18, a five-minute compilation of his work, garnered over 440,000 likes and 40,000 comments.

"So snake catching is as easy as catching mud fish, just grab the tail and shake it!" one user commented, joking he wanted to try it himself.

Others empathized with the cameraman: "The cameraman's heart was saying 'Stop asking me to get closer'."

Chen's first assistant declined to return, so this time he brought along his longtime friend Lai Yanquan. Lai admitted he was scared the first time he saw so many snakes. It took several days for him to even dare to film close-up.

Chen's biggest catch was a 2.5-kilogram cobra, which he found in a greenhouse.

Many online commenters urged him to wear protective gloves, but Chen said bare hands are essential for speed and dexterity. "Gloves get muddy and slippery; they affect my feel," he explained.

To him, the most dangerous part of the hunt was not the confrontation, but the "ambush".

In one instance, while pursuing a cobra in a cluttered corner, he was surprised by two more that suddenly rose up, staring straight at him.

Fortunately, they didn't all attack at once, and Chen managed to catch them one by one. "If they all attacked at once, I wouldn't be afraid either," he said. "I'd just tap their heads."

For Chen, the most important tool isn't technique, but staying alert and composed.

The intense physical work, in Guangxi's high temperatures, took a toll. "Several times I almost got heatstroke," he said. "Only when I sat down to rest did I realize how exhausted I was."

He would take a dose of *huoxiangzhengqi* water, a traditional Chinese herbal remedy for heatstroke, and press on.

During his time in Hengzhou, Chen was bitten only once, by a non-venomous rat snake.

Chen spent more than 10 consecutive days catching snakes in Hengzhou, moving from village to village.

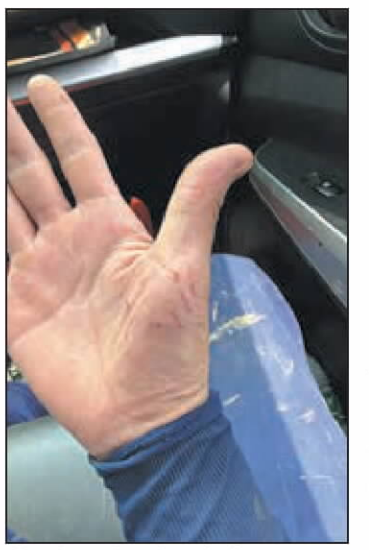
At one school, he captured over 30 rat snakes, which are non-venomous. However, he caught even more cobras, each about 1.5 meters long and weighing around 1 kilogram.

Before his departure on July 29, Chen livestreamed online. Some locals came to present him with homemade wine, chickens, gifts and banners expressing gratitude.

"The villagers are so warmhearted. It made me feel that my efforts were truly appreciated," he said, adding that he would definitely come back for a visit if he had the chance.



Chen Peixin, a member of the Zhangzhou Liming rescue team, explains a snake's fangs and habits to his online followers after catching it. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Chen shows his palm, which was scratched by the fangs of a non-venomous rat snake. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY





Left: Chen attempts to catch a cobra during his mission in Hengzhou in July. **Right:** A villager bids Chen farewell with a bottle of homemade wine. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Farming wake-up call

Guangxi, which is the world's largest source of snake raw materials, had over 30 million snakes in captivity as of 2025, accounting for 80 percent of the total snake farming in China. Hengzhou is one of the three major snake farming counties in the region, according to the Beijing Youth Daily.

In Hengzhou, species like cobras and rat snakes are raised primarily for their medicinal and cosmetic value.

A local breeder surnamed Huang, who has 16 years' experience in the industry, told Jiupai News that snakes are kept in temperature- and humidity-controlled places fitted with wire mesh. Escapes only occur when floodwaters destroy the structures, Huang said.

"After the flood, many farmers' snakes were drowned. Only a very small number escaped," she said.

The incident has drawn renewed attention to the vulnerabilities of snake farming during extreme weather events.

Huang Song, a professor of ecology at Anhui Normal University, told CPPCC Daily that while current industry access policies are relatively well-regulated, flood safety risk assessments for snake farms have long been neglected.

He recommended that farm site selection be incorporated into a flood risk assessment framework, emergency containment plans for extreme weather events be established, and that post-disaster public education on snake avoidance be strengthened to enhance people's awareness of proactive self-protection.

Xu Xudong, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and dean of the school of life sciences at Central China Normal University, told CPPCC Daily that the convergence of natural disasters and specialty livestock farming poses new challenges to the biosafety and public health emergency response systems.

"For venomous snake farming and other specialty livestock operations, we cannot simply manage them as small-scale industries," he said.

He recommended they be registered with authorities responsible for emergency response work, public health, and ecological and environmental protection. "Risk assessments should be conducted at the outset of operations, and they should receive supervision, guidance, and services throughout the farming and management process," said Xu.

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TOP NEWS

Rocket: Test results to decide reusability

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"For example, during atmospheric reentry, multiple onboard systems must precisely coordinate with each other, with extremely tight sequencing and a very high degree of synchronization. Also, as the booster descends at an extremely high speed, it requires attitude control and engine thrust adjustments to be completed within a very short window," Shen told reporters at a briefing in Minqin several days ahead of Wednesday's mission.

To tackle these hurdles, the Y2 has received targeted upgrades over its predecessor, Shen said. "Its propulsion system has been refined to reduce the number of engines that fire during the return flight, in order to cut structural complexity and control difficulty. The Y2 also features improved flight safety control programs that can autonomously determine the landing point in real time and execute safety measures. Its base heat protection measures have also been optimized," he added.

Shen explained why LandSpace chose Minqin for the recovery mission. "First, the site's position aligns with our rocket's launch azimuth (the compass bearing of a rocket's ground track during ascent) and is compatible with its lift capacity parameters. Second, the facility sits in a sparsely populated area, and it also has good transportation access, being close to a paved road, which is convenient for bringing the recovered booster back to the manufacturing base. Third, Minqin's climate is well-suited for recovery missions, and the local government has been highly supportive of the project," he said.

Future endeavors

On whether the recovered Y2 booster will be reused in a subsequent launch, Huang Cheng, deputy project manager for the ZQ 3 series, said the decision will depend primarily on its structural integrity and overall airframe safety after recovery.

"Engineers will conduct an initial inspection at the landing site. The booster will then be transported back to LandSpace's manufacturing facility in Zhejiang province for disassembly, where its engines will be removed for comprehensive examination and testing. Necessary component replacements will be carried out during the process," he said, adding that the final decision on reusing the booster will be made after all test results are reviewed.

According to Huang, the ZQ 3 production facility in Zhejiang is highly automated and features China's first laser welding system capable of putting together rocket bodies. Once mass production is ramped up, the facility will have an annual production capacity of eight to 10 rockets in the ZQ 3 series.

In the near future, the ZQ 3 will facilitate China's efforts to build its massive space-based internet networks and other commercial constellations, he said.

Technical specifications from LandSpace reveal that the Y2 rocket used during Wednesday's mission had a diameter of 4.5 meters and weighed about 570 metric tons when fully fueled.

Its first stage was propelled by nine TQ 12A methane engines, while the second stage ran on a TQ 15A methane engine, boasting a liftoff thrust of nearly 770 tons — enough to transport heavy satellites to low-Earth or sun-synchronous orbits. Compared with traditional types of rocket engines that can function only once, a methane engine is reusable and more environmentally friendly.

LandSpace started its research and development of the ZQ 3 model in August 2023, intending to build a reusable liquid-fueled launch vehicle boasting strong carrying capacity but at the same time being low in cost. The company conducted the world's first orbital mission of a methane-propelled launch vehicle in July 2023 with the second flight of its ZQ 2 carrier rocket from the Jiuquan spaceport.

Steered by women



Women drivers pose for a group photo beside vehicles of the "Pink Bus Service" launched on Tuesday in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi government has started the dedicated bus service for women, operated and managed by women drivers, to ensure safe and comfortable journeys for female commuters. Authorities said the service will eventually cover major cities and towns across the country. ABDUL GONI / ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

UAE embargoes Iran over alleged attacks

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

The conflict between the United States and Iran has entered a new phase of political attrition. The United Arab Emirates on Tuesday announced the suspension of all trade and financial dealings with Iran after alleging that two Iranian missiles targeting maritime navigation fell into the sea, a claim immediately rejected by Tehran.

Tuesday's announcement marked the latest UAE countermeasure against Iran, following its ambassador's recall earlier. The move also came after months of relative calm within UAE territory.

"In light of regional escalations ... all trade, commercial exchanges and financial transactions with Iran have been halted until further notice," said Afra Al Hameli, communications director of the UAE's Foreign Ministry, while reaffirming Abu Dhabi's commitment to dialogue-based solutions for regional peace.

The UAE on Tuesday accused Iran of firing two ballistic missiles toward the country, the first such reported incident since May. It later said that the salvo was directed at shipping vessels, as Tehran denied firing missiles at the neighboring country.

"UAE air defenses detected two ballistic missiles launched from Iran toward the country, with the first falling outside the country's territorial waters, while the second fell within the territorial waters," the UAE military said in a statement posted on social media.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei later "categorically dismissed the UAE's claim that Iran had launched a missile toward that country", calling the allegation "harmful" to regional trust and security efforts.

Ali Abdollahi, chief of staff of Iran's armed forces, warned Gulf states on Wednesday against assisting the US military, saying that nothing is "hidden from our eyes".

When the conflict began on Feb 28, the UAE bore the brunt of Iran's attacks, with nearly 3,000 missiles and drones directed at it — more than any other regional country.

The US and Iran remain at odds over the Strait of Hormuz and the terms for ending the conflict, with the future of the talks uncertain after a 60-day negotiating period set under a memorandum of understanding ending on Monday.

In Washington, US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that no Iran-US talks were in the pipeline. He shared a map labeling the strait "NEW US Territory", even as he insisted that the vital waterway remained "open and operating".

Citing multiple US administration officials, CNN reported that Trump had instructed his negotiating team — including Vice-President JD Vance, and envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner — to hold off on engaging with Tehran, despite reports of preliminary positive-toned exchanges.

However, Iran said that it will not reopen the strait until Washington meets a sweeping list of demands, including ending the US blockade of Iran's ports, lifting oil sanctions, unfreezing Iranian assets and paying for war damages.

"I want to state clearly that the Strait of Hormuz will not be opened until the American commitments stipulated in the memorandum of understanding ... are implemented," Speaker of the Iranian Parliament Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said in a speech broadcast on state television.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that the US is now "begging" to negotiate on Tehran's conditions after failing to force it to surrender.

Control of the waterway, which Iran has effectively closed since the conflict began, remains at the heart of the deadlock between Tehran and Washington. In peacetime, nearly a fifth of the world's oil passes through the chokepoint.

Trump threatened on Monday to "bomb" US ally Oman if it interfered with a deal on the Strait of Hormuz.

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Relations: All human civilizations are equal

From page 1

At the time, Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, which argued that future conflicts would be fought between civilizations rather than states, was highly influential.

"History tells us that only through exchanges and mutual learning can a civilization be filled with vitality," Xi said. "If all civilizations can uphold inclusiveness, the so-called 'clash of civilizations' will be out of the question, and the harmony of civilizations will become a reality."

Xi's speech made a significant impression on those involved in international policymaking. The message was strong and clear, and was widely heard.

Today, as the world faces growing divisions rooted in profound misunderstandings, Xi's message continues to be relevant. These divisions often stem from the inability of the former "global center" to recognize the emergence of a new multipolar world in which every country has a voice.

UNESCO was founded in 1945 on the conviction that wars begin not only on battlefields. Its Constitution states: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." If ignorance, intolerance and hatred contribute to conflict, then education, science and culture must become instruments of peace.

While political agreements may be negotiated within months, changing mentalities requires generations. Xi's message at UNESCO was not only an invitation to dialogue, but also a call to embrace several fundamental principles: "Civilizations are equal, and such equality has made exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations possible. All human civilizations are equal in terms of value. They all have their respective strengths and shortcomings. There is no perfect civilization in the world. Nor is there a civilization that is devoid of any merit. No one civilization can be judged superior to another."

Xi has developed a cohesive system of approaches and solutions through his four global initiatives (the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative), forming a coherent concept of international relations.

The Global Civilization Initiative, first proposed in 2023, promotes cultural exchange, mutual learning and the rejection of attempts to impose development and governance models based on Western ideology. It proposes cooperation among civilizations as the foundation of a more stable international order.

On the eve of the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China, on Sept 30, 2024, after the ceremony at which I received the Chinese Government Friendship Award, I had the privilege of attending Xi's address in the Great Hall of the People. His message was directed not only to the Chinese people, but to the international community as a whole. Xi stressed that humanity lives on the same planet and that all nations of the world have an equal right to determine the future of the planet and share the achievements of global progress.

These principles were encapsulated in the Global Governance Initiative announced on Sept 1, 2025.

As Xi stated, "All countries, regardless of size, strength and wealth, are equal participants, decision-makers and beneficiaries in global governance. There should be no double standards, and the house rules of a few countries must not be imposed upon others."

For a country that has emerged as a global leader in economic and social development, advocating equality rather than privilege reflects both confidence and responsibility. On the other hand, the United States' approach to international cooperation is fundamentally different.

This year's US Presidential Memorandum directed federal agencies to stop participation in and funding for 31 UN entities considered contrary to US interests.

Xi's historic visit to UNESCO in March 2014 paved the way for cultural protection and dialogue among civilizations. This year, Xiamen, Fujian province, will host the 21st session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage from Nov 30 to Dec 5, reflecting China's growing contribution to global governance.

The author is former head of the Asia-Pacific Unit, Sector for Priority Africa and External Relations at UNESCO and a recipient of the 2024 Chinese Government Friendship Award. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

More firms to benefit from AEO program

Importance of certification for smoother cross-border trade highlighted at seminar

By ZHONG NAN in Dalian, Liaoning *zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn*

China will expand its pool of companies certified under the Authorized Economic Operator program and broaden mutual recognition arrangements with Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation economies to help more businesses benefit from streamlined cross-border trade procedures, customs officials said on Wednesday.

Speaking at a seminar organized by the General Administration of Customs during the ongoing third APEC Senior Officials' Meeting in Dalian, Liaoning province, they said these measures would make AEO certification a stronger tool for supporting smaller businesses, boosting participation in trade and fostering a more open, inclusive and resilient Asia-Pacific trading environment.

The AEO program, promoted by the World Customs Organization, is designed to strengthen international supply chain security and facilitate the movement of legitimate goods.

Under the program, customs authorities work with businesses to streamline customs procedures and improve the efficiency of international trade.

Lazzat Daniyarova, a technical officer at the Brussels-based World Customs Organization, said that integrating more small- and medium-sized enterprises into AEO programs would make the system more inclusive and give smaller businesses greater access to secure trade and sustainable growth opportunities.

Lin Jiantian, director of the GAC's department of enterprise management and audit-based control, said China will pursue mutual AEO recognition with more economies to enable businesses across the Asia-Pacific to benefit from faster and more efficient customs clearance.

All APEC economies except Papua New Guinea have AEO programs in place. China has established mutual recognition arrangements with 10 of them, including Australia, Singapore and South Korea.

China's AEO-certified companies recorded 16.76 trillion yuan ($2.49 trillion) in foreign trade in the first seven months of 2026, accounting for 44.2 percent of the country's total, up 5.77 percentage points from a year earlier.

Meanwhile, their trade with other APEC economies rose 21.87 percent year-on-year to 9.19 trillion yuan.

The GAC said Chinese customs officials will also hold discussions with their counterparts from Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam, as well as representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat, to accelerate AEO mutual recognition and identify priorities for the next phase of cooperation.

Olgun Basel, supply chain director at Einhell Germany AG, a German industrial goods trading company based in Shanghai, said the company's import clearance times have fallen by 80 percent since it gained AEO certification in February.

Basel said that preparing for AEO certification also prompted the company to improve internal controls, documentation and risk management, helping to optimize its operations and build trust with customers in overseas markets.

China had more than 15,450 AEO-certified companies as of the end of July and has signed 34 mutual recognition agreements covering 60 countries and regions.

China is hosting the third APEC Senior Officials' Meeting in Dalian from Monday through Aug 28, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Newlyweds attend a group wedding ceremony during the Qixi Festival on Wednesday in Qujing, Yunnan province. SUN WENLAI / XINHUA

Qixi: Different age groups add to the spending spree

From page 1

A free group wedding was also organized in Gusu district in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. The event offered free styling, photography and a traditional ceremony.

The district also rolled out a series of romantic experiences to fuel the "sweet economy", according to the Jiangsu provincial civil affairs department.

At the Suji Ancient Town in Leshan, Sichuan, on Saturday, visitors tried their hand at a Qixi needle-threading ritual.

He Qicong, an associate professor at Beijing Normal University's Institute of Culture Innovation and Communication, said traditional festivals have always provided an opportunity for people to connect with their cultural roots.

"Emulating ancestors is not just a revival of old customs," she said. "What lies beneath this value system is the ancient view of life."

Nighttime outings have become one of the most popular ways to celebrate Qixi. According to Tongcheng Travel, an online travel agency, evening ticket sales at domestic scenic spots on Qixi day rose more than 50 percent compared with the daily average.

Qixi also prompted many to head out on weekend trips. Online travel agency Tuniu said that families accounted for more than 60 percent of travelers.

Tongcheng Travel revealed that since the beginning of August, travelers age 55 and above have accounted for nearly 40 percent of package-tour bookings on its platform, up about 6 percentage points year-on-year.

He of Beijing Normal University said the festival resonates with people of all ages.

"To young couples, Qixi symbolizes enduring love. For women, Qixi carries the tradition of seeking skills. For the elderly, Qixi evokes a vision of family harmony. A festival that touches every generation, arriving in splendid midsummer when the land is lush, spurs consumption across all age groups," she said.

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WORLD

Analysts see opportunities for ASEAN

Forum discusses potential benefits for region amid geopolitical rivalry

By **YANG WANLI** in Bangkok
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The global order is entering a period of profound transformation, marked by intensifying geopolitical rivalry, economic fragmentation, and the rise of the Global South, which offers challenges and opportunities for Southeast Asia, according to a recent seminar.

Experts said the key question for the region is how the Association of Southeast Asian Nations can preserve its centrality and turn disruption into an opportunity to shape a more inclusive regional order.

They were speaking at the 13th Chula-ASEAN Dialogue — themed "The Once and Future ASEAN: Global Shifts, Institutional Agility, and the Path to 2045" — on Tuesday at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand.

"The decline of Western dominance is inevitable and not synonymous with the end of Western civilization," said Amitav Acharya, distinguished professor of international relations at the School of International Service at American University.

Rather than viewing the transition as a contest between the West and the rest, Acharya argued that the changing balance of power could be an opportunity to build a more pluralistic international system drawing on the contributions of different civilizations.

"The contemporary world order is a shared creation across multiple civilizations, not dominated by any single country or region," Acharya said, emphasizing that interdependence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, institutions and free trade have evolved as globally shared principles rather than the exclusive products of the West.

That perspective is particularly relevant to ASEAN, a region positioned at the intersection of major powers and increasingly influenced by the rise of emerging economies.

"For ASEAN, the more consequential question is whether a fragmented world can still sustain cooperation, and how to maintain strategic autonomy while avoiding a fragmented regional environment in which countries are pressured to choose sides," he said.

Piti Srisangnam, executive director of the ASEAN Foundation, described the current environment as one of unprecedented uncertainty driven by geopolitical rivalries, economic fragmentation, supply-chain restructuring, climate disruptions, and rapid digital transformation.

"Rather than resisting change, we anchor our resilience in openness, inclusivity, and cooperative frameworks," Piti said, arguing that ASEAN's strength lies in its ability to remain cohesive, relevant, and forward-looking.

He said the emphasis on openness comes as globalization itself becomes increasingly fragmented.

At the same time, other experts argued that Southeast Asia's economic integration has become more complicated as some countries deepen their ties with major partners while navigating competing regional frameworks.

Suthiphand Chirathivat, former executive director of the ASEAN Studies Center at Chulalongkorn University, said: "Many ASEAN countries are pursuing a 'dual-track' strategy, seeking market access and investment without fully aligning with either side (China and the US)."

Arthayudh Srisamoot, a former adviser to Thailand's minister of foreign affairs, said ASEAN should strengthen both internal cohesion and its external strategic presence.

Rather than replicating the European Union's model of deep integration, he said the bloc should focus on practical connectivity, intra-regional trade, and unified positions on regional frameworks and agreements such as the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

"ASEAN must strengthen both internal cohesion and external strategic presence," Arthayudh said, adding that the bloc needs faster and more coordinated mechanisms to address nontraditional threats such as climate change, transboundary environmental problems, and public health crises.

Broadening partnerships

Experts said ASEAN's future prosperity will also depend on how successfully it broadens its economic partnerships.

The traditional markets of the US, the European Union, and Japan will remain important, Arthayudh said.

However, he also urged ASEAN to actively engage emerging partners — including China, Russia, India, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America — through targeted investment, technical cooperation, and infrastructure development.

Meanwhile, for China — a major country in the Global South and one of ASEAN's biggest trading partners — the changing world order presents both a responsibility and an opportunity, according to Acharya.

He suggested that China should serve as a constructive bridge between the existing international order and an emerging, more pluralistic one.

Acharya said this should involve not only infrastructure initiatives, but also help in contributing ideas, strengthening global governance, supporting humanitarian efforts, and expanding participation in multilateral institutions.

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Cultural bridge



A visitor views an artwork at an exhibition held at the National History Museum of the Kyrgyz Republic in Bishkek on Tuesday. The exhibition, which opened this month, will run until November. XINHUA

Malaysian PM backs one-China principle

By **ZHANG YUNBI**
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As Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim voiced unequivocal support for the one-China principle and China's reunification in a recent media interview, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said that China "commends" the Malaysian leader's remarks.

In a video interview with Al Jazeera released on Sunday, the Malaysian leader said, "I see Taiwan as part of China, period … It is one China. It is accepted by all."

When asked about his view on China not committing to renouncing the use of force, Anwar responded by drawing an analogy with Malaysia.

"If one province decides to break away, do we use force?" Anwar was quoted as saying. "I think I will protect the sanctity and unity of the nation."

At a daily news conference in Beijing on Wednesday, Lin, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, said, "China commends Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's remarks."

"Upholding the one-China principle is where public opinion trends and the right thing to do," he said in response to a question about the interview with Anwar.

"The international community's commitment to the one-China principle is not to be shaken," he added.

In the interview, the Malaysian prime minister also lashed out at the double standards adopted by some Western countries against China.

"When it comes to China, it's hypocrisy. You don't talk about many countries in Europe breaking up, or within the US, or Africa … but you focus only on China," he said.

Condemning the attempts to lend support to "Taiwan independence" forces, Anwar criticized such a way of "condoning an attempt to break up a legitimate independent country". "I don't accept that," he said.

On Wednesday, Lin, the spokesman, stressed at the news conference that "there is but one China in the world, and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory".

"China must and will achieve reunification. This will not be stopped," he said.

Medical bond



A Chinese doctor talks with Cameroonian medical staff members at the Yaounde Women's and Children's Hospital in Cameroon on Tuesday. Since 1975, North China's Shanxi province has sent 25 medical teams totaling 811 medical personnel to Cameroon. XINHUA

Joint effort sought for Libya resolution

By **SHI GUANG** in New York
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A Chinese envoy to the United Nations said that the international community must work toward a comprehensive and fundamental solution to the issues facing Libya and its long-delayed elections.

"Sincere dialogue is needed to break the political deadlock," Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said at a Security Council briefing on Libya on Tuesday.

Elections in Libya have been continuously postponed over the past years due to fractures in government institutions that have triggered ongoing conflict over legitimacy and authority.

"The Libyan parties concerned should fully recognize that the division of state institutions and repeated postponement of elections are detrimental to the country's long-term development and the vital interests of the Libyan people," Fu said.

"China calls on all parties, with the support of the United Nations, to intensify consultations, bridge their differences, and reach agreement as soon as possible on the relevant matters set out in the road map, thereby paving the way for national elections," he said.

The UN-recognized Government of National Unity, based in the capital, Tripoli, has been locked in conflict with a rival authority based in the east of the country, backed by the House of Representatives and the Libyan National Army.

Fu said that the United Nations Support Mission in Libya should maintain dialogue between the country's major political factions.

"The United Nations should continue to play a central role in mediating the Libyan issue. Efforts by countries outside the region should uphold the Libyan-led and Libyan-owned principle, and fully respect Libya's national conditions and the will of its people," Fu said.

The ceasefire deal from nearly 6 years ago between the parties needs to be preserved, Fu said, despite recent outbreaks of violence and targeted drone attacks on oil refineries.

"This not only threatens the safety of civilians, but could also disrupt energy supplies and affect people's lives and livelihoods. China is deeply concerned about these developments. We urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint and cease all violent attacks. We support the Libyan authorities in investigating the relevant attacks and holding those responsible accountable," Fu said.

"Civilian safety and the security of critical infrastructure, including energy facilities, must be effectively protected. The 2020 ceasefire agreement remains an important foundation for maintaining Libya's overall stability. The parties in eastern and western Libya should fully implement the agreement, strengthen dialogue, consolidate mutual trust, and advance the unification of military and security institutions of the eastern and western sides," he said.

Public governance

Public governance must be improved to enhance people's well-being, Fu said, adding that the country continues to face significant challenges, including fiscal deficits, inflation and fuel shortages, which are detrimental to sound economic development and lasting social stability.

"Libya stands at a critical crossroads. The international community should genuinely respect Libya's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, uphold objectivity and impartiality, step up mediation, and play a constructive role with a genuine commitment to Libya's peace, stability and the well-being of its people.

"As a good friend of Libya, China stands ready to continue working with the international community to make greater contributions to advancing a political settlement of the Libyan issue and promoting lasting peace and stability in Libya," Fu said.

China calls for unity, improved methods at UNSC

By **MINLU ZHANG**
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China on Wednesday called on members of the UN Security Council to "strengthen unity and cooperation, build broader consensus and improve the council's working methods" so that it can more effectively fulfill its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

Speaking at a Security Council meeting on working methods, Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said the effectiveness of the council bears directly on the authority and credibility of the United Nations as well as the prospects for international peace and security.

"Working methods are an important safeguard for the Security Council in fulfilling its responsibilities and have never been merely a technical issue," Fu said, adding that they should be continuously improved from the broader perspective of maintaining international peace and security.

"Unity and cooperation are the source of vitality for multilateral mechanisms and should always remain the most fundamental working method of the Security Council," Fu said.

Whether dealing with substantive or procedural matters, council members should "respect one another, engage in full consultations, properly manage differences and make every effort to seek consensus", Fu said.

Fu warned against pushing draft resolutions to a vote when major disagreements remain. "(This) not only deepens divisions within the council, but also greatly weakens the political weight and effectiveness of the resolutions themselves," Fu said.

On sanctions, peacekeeping and other tools available to the council, Fu said their value should ultimately be measured by whether they contribute to political solutions.

"The effectiveness of Security Council meetings, outcomes, and tools such as sanctions and peacekeeping should be judged by whether they proceed from realities and constructively advance the political settlement of hotspot issues," Fu said.

The council should also fully respect the sovereignty and ownership of the countries concerned and exercise caution in the use of coercive measures, including sanctions and the use of force, Fu said.

On UN political and peacekeeping missions, Fu said they should focus on their core mandates, maintain close cooperation with host countries and adjust their mandates and deployments according to conditions and needs on the ground.

"The transition and withdrawal of missions should be carried out in a smooth and orderly manner so as to avoid shocks to the situation on the ground," Fu said.

Fu also called for more practical steps to improve the efficiency of the council, including reducing repetitive meetings, making greater use of informal consultations where appropriate, and producing more concise and focused outcome documents.

Fu also urged the council to improve the selection of civil society briefers to ensure that their participation is objective, impartial and substantively useful to discussions.

Fu reiterated the Security Council's central role in the international collective security architecture, saying its status and role are "irreplaceable".

"A united and effective Security Council meets the needs of world peace and stability and serves the common interests of the broad membership of the United Nations," Fu said.

He urged the international community to oppose "illegal unilateral actions that bypass the Security Council and undermine the role of the United Nations".

Permanent members of the Security Council, in particular, should take the lead in upholding fairness and justice and "demonstrate the responsibility expected of major countries", Fu said.

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WORLD

US-ROK drills halved after Trump order

Exercises cut to 5 days, signaling possible shift in White House's approach to DPRK

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong
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The Republic of Korea and the United States have cut the duration of their annual joint military exercise roughly in half following an order from US President Donald Trump.

The Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise, originally scheduled to run for 11 days through Aug 27, will now last five days and conclude on Aug 21 at the request of the US, Yonhap News Agency reported on Wednesday, citing the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff.

UFS is a summertime exercise involving command post and field training. The two countries label it as an effort to strengthen their combined defense posture and response capabilities.

The scale of this year's drills will also be adjusted, Seoul said.

"The ROK and the US agreed to discuss and carry out various measures going forward to achieve the objectives of the UFS exercise and establish a robust combined defense posture," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

On Sunday, Trump said he had instructed Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth to "substantially reduce" the joint military exercises with the ROK, citing his friendly relationship with Kim Jong-un, top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The US Department of Defense said the adjustments would not degrade the exercise's training objectives.

ROK Foreign Minister Cho Hyun said on Wednesday that the government had not been informed in advance of Trump's directive to scale back the drills. However, he said the move did not amount to a unilateral notification as the defense minister had been involved in the discussions.

Chung Dong-young, the ROK's unification minister, also expressed support for Trump's order. "I hope this leads to dialogue between the US and the DPRK and further extends to improved inter-Korean ties," he was quoted by Yonhap as saying.

Lam Peng Er, head of the Korea Centre and principal research fellow at the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore, told China Daily that Trump was essentially sending Kim a strong signal in hopes of reviving their in-person engagement.

Trump's desire to re-engage with the DPRK leader is also driven by his eagerness for a major foreign policy breakthrough in his second term, especially amid his frustration over the situation in the Middle East, Lam said.

During his first term from 2017 to 2021, Trump met Kim three times: in Singapore in 2018 for their historic first summit, in Vietnam in 2019, and at the Korean Demilitarized Zone later that year in an impromptu third meeting.

Following the 2018 summit, Trump also suspended and scaled back joint military exercises with the ROK.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday that Trump is pushing aides for a meeting with Kim as soon as this fall. Trump has privately discussed holding the meeting during his next trip to Asia, which "could happen in November", the Journal reported, citing US officials.

Stronger position

However, with the DPRK now in a stronger economic and diplomatic position than during Trump's first term, Lam said the US will need to offer more tangible incentives to bring Pyongyang back to the negotiating table, including lifting sanctions.

It will also be important for the US to work with China and Russia in the process, he said.

Park Won-gon, a professor of DPRK studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul, told Agence France-Presse that scaling back the exercises could improve prospects for US-DPRK dialogue.

Suspending US-ROK joint exercises has always been a prerequisite for the DPRK to engage in dialogue with the US, he said.

In February, Kim said his country could get along with the US if Washington respects its current status and drops the "hostile policy".

While the DPRK has made no official statement on Trump's overture, the Korean Central News Agency commented on Wednesday that the UFS exercise poses the most immediate and open threat to the DPRK and regional security.

The DPRK will continue to exercise its right to self-defense and counter "threatening maneuvers", it said.

Highland harvest



Sheep farmers gather at an auction for the sale of hill ewes and wether lambs on Tuesday in Lairg, Scotland. The annual event is one of Europe's largest one-day sales of hill sheep. JEFF J MITCHELL VIA GETTY IMAGES

Trump's 3-day tariff pause a reprieve, not a solution, experts say

By **YANG GAO** in Toronto
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US President Donald Trump's decision to pause new 50 percent tariffs on Canadian goods for three days offers Canada temporary relief but is unlikely to resolve deeper trade tensions between the two countries, experts said.

Trump said on Tuesday night that Canada and the United States had reached a deal, subject to the finalization of documents, and that he had paused the tariffs that were due to take effect on Wednesday.

The move came as the two countries remained engaged in intensive trade negotiations, with Canada seeking relief from existing US tariffs while Washington pushed for greater access to the Canadian market.

Ronald Stagg, a history professor at Toronto Metropolitan University and an expert on Canadian-American relations, said the emerging deal would likely address several issues that have drawn the Trump administration's attention.

He said the issues could include access to Canada's alcohol market, greater access for US dairy products, and potentially restrictions on Canadian vehicles and vehicle parts entering the United States.

"The latest 'deal,' as Trump would call it, should it be finalized, will likely address some of the sectors that most annoy the Trump government," Stagg told China Daily.

In return, Canada would likely seek reductions in US tariffs on steel, aluminum and softwood lumber, as well as some relief for its auto industry, he said.

But Stagg said Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's government was facing a difficult balancing act as it sought to reach an agreement with Washington without appearing to give too much ground at home.

"The Carney government is walking a fine line in these negotiations," Stagg said. "While hoping to give enough to please the American government, it must be seen by the Canadian people to have achieved a fair deal for Canada."

> "No longer can Canada count on the United States as a friendly trade partner."
>
> **Ronald Stagg,**
> history professor at Toronto Metropolitan University

He said there was already a perception in Canada that the country had "given up a substantial amount to the Americans".

Julian Castro-Rea, a political science professor at the University of Alberta, said the dispute reflected broader challenges in Canada-US trade relations.

He argued that Trump's tariff policy had disrupted a deeply integrated North American production and investment system.

"He threw a monkey wrench into a trade, production and investment system between the two countries that was working reasonably well," Castro-Rea told China Daily.

Castro-Rea also challenged the argument that Canada was taking advantage of the United States through its trade surplus, saying that many Canadian products sold in the United States contain US-made components.

"The argument that Canada is taking advantage of the US by enjoying a trade surplus — the main motivation for the tariff dispute — is ludicrous, since most 'Canadian' finished products sold in the US incorporate a large number of components made in the US," he said.

He pointed to the auto industry as a particularly clear example, noting that vehicles assembled in Canada depend heavily on parts produced in the United States and Mexico.

"Therefore, the issue of tariffs is raised for political reasons alone, as an attempt to score points for Trump's MAGA coalition political brand," Castro-Rea said.

Castro-Rea said the measures would hurt targeted Canadian industries but also create costs for Americans because tariffs are paid by US importers.

"It highlights the paradox of the tariff war launched by Washington: increased tariffs hurt the Canadian economy but also the US economy," he said.

"For starters, increased tariffs are paid by US importers, not Canadian exporters. Those extra costs are then transferred to US consumers, thus making ordinary citizens in that country pay for the trade war," he said.

He added that the integration of the two economies meant some US industries would also be directly affected by higher tariffs.

Both experts noted that the three-day pause should not be viewed as an end to the broader dispute.

Stagg said it was "highly unlikely" that any agreement would resolve all the issues between the two countries.

"Donald Trump is likely to continue saying that Canada is 'ripping off' the United States, while Canada is going to want to eliminate most American tariffs.

"This deal is likely to be seen by both governments as an interim solution. Friction will remain," Stagg said.

Castro-Rea was even more skeptical about the durability of any agreement reached under the Trump administration.

Nothing is a lasting solution under the Trump administration in any policy field, including foreign and defense policies, he said.

"Experience has shown by now that any government decision can be reverted or changed under the authority of this unpredictable leader," Castro-Rea said.

Stagg said Canada's approach to trade with Washington had already changed fundamentally under Trump.

"No longer can Canada count on the United States as a friendly trade partner," he said.

Canada cannot simply walk away from its largest trading partner, however, he said.

"While the Canadian government tries to reorient as much trade as possible, it is going to have to live with the new uncertainty in dealing with the United States," Stagg said.

Castro-Rea, however, viewed the longer-term impact differently.

"I believe the current tariff controversy is only a temporary blip in Canada-US trade and economic relations," he said.

China auto giant Chery expands in UK market

By **JONATHAN POWELL**
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Chinese automaker Chery plans to open a research and development center in the United Kingdom for passenger vehicles, expanding the market footprint of its Omoda and Jaecoo brands.

The move comes as the company accelerates its push into Europe, with demand for its vehicles continuing to surge.

Chery rolled out the Lepas brand in February, developed specifically for European buyers. In June, it signed a deal with Nissan to assemble its vehicles at the Japanese carmaker's plant in Sunderland, England.

The company confirmed on Wednesday that its new research and development center will be based at UTAC Millbrook — the vehicle development and testing hub in Bedfordshire, England — and is slated to open later this year.

Chery said the center's initial work will focus on fine-tuning the company's cars for UK driving conditions, expanding over time to autonomous driving and AI. The Bedfordshire area is a hub for engineering and motorsport, hosting several automotive R&D centers.

Gary Lan, chief executive of Chery International UK, said the launch of a passenger car R&D center would be a key milestone in localizing operations, with UK manufacturing to follow.

"We waited over 20 years for the right time to enter this market, and our ambition has always gone much further than simply bringing vehicles here," Lan said in a statement.

"UTAC Millbrook allows us to turn UK customer insight into product development, from ride and steering to active safety systems," he added.

The group did not specify how much it would invest in the facility, or how many jobs may be created, but said it has long-term plans to hire local talent and create new, high-skilled roles at the center.

Kirsty Andrew, vice-president of UTAC UK, said: "This is about much more than testing individual vehicles. We see this as the sustained momentum of a long-term engineering relationship with Chery Automobile."

Last month, Chery sold roughly 280,000 vehicles worldwide, with exports of about 202,000 — up 70 percent year-on-year — making it the first Chinese automaker to ship more than 200,000 in a single month.

Deadly blaze



Civil defense personnel stand at the site of a hotel fire on Wednesday in Kolkata, India. The blaze broke out around 2:50 am on the second floor of the hotel, killing nine people, including a child, according to fire authorities. DIBYANGSHU SARKAR / AFP

Briefly

CROATIA

Ukrainian arrested over Nord Stream sabotage

A Ukrainian man was arrested on Wednesday in Croatia in connection with the 2022 undersea explosions that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines between Russia and Germany, German prosecutors said. Ukrainian national Vladimir Z., whose last name was not given in line with German privacy rules, was arrested in Pula, Croatia, by local police acting on a European arrest warrant. The trained scuba diver "is strongly suspected of jointly causing explosions", prosecutors said. The man was part of a group that sabotaged the pipelines near the Danish island of Bornholm, they alleged.

INTL CRIMINAL COURT

Washington criticized for sanctions on court

The International Criminal Court on Wednesday slammed the latest United States sanctions targeting senior ICC staff, including its president, calling them a "flagrant attack" on the court's independence. The US imposed sanctions on ICC President Tomoko Akane of Japan and senior trial lawyer Abdoulaye Seye of Senegal on Tuesday, as part of Washington's campaign against what it calls a "corrupt and fatally politicized" body. "These sanctions are a flagrant attack against the independence of an impartial judicial institution," the court, based in The Hague, said. Japan's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday described the US move as "very unfortunate". In twin statements on X, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa said they "stand firmly" with the ICC's president and top officials, which "must be able to act independently and without external pressure".

AGENCIES — XINHUA

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COMMENT

Editorials

Real story isn't individual breakthroughs, it's the whole ecosystem that cultivates them

It is an incontrovertible fact that China is becoming increasingly adept at translating technological ideas into real-world applications. This was underscored on Wednesday by three concurrent developments: Unitree Robotics' stock market debut in Shanghai, the opening of the 2026 World Robot Conference in Beijing, and the first successful land-based recovery of the first stage of the reusable Zhuque-3 rocket.

Interestingly, ahead of its listing, a report by Reuters framed Unitree's success as the result of allegedly "using" US military-funded research. Reuters touted itself as the first outlet to "detail connections" between Unitree's designs and a US Army program.

According to US researchers and former officials who spoke to Reuters — without offering any verifiable technical proof — some of Unitree's robots allegedly "draw on" breakthroughs in quadruped movement financed by the US DEVCOM Army Research Laboratory and other military programs.

That is precisely where the story takes an intriguing and questionable turn. China's advantage is not in "copying". It is an entire ecosystem: enormous manufacturing capacity, dense supplier networks, huge domestic market, abundant engineering talent, affordable component costs, patient capital and a government willing to make long-term inputs.

That ecosystem also has an unusual feature: It was built under pressure.

For years, some Western governments have restricted Chinese access to advanced semiconductors, equipment, software and other technologies. The response was not the intended technological paralysis. It was accelerated localization, diversification and improvisation. Pressure has made China's innovation system more adaptive and resilient.

At this week's 2026 World Robot Conference, more than 300 exhibitors are showcasing more than 2,000 products, with more than 150 making their global debut. Many of them are Chinese. The Chinese robotics industry is moving from robot gymnastics to practical applications in factories, warehouses, logistics and services. Unitree itself has become a symbol of that transition.

The same pattern is visible in AI. Alibaba's new lightweight AI model Qwen3.8-27B has matched much larger near-frontier rivals while being able to run on everyday hardware. The Qwen3.8-27B, a small model with 27 billion parameters, performed on par with OpenAI's GPT-5.6 Luna, which was billed as the most cost-efficient model in the US lab's latest flagship series, benchmark firm Artificial Analysis said on Monday.

Hugging Face's latest analysis points to Chinese models becoming influential in the global open-model community. Qwen has reportedly accumulated more than 151,000 derivative models on Hugging Face — far more than the combined derivatives of Meta's models. The point is that more and more developers treat Chinese models as building blocks rather than merely products to be consumed.

The AI revolution itself is making the old logic of technological containment harder to sustain. Open-source models spread. Engineers collaborate. Developers modify other people's work. Breakthroughs increasingly emerge from networks rather than laboratories operating behind walls. China is simply becoming very good at making innovations and promoting applications in the new technology revolution.

The country's paradigm combines market incentives with public investment and long-term industrial strategy. Its success comes from connecting research, manufacturing, capital, talent and markets at extraordinary scale.

There is also a larger philosophical question. Technology can be treated as a weapon, a monopoly or a public resource. China has presented openness and cooperation as part of its technological strategy. The global adoption of Chinese open-source models demonstrates that the approach has real appeal.

The real story of China's breakthroughs is the whole ecosystem that connects robots, rocket recovery and AI models.

Western countries may attempt to slow individual Chinese breakthroughs through export controls and technology bans. But they cannot cripple the Chinese innovation ecosystem itself, because its underlying engine — economies of scale, engineering talent, industrial depth, market demand and relentless iteration — will only grow more adaptive and more powerful under pressure. When the going gets tough, the tough get going.

The sensible response is not denial or panic. It is cooperation and competition.

Smearing every Chinese breakthrough as a "theft" or "threat" does not make the breakthrough disappear. It only makes the person doing that look increasingly out of touch with the future.

Mexico should handle trade issues prudently

The Mexican government is reportedly exploring the possibility of further expanding the trade restrictions and raising tariffs on certain imported goods, while continuing case-by-case investigations into alleged "dumping" by China and other countries. In January, Mexico imposed tariffs of up to 50 percent on approximately 1,500 products from nations with which it does not have a free trade agreement, a policy that has directly impacted China.

Bilateral economic cooperation is based on international rules and market principles, with mutual benefit as its defining characteristic. Politicizing economic issues serves no one's interests. Mexico should think twice before moving forward with the new trade restrictions.

The move comes as Mexico is seeking to persuade the United States to lower tariffs on its automotive and steel products and to secure more favorable rules of origin during the ongoing review of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. By increasing trade barriers against Chinese goods and strengthening origin and anti-transshipment controls, Mexico aims to demonstrate to Washington that it is not a "backdoor" for Chinese products entering the US market, thereby enhancing its bargaining power in the USMCA negotiations.

The proposed tariff hikes seem like an attempt to appease the US, while targeting Chinese goods perceived to be direct competitors to domestic industries. But Mexican manufacturing is highly dependent on Chinese intermediate goods, components and equipment. If Mexico raises import tariffs on Chinese goods and expands trade remedies such as "antidumping" and "countervailing" duties, the cost of Chinese goods entering the Mexican market will rise further, potentially leading to a contraction in the bilateral trade volume.

Mexico would be effectively shooting itself in the foot to please the US, only to find that the bullet is paid for by higher costs for its own consumers and a less competitive export sector.

Tariff protection alone does not automatically translate into stronger domestic competitiveness. Mexico's real bottlenecks are its domestic supplier base, technological capabilities, energy and power infrastructure, shortage of skilled labor and weak research and development capacity.

Beijing has consistently maintained that trade wars benefit no one while repeatedly emphasizing that China and Mexico are partners not rivals. China is Mexico's second-largest trading partner, while Mexico ranks as China's second-largest trading partner in Latin America. In recent years, the economic relationship has deepened from the trade in goods to industry chain collaboration and production capacity cooperation.

Even if Mexico yields to US pressure and works hand in glove with it to target Chinese industries, there is no guarantee it will gain more leverage in the USMCA negotiations. This week's tough tariff negotiations between the US and Canada have laid bare a stark truth: the US views its two neighbors not as partners, but as free-riders who have been taking advantage of it for too long.

China reserves the right to take corresponding measures to safeguard its interests. A trade and investment barrier investigation launched by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce in September last year concluded in March that Mexico's tariff policies constitute investment barriers that restrict market access for Chinese enterprises.

China opposes unilateral tariff hikes in all forms, and has urged Mexico to correct its wrong practices of unilateralism and protectionism at an early date. The path forward lies not in erecting barriers, but in embracing openness, cooperation, and a competitive dynamism that drives genuine industrial progress.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Some in Australia trying to shoo its golden goose away

Australia, under the Anthony Albanese government, is proving to be a textbook case of what happens to countries when anxiety masquerades as strategy. The latest symptom is Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong's intervention to pressure the Australian National University and the University of Queensland to sever academic ties with Shandong University and the Chinese Academy of Sciences respectively.

Given the Pentagon's recent campaign to pressure universities in the United States to cut research collaborations with China, it is highly questionable whether Canberra's latest action is entirely its own — or whether it reflects pressure from Washington.

This is reminiscent of a scene in the Australian satirical sitcom *Utopia*, in which officials are discussing spending billions to protect Australia's trade routes, only to acknowledge that the country's biggest trading partner is China. "So we're spending close to $30 billion a year to protect our trade with China ... from China?" asks a bewildered character.

The problem is that Canberra seems increasingly determined to turn this joke into policy. Wong, once regarded as a pragmatist, is now helping dismantle Australia's academic links with China — amid a political climate in which "national security" has become a blank check for bureaucratic vandalism. Is Australia protecting its economic interests by frightening its golden goose away?

Chinese students are a financial pillar of the university sector in Australia. Statistics show that Chinese enrollments reached 192,225 in 2025, accounting for 23 percent of Australia's international students, generating A$12.7 billion ($8.98 billion) in economic activity. Across New South Wales, without Chinese enrollments, the sector's A$583 million surplus would be a A$1.754 billion deficit.

Between January and April 2026, Chinese applications for degree-level student visas fell 32 percent from the average for the same period in 2023-25. Higher-education applications plunged 39 percent, reaching their lowest level in nearly 12 years, according to media reports. Canberra's response? Further alienate Chinese students and researchers by dismantling institutional ties. The message is difficult to misunderstand: Chinese people are welcome as revenue streams, but increasingly suspect as intellectual partners.

The academic squeeze is part of a wider pattern. Take the Port of Darwin. In 2015, the Northern Territory government granted China's Landbridge Group a 99-year lease for A$506 million. The port was loss-making; Landbridge invested heavily and expanded capacity from 16 million to 30 million tonnes. Security reviews found no national-security threat, and a 2023 review saw no need to cancel or alter the lease. Yet in January 2026, citing "national security", the Albanese government announced that Canberra would terminate Landbridge's operating rights.

Washington's subsequent allocation of $1.2 billion to upgrade military facilities at the port only makes the politics more conspicuous. Landbridge has since initiated arbitration at the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes.

Meanwhile, Australia is deepening military cooperation with Japan and the Philippines, including hosting Japanese hypersonic-missile tests on Australian ranges and its participation in the Philippines' largest Balikatan military exercises with the US in decades.

It is crystal clear that Canberra is moving closer to a US-led containment strategy while assuming its economic relationship with China will somehow remain insulated. That assumption is rather *Utopia*-like.

After years of damage by the pro-US Scott Morrison government, China-Australia relations had finally begun to recover thanks to joint efforts by the two sides. Bilateral trade reached A$309 billion in 2025, Chinese tourists returned in force and high-level dialogue resumed. Now Canberra risks squandering that hard-won capital.

Australia's economic interests with China are not something that can be wished away with strategic rhetoric. Iron ore, liquefied natural gas, beef, universities and tourist operators cannot simply be redirected because Washington is pressuring Canberra to choose sides. Nor can US military cooperation compensate for the economic value of a stable relationship with Australia's largest trading partner.

Australia lectures China about a "rules-based order" while repudiating a legally binding 99-year lease. It invokes academic freedom while pressuring universities to sever legitimate partnerships. It worries about foreign influence while deepening dependence on a US security architecture whose strategic priorities are not always in Australia's interests.

A serious national-security policy distinguishes between evidence and suspicion, between espionage and scholarship, between strategic prudence and political theater. Canberra would do well to remember that stable China-Australia relations are not a concession to Beijing. They are an expression of Australian self-interest. The choice is between strategic autonomy and strategic reflex.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Beautiful China plan highlights green governance

Editor's note: *China has released a plan for building a Beautiful China during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period. China Economic Times spoke to Zhou Hongchun, a researcher at the Development Research Center of the State Council, on the significance of the plan. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

As the first five-year plan to focus explicitly on building a Beautiful China, it moves beyond the previous approach that concentrated primarily on pollution control. The plan introduces a new model of coordinated governance covering all regions, environmental elements and stages of development.

In terms of tasks, the focus has shifted to an integrated approach that advances carbon reduction, pollution control, green development and economic growth. The goals have expanded from cleaner air, greener land and clearer water to areas that directly affect people's quality of life and health, including emerging pollutants, noise, ecological security and environmental problems in communities. The emphasis is on comprehensive improvement rather than simply meeting individual standards.

A key objective is to reverse the growth in fossil fuel consumption and promote simultaneous reductions in major pollutants and carbon emissions. The plan envisions a symbiotic relationship between development and environmental protection, using high-quality environmental protection to bolster high-quality development, and vice versa. This integration of the two goals creates a mutually reinforcing virtuous cycle.

From an economic perspective, the new quality productive forces emerging in ecological and environmental protection are themselves a form of green productivity. From being seen as a cost constraint, environmental protection is shifting to become a growth engine. Mechanisms such as carbon markets and green finance can help put this principle into practice by making carbon emissions costlier and carbon reduction more economically rewarding.

There are many opportunities to achieve synergies between pollution reduction and economic growth in the treatment of air, water and soil pollution. The key lies in rethinking these challenges and leveraging innovation, especially disruptive technologies.

Currently, businesses face challenges such as high initial investments, long payback periods, limited returns and policy uncertainty when participating in ecological development. These issues need to be addressed through stronger policy support and well-designed market mechanisms to create long-term incentives for businesses to participate in ecological civilization efforts in ways that are economically viable for them.

Additionally, efforts should be made to remove obstacles that hinder the realization of the value of ecological products. Turning the value of ecological products into tangible economic value is an effective way to shift businesses from passive compliance to active participation in building a Beautiful China.

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VIEWS

Li Jia

Elder-care robots need to start with people

Imagine the future of elder care and it is easy to envision a robot. Perhaps it is humanoid, standing patiently beside an old person, helping the senior get out of bed, carrying a tray, cleaning the floor or leading a morning exercise session.

In a country where the population is growing older and families are getting smaller, this image has obvious appeal.

China is turning that vision into a thriving industry. The country's aging population has created a vast market called the "silver economy", attracting attention from investors and technology companies. Rehabilitation robots help people with limited mobility exercise, while transfer robots handle the heavy lifting that exhausts caregivers.

Other machines clean homes, provide entertainment, play sports with older people or offer massage and other wellness services.

While technology is advancing rapidly, the question is whether our understanding of old age is moving in tandem.

For years, making technology "age-friendly" meant modifying existing products to make them less challenging for elderly users — larger fonts, fewer buttons, higher volume.

Essentially, products designed for everyone else were slightly adjusted before being handed to seniors. This approach now looks outdated.

Seniors don't necessarily need simplified versions of products designed for 30-year-olds. They may need entirely different products. Consider the difference between making a robot easy to operate and making it truly useful in an elderly person's daily life.

An old person may move more slowly, tire more easily or have difficulty with certain kinds of instructions. A caregiver may perform physically demanding tasks several times in a day. A robot that ignores these realities may work perfectly in a laboratory and still fail in a home.

This is where the industry faces a less glamorous challenge than artificial intelligence or advanced robotics: listening.

Surprisingly, we still lack systematic knowledge about what seniors and their caregivers actually need from machines.

Research on everyday care scenarios is limited, and very few engineers have a deep understanding of aging.

There is a simple reason for this: we have all been young, but nobody experiences old age until they reach it.

That creates a peculiar blind spot in product design. Engineers can study how a robot moves, how much weight it can carry and how accurately it recognizes an object.

It is much harder to teach a machine — or its designer — what it feels like to hesitate before standing up from a chair, to feel embarrassed about needing help, or to rely on someone for basic mobility.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

This is why elder-care robotics needs more than better hardware. It demands better fieldwork. A robot intended for a nursing home should not be treated as the one intended for a family apartment.

Companies should spend more time observing actual care delivery, breaking down everyday tasks into their smallest movements and talking to both older people and caregivers. Surveys and interviews are important, but so is observing how people get through an ordinary day.

Rehabilitation robots help people with limited mobility exercise, while transfer robots handle the heavy lifting that exhausts caregivers.

The fundamental questions for companies should be: Who will use this machine? What problem will the robot address? What makes that problem challenging? Is a robot really the best solution?

Answering these questions could save the industry from the expensive mistake of producing impressive machines that search for a market.

Getting a robot into production is only half the job. An elder-care robot is not a refrigerator that can be delivered, plugged in and forgotten.

It enters a person's home, sometimes at a moment of considerable physical vulnerability. An old person needs to know how to use it, caregivers need to know how to maintain it and homes and nursing facilities may need rearranging for the machine to function safely.

Then there is the human aspect. As robots become more capable, some families may start relying on them for tasks once performed by relatives or professional caregivers. This can be useful, but it can also be unsettling.

A machine can remind an old person to take a walk, assist with an exercise routine, or carry something too heavy to lift.

But it should not pretend to be a daughter, a son, a nurse or a friend.

This distinction matters because elder care is not just about physical tasks. It is also about dignity, reassurance and human interaction. The industry will need clear guidelines on privacy, data and the limits of what machines do.

A robot operating in someone's bedroom or living room is not merely an appliance. It has access to intimate details of a person's life.

This is not an argument against robots. In fact, it is quite the opposite. If designed well, robots could make an enormous difference, particularly as societies struggle with fewer caregivers and longer life spans.

But the industry should resist measuring progress by how humanlike a robot looks or how many tasks it can perform.

The more meaningful question is a simpler one: Does the robot make an old person's day easier?

If the answer is yes, elder-care robots have a promising future. The most successful ones will not be the machines that replace people. They will be the ones that quietly take the hardest jobs off their hands, giving caregivers more time to care — and seniors more time to live their lives on their own terms.

The author is deputy head of the Aging Society Research Center at the Pangoal Institution.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Rizwan Basir

Climate adaptation as the next frontier for China

China has done more than any other country to cut the emissions that cause climate change. Now it's time for the country to move to the next chapter of its climate ambition. While there is a flourishing market for mitigation technologies, the world does not have a similar market for adaptation.

Typhoon Bavi made that case in concrete terms this month. As one of the strongest storms to hit China this year, it made two landfalls in Zhejiang province, tore down trees in Yueqing, flooded farmland, and sent boulders crashing onto mountain roads.

People were evacuated, most from one of China's most economically dynamic provinces. In Shanghai, transport was severely disrupted, with some trains and flights canceled.

China's response was swift and effective. The government activated a national emergency response, deployed task forces across affected provinces, and allocated 100 million yuan ($14.76 million) from the central budget for repairs of roads, water infrastructure, schools and hospitals.

Indeed, China's capacity to manage the aftermath of a disaster is formidable. But the crucial question is whether the country is developing the tools to mitigate the severity of such events in the first place.

On cutting emissions, China's record is extraordinary. By the end of 2025, China's total installed renewable energy capacity had reached 2.34 billion kilowatts, and hit its 2030 target of more than 1.2 billion kilowatts of installed wind and solar capacity six years ahead of schedule.

Global Lens

Developing countries from Bangladesh to Brazil are able to deploy clean energy technologies that would have been out of reach without China's contribution.

The country accounts for over 80 percent of global battery production capacity. CATL and BYD together command more than half the global battery market.

This has had a transformative effect on global energy costs. Solar module prices have fallen to levels that seemed implausible a decade ago, largely because of China's manufacturing scale.

Developing countries from Bangladesh to Brazil are able to deploy clean energy technologies that would have been out of reach without China's contribution.

But mitigation is only half the climate equation. The other half is adaptation: the infrastructure, systems, and technologies that enable people and economies to withstand what warming has already made inevitable. This includes flood-resilient construction, early warning systems precise enough to protect lives, climate-smart agriculture and large-scale coastal protection.

On this side of the ledger, the world is underequipped.

China accounts for around 37 percent of global mitigation finance, while adaptation remains significantly underfunded worldwide. Mitigation technologies attract private capital because they generate returns.

Adaptation technologies often produce public goods that are harder to monetize. The scarcity of investment is reflected in the technology pipeline.

The financial impact is visible in China itself. Natural disasters caused 241.6 billion yuan in direct economic losses in 2025.

The case for investment in adaptation requires no external persuasion. The world does not yet have a China-scale manufacturer of flood-resilient infrastructure systems. There is no adaptation equivalent of CATL.

Early warning technologies, climate-hardened building materials, and flood-barrier systems remain fragmented markets, expensive at scale, and largely out of reach for developing countries with the greatest exposure to extreme weather events.

China's success in mitigation offers a blueprint for adaptation. Scale drove down the costs of solar infrastructure, manufacturing concentration accelerated battery innovation, and coordinated five-year planning brought new sectors to maturity faster than fragmented market forces could.

China has already shown what is possible with ambition. The question is whether adaptation technology will be the next sector to adopt this approach.

The foundation is already in place.

China's National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2035 sets targets for climate resilience across cities, agriculture, ecosystems, and public health.

A national disaster monitoring platform is being built, incorporating predictive models, remote sensing, and drone-based real-time assessment.

These provide a solid base for the industry. What is now needed is investment that matches the ambition, and builds on what China has already achieved.

Typhoon Bavi was just one storm. Scientists have warned that El Nino conditions this year may drive more intense typhoon seasons, shifting tracks westward toward China's coast and compressing the time available to prepare.

China changed the economics of clean energy by treating it as a strategic industrial priority. The case for doing the same with adaptation is at least as strong.

The world was able to accelerate the transition to cleaner energy faster because of China's efforts. It could close the adaptation gap just as quickly for the same reason.

The author is a sociologist who works as a climate finance specialist at the Climate Resourcing Coordination Center in Islamabad, Pakistan.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Tseng Taiyuan

Western Gen Z is embracing Eastern rhythms

Scroll through TikTok or Instagram today, and the algorithmic feed of the average Western teenager reveals a quiet cultural tide rising amid a chilling geopolitical climate. The endless loops of US consumerism are fading into the background.

In their place, a 20-year-old in Ohio extols the virtues of drinking hot water, a London fashion influencer unboxes a Labubu doll and a European tech enthusiast marvels at the seamless pulse of a Chongqing monorail.

Welcome to the era of "Chinamaxxing".

Borrowed from the gaming lexicon, "maxxing" signifies optimizing a build or a strategy. Here, the term encapsulates a rapidly growing subculture of Western youth actively embracing Chinese lifestyle norms, dietary habits and wellness philosophies.

While the trend is going viral on social media, its deeper significance is profound: it reflects a grassroots re-examination of lifestyle, personal well-being and governance in an era of global uncertainty.

To dismiss this phenomenon merely as a social media fad is to miss its deeper significance.

Movements such as "Chinamaxxing" highlight a growing international fascination with China's technological and social trajectory. At a structural level, this shift stems from a quiet, weary response to the internal discord in Western societies.

While some Western politicians attribute this trend to foreign communication strategies, the reality is quite straightforward: Western youth are responding to the internal anxieties at home, allowing China's orderly everyday life and public safety to speak for themselves.

Global Lens

Inbound international visits surged, with millions taking advantage of visa-free access.

For a generation grappling with economic uncertainty, partisan strife and fragmented healthcare systems in the West, the rhythm of Chinese daily life offers an appealing sense of balance and well-being.

This manifests in the "Chinese baddie" aesthetic. Western slang is repurposed by Gen Z creators to describe a holistic lifestyle rooted in Eastern wellness and understated elegance. Across Western feeds, influencers are normalizing boiled apple water, red-date tea, and warm soups as rational alternatives to commercialized wellness culture.

Even global consumer culture is changing. The worldwide success of *Black Myth: Wukong* and Pop Mart's collectible figures signals a shifting tide. Where cultural trends once flowed predominantly from Western cultural capitals and Hollywood, today's youth increasingly look toward Shanghai and Beijing for fresh creative energy.

When basic public transit and healthcare feel fraught with anxiety in Western urban centers, the convenience of Chinese city life — accessible wellness, efficient infrastructure, and hassle-free lifestyle — presents a compelling vision of modern governance.

Ironically, a key catalyst for this cultural bridge was the US government's own stance against Chinese digital platforms. Regulatory friction surrounding TikTok created a classic "forbidden-fruit" dynamic and pushed millions of Western "digital refugees" to explore RedNote, China's leading lifestyle-focused social platform.

This digital migration allowed Western youth to look directly into the daily lives of their Chinese counterparts.

Rather than rhetoric, they discovered unscripted glimpses of daily urban life: well-lit city streets at 3 am, affordable smart technology, and sophisticated high-speed trains connecting distant places.

While Western youth have organically generated these trends, China's proactive openness initiatives have translated online interest into real-world interaction. By expanding its visa-free transit policy to 240 hours (10 days) and granting visa waivers to numerous international partners, Beijing sent a clear, confident message to global travelers: Come and see China for yourself.

The policy bore immediate fruit. Inbound international visits surged, with millions taking advantage of visa-free access. Foreign visitors have taken to social media to share authentic travelogues, expressing genuine delight at China's mobile payment convenience, efficient urban infrastructure and services, and welcoming public environment.

As geopolitical friction persists on the global stage, official relations between major powers remain complex. Yet at the grassroots level, a meaningful re-coupling is taking place.

Whether seen as an embrace of Chinese lifestyle habits or a thoughtful reflection on Western domestic challenges, the message from young people worldwide is clear: while political barriers may be erected, the younger generation will always seek practical ways to connect and learn from one another.

Ultimately, global public perceptions are shaped not by political grandstanding, but by shared human experiences and tangible social outcomes.

Millions of young Westerners are now sipping hot water, stepping into indoor slippers, and quietly discovering new perspectives on what an orderly, modern life can look like.

The author is a professor of English at Sanda University in Shanghai.
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GLOBAL VIEWS

HECTOR VILLAGRAN CEPEDA

Practical development approaches

China's economic and social experience offers Ecuador valuable lessons in pursuing inclusive growth and modernization



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

As Ecuadorian President Daniel Roy-Gilchrist Noboa Azin began a state visit to China on Sunday, coinciding with the 10th anniversary of the China-Ecuador Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, attention has once again turned to the growing relationship between the two countries and the opportunities for deeper cooperation in trade, investment and development. Beyond the immediate outcomes of high-level exchanges, the visit offers an opportunity to consider a broader question: What lessons can Ecuador draw from China's modernization and poverty reduction experience as it seeks to address its own development challenges?



China's modernization is widely regarded as one of the most remarkable development stories in modern history. Over the past four decades, the country has transformed itself from a largely rural and low-income economy into the world's second-largest economy and one of the leading global powers in manufacturing, technology, infrastructure and innovation. This transformation began with the reform and opening-up policy introduced in 1978 under Deng Xiaoping, which shifted China toward a socialist market economy while encouraging foreign investment, industrialization and greater participation in international trade. Since then, China has experienced rapid economic growth, expanded its infrastructure on an unprecedented scale, modernized its industries and significantly improved the living standards of hundreds of millions of people.

Perhaps the most internationally recognized outcome of China's modernization has been its extraordinary poverty reduction experience. According to the World Bank, China has lifted nearly 800 million people out of extreme poverty since the beginning of its economic reforms, accounting for the majority of global poverty reduction during this period. In 2021, the Chinese government announced that all 98.99 million rural residents living below the country's current poverty threshold had been lifted out of poverty. This achievement was not the result of a single policy but rather of a combination of long-term planning, sustained economic growth, investment in rural development, infrastructure expansion, educational opportunities, healthcare improvements and employment creation.

One of the defining characteristics of China's poverty reduction strategy was its targeted approach. Rather than applying identical policies across the country, the authorities identified the specific needs of different communities and households.

Shibadong, a remote village in Hunan province inhabited by the Miao, one of China's ethnic minority groups, where the approach was first proposed in 2013, illustrates how this worked. Following household-level assessments, officials combined improved roads and public services with locally suited industries, including tourism, kiwifruit cultivation, Miao embroidery and vocational training. The village's annual per capita net income rose from 1,668 yuan ($247) in 2013 to 18,369 yuan in 2020, while its poverty rate fell from 56.76 percent to 1.28 percent by 2017. Shibadong demonstrates how targeted infrastructure, skills training and industrial development can address both immediate hardship and the structural isolation of rural communities, enabling residents to participate more fully in economic growth.

Although Ecuador has made progress over the past decades, it continues to face significant development challenges. According to Ecuador's National Institute of Statistics and Census, the national income poverty rate stood at 21.4 percent in December 2025, while the extreme poverty rate was 8.3 percent. The corresponding rural rates were substantially higher, at 37.6 percent and 19.7 percent, respectively. Access to quality healthcare, education, employment opportunities and basic infrastructure remains limited in many rural communities.

In recent years, Ecuador has been experiencing one of the most serious security crises in its history. Rising levels of organized crime, drug trafficking, prison violence and homicide have affected economic activity, tourism and foreign investment. Security has become closely linked to development because businesses are less likely to invest in areas where instability increases operating costs and risks. As a result, improving public safety has become an essential component of Ecuador's long-term development strategy.

China's modernization experience offers Ecuador several valuable lessons that can be adapted to its own national context.

First, poverty reduction should be linked to local economic opportunities. Following China's targeted approach, Ecuador could identify the specific needs and economic potential of different communities. In rural Esmeraldas or Manabi, for example, support might combine feeder roads, irrigation, internet access, agricultural credit and technical assistance for cocoa producers. Progress should be measured at the household level through income, school attendance, access to services and stable employment.

Second, development and public security should be treated as mutually reinforcing. Poverty itself does not directly cause crime, but limited economic opportunities can increase social vulnerability and facilitate the recruitment of young people into criminal organizations. Creating employment, improving education, expanding social services and strengthening local economies can therefore contribute not only to poverty reduction but also to greater social stability.

In Ecuador's current context, where organized crime represents one of the country's greatest challenges, development policies should complement law-enforcement efforts. One example is the ECU911 emergency response system, developed with Chinese cooperation, which integrates the police, fire, transport and healthcare authorities into a single coordinated emergency management platform. The system has significantly improved emergency response times and increased citizens' sense of security. Continued investment in digital governance, smart city technologies, surveillance systems that respect legal safeguards and data-driven public administration could further improve the effectiveness of public institutions.

Another important lesson is economic diversification. Ecuador's economy has historically relied heavily on oil exports and primary agricultural products such as bananas, shrimp, cocoa and flowers. While these sectors remain important, dependence on a limited number of commodities makes the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in international prices. China's modernization involved gradually moving from primary production toward manufacturing, technology and more sophisticated supply chains. Ecuador could apply this lesson by expanding food processing, sustainable aquaculture, cocoa-based manufacturing, renewable energy and logistics services. Economic diversification based on sectors in which Ecuador already has advantages would be more realistic than attempting to copy China's industrial model directly, and could both create skilled employment and make the economy less vulnerable to commodity-price fluctuations.

It is important to recognize that China's development model cannot simply be copied. China and Ecuador differ significantly in terms of population size, geography, political institutions, economic structure and historical experience. Policies that proved successful in China may require important adjustments before being implemented in Ecuador.

Rather than replicating China's model, Ecuador should focus on understanding the principles that contributed to China's success: place-based poverty reduction linked to local economic opportunities, the integration of development and public security, and productive upgrading based on existing export strengths.

China's modernization and poverty reduction experiences provide a valuable basis for deeper exchanges on development and governance, while Ecuador's national priorities create new opportunities for practical cooperation. Building on existing political trust, the China-Ecuador Free Trade Agreement and Belt and Road cooperation, the two countries can further expand their partnership and translate high-level consensus into sustainable development outcomes. By pursuing cooperation based on mutual respect, complementary strengths and shared interests, China and Ecuador can open a new chapter in their comprehensive strategic partnership and generate broader benefits for both countries and their peoples.

The author is the first trading representative from Ecuador to China, a former minister of transportation and public works of Ecuador, a professor at Beijing Language and Culture University and the director of China-Latin American and Caribbean Dialogue for the World Sinology Center in Beijing. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

JI XIANBAI

Bridging the Pacific

Chile among others can provide linkage to institutional architecture between Asia and Latin America involving APEC, CPTPP, DEPA and RCEP

Latin America's growing concern about the United States' hegemony is accompanied by a genuine and growing interest for wider international partnerships.

The Pacific offers the clearest strategic opening. As China hosts Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in 2026, Latin American governments have a rare opportunity to widen their markets, diversify their economic relationships and strengthen their capacity to navigate an increasingly competitive and securitized international environment by anchoring themselves more deeply in Asia-Pacific institutions.



The timing matters. The revival of the Monroe Doctrine by the Donald Trump administration has given hemispheric primacy renewed prominence in US strategy. The 2025 US National Security Strategy introduced a "Trump Corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine, asserting US primacy in the Western Hemisphere and calling for constraints on the influence of extra-hemispheric competitors. Ports, critical minerals, telecommunications, energy infrastructure and supply chains are consequently being drawn ever more deeply into great-power competition.

Latin America therefore needs more institutional options. Stronger integration across the Pacific provides one. The economic foundations are already substantial. Latin America possesses enormous reserves of copper, iron ore and lithium, alongside energy resources, agricultural commodities and globally competitive food exports. Asian economies combine vast consumer markets with manufacturing capacity, investment capital, infrastructure expertise, digital technologies and sustained demand for resources and food. The economic structures of Asian and Latin American countries fit together remarkably well. That complementarity has already become one of the most powerful forces driving trans-Pacific commerce.

Chile provides a natural starting point. It was the first Latin American country to conclude a bilateral free-trade agreement with China, with the agreement entering into force in 2006. The relationship subsequently generated several other "firsts", including Chile becoming the first Latin American economy to upgrade its FTA with China. Chile has therefore occupied a pioneering position in China's economic engagement with Latin America for two decades.

The next step should be institutional. China can find strong reasons to support Chile's application to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which Chile formally submitted in 2024. Chilean accession would give the RCEP its first Latin American member. It would also place Chile simultaneously within the RCEP, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and APEC, with strategic significance. Chile could become an institutional hinge connecting East Asia with Latin America, while the RCEP would acquire a genuinely trans-Pacific reach.

The bridge should extend in both directions. China applied to join the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement in 2021. Following the Republic of Korea's accession in 2024, DEPA members should advance China's accession as rapidly as negotiations and compliance assessments allow. Created by Chile, Singapore and New Zealand, DEPA offers an especially useful framework for governing e-commerce, paperless trade, digital transactions and other emerging areas of the digital economy. China's participation would greatly increase its economic weight. It would also deepen the institutional links connecting Latin American and Asian economies through common digital rules.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

The significance of these two accessions goes well beyond the two countries. Chile joining the RCEP and China joining DEPA would establish a powerful principle: Asia-Pacific institutions can expand across the ocean in both directions. Latin American and Asian economies could become progressively embedded in overlapping rules governing trade, investment, data, digital transactions, customs procedures and innovation.

That process should eventually support a larger ambition: greater convergence between the RCEP and the CPTPP. Seven economies already participate in both arrangements. Their overlapping membership creates practical opportunities to improve compatibility in rules of origin, customs procedures, supply-chain management and digital standards. China has appropriately placed stronger synergy between the RCEP and the CPTPP on the agenda of its 2026 APEC host year, linking such efforts to renewed progress toward APEC's long-standing objective of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific.

The realization of an FTAAP could transform Latin America's place in the Pacific economy. Chile, Peru and Mexico have already participated in APEC and the CPTPP. A broader Asia-Pacific trade architecture would reinforce their Pacific identity while adding another durable layer to their existing economic relationships across the Americas, Europe and other regions. Over time, the institutional geography of Latin America would become increasingly multidirectional and multi-aligned.

South America's Atlantic economies are also moving. Brazil had long approached the prospect of a Mercosur-China trade agreement cautiously. Its calculations have evolved as Mercosur's external trade strategy has become more active and its bloc-to-bloc agreement with the European Union has advanced. In late July, President Xi Jinping and President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva agreed on the importance of accelerating preparations for Mercosur-China trade negotiations. Progress toward such an agreement could connect South America's largest economic bloc much more closely with the dynamic markets of Asia.

Latin American governments have another reason to move soon: their room for maneuver cannot be taken for granted. The US-Mexico-Canada Agreement offers a revealing precedent. Article 32.10 makes it procedurally and politically difficult for a member to contemplate an FTA with a designated "non-market country". Similar poison-pill-style provisions could someday become instruments for Washington to discourage countries elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere from building closer economic relations with China and other Asian economies.

Once such restrictions enter trade agreements, policy autonomy becomes more difficult to recover. Latin America should therefore cross the Pacific while the institutional door remains open. This is where the idea of an Asia-Pacific community with a shared future can acquire concrete economic meaning. RCEP enlargement, DEPA expansion, greater RCEP-CPTPP compatibility and movement toward an FTAAP can translate community-building into rules, norms, agreements and commercial relationships used every day by governments, companies and consumers.

As such, the objective should be a denser trans-Pacific institutional architecture. It would give Latin American economies access to more markets, more investment, more rules-based partnerships and greater freedom to determine their own external economic relationships.

Indeed, as Latin American economies become more deeply embedded in trans-Pacific agreements, supply chains and regulatory networks, efforts by any single power to determine the terms and boundaries of their international economic relationships would be increasingly costly and difficult.

The Pacific is therefore more than a trade route. It is a horizon of agency.

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BUSINESS

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Walmart keen on further expansion

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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View of a Sam's Club store in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province. QI LIGUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Walmart Inc, a US retail giant and owner of Sam's Club, is doubling down on China, betting its omnichannel strategy and continued expansion of both its membership warehouse chain and hypermarket business will sustain growth.

Walmart China President and Chief Executive Officer Zhu Xiaojing said online sales accounted for more than half of the company's revenue in China in 2025, highlighting the retailer's transformation from a traditional brick-and-mortar operator into an omnichannel retailer.

Over the past three decades, Walmart China has built an integrated retail network spanning hypermarkets, neighborhood stores, Sam's Club warehouses, cloud warehouses and digital channels, Zhu said.

"Walmart will continue investing in China by expanding its omnichannel footprint, strengthening localized merchandise development with suppliers and deepening its presence in local communities," said Zhu.

As part of its latest expansion, Walmart signed cooperation agreements with local governments in five cities. The projects include new Walmart and Sam's Club developments in Yantai, Shandong province; Walmart stores in Beijing's Changping district and Shenyang, Liaoning province; and Sam's Club locations in Wuhan, Hubei province, and Nantong, Jiangsu province.

The investment marks the latest phase of Walmart's decade-long transformation in China.

After entering the market in 1996, Walmart expanded rapidly through its hypermarket business. However, the rise of e-commerce, changing consumer habits and intensifying competition from warehouse clubs and fresh-food retailers prompted the company to overhaul its strategy.

Beginning in 2016, Walmart accelerated the closure of underperforming hypermarkets while shifting investment toward Sam's Club, which has since become the company's biggest growth engine in China.

According to the China Chain Store & Franchise Association, or CCFA, Walmart and Sam's Club operated a combined 342 stores in China in 2025, about 100 fewer than their peak in 2019. Despite the smaller store network, Walmart China's sales exceeded 190 billion yuan ($28.18 billion) last year, with Sam's Club contributing more than 100 billion yuan, according to public data.

The strategy has helped Walmart maintain its position as the country's largest modern grocery retailer, although competition in the membership warehouse segment is intensifying.

Costco Wholesale Corp, which currently operates seven stores in China, plans to more than double that number to 16 by fiscal 2030, with most new locations concentrated in eastern and southern China.

Although Costco has expanded more cautiously than Sam's Club, it generated more than 10 billion yuan in China sales in 2025, with average annual revenue exceeding 1.4 billion yuan per store, according to figures cited by the CCFA.

At the same time, Sam's Club is facing growing operational challenges as its membership base expands. Consumer complaints over product quality have increased and the chain was summoned by China's market regulator in June over food safety issues. Shortly afterward, Zhang Qing, Sam's Club China's chief merchandising officer, resigned.

More broadly, China's grocery sector continues to undergo structural change as consumers gravitate toward value-oriented, convenience-focused and digitally integrated retail formats.

Data from Worldpanel by Numerator showed sales across modern grocery channels — including hypermarkets, supermarkets and convenience stores — fell 2.5 percent in the first half from a year earlier. Neighborhood supermarkets outperformed, with sales rising 3.6 percent, while convenience stores posted the steepest declines.

Memory chipmaker passes IPO coaching review

By **MA SI**
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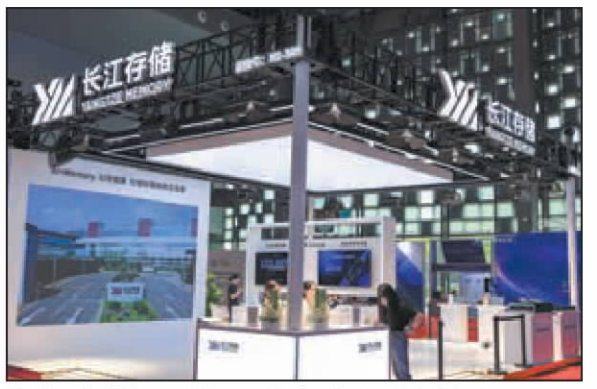

The booth of Yangtze Memory Technologies Co Ltd during an expo in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinese flash memory chipmaker Yangtze Memory Technologies Co Ltd has passed its initial public offering coaching review, marking a significant step toward a potential stock market listing, according to a disclosure on the China Securities Regulatory Commission website on Wednesday.

The company, advised by CITIC Securities and China Securities Co Ltd, completed the coaching process after filing its IPO coaching report in May.

Founded in Wuhan, Hubei province, in July 2016, YMTC is the Chinese mainland's sole 3D NAND integrated device manufacturer, or IDM. The company has achieved remarkable growth over the past decade, evolving from a startup into a global industry player.

According to Counterpoint Research, YMTC captured 14 percent of global NAND flash memory shipments in the second quarter of 2026, ranking third worldwide behind Samsung's 25 percent and SK Hynix's 22 percent while surpassing Kioxia, Micron and SanDisk.

YMTC's Q2 shipments grew 22 percent year-on-year and 5 percent quarter-on-quarter, benefiting from tight global NAND supply and expanding domestic supply.

The company has commenced mass production of 267-layer 3D NAND chips based on its proprietary Xtacking 4.0 architecture and is developing products beyond 300 layers, according to Counterpoint.

Revenue exceeded 20 billion yuan ($2.97 billion) in the first quarter of 2026, up 100 percent year-on-year.

On March 27, YMTC unveiled three new products targeting high-performance, high-security and high-capacity artificial intelligence storage scenarios.

Industry experts said that as AI workloads shift from model training to inference applications, the surging demand for dataset storage is driving a paradigm shift from capacity-driven competition to performance-and-capacity parity.

Zhang Lin, deputy dean of Fareast Credit Rating Co's research institute, said: "The next two years represent a window of opportunity for China's memory industry, with clear 'volume and price advantages' — not just for market share expansion but also for product mix upgrading and customer loyalty enhancement."

With its IPO coaching now completed, YMTC is poised to leverage capital markets to accelerate technology iteration and capacity expansion, positioning itself strategically in the next phase of global memory industry growth, experts added.

Market researcher TrendForce's latest memory pricing survey said the DRAM market will see extremely tight supply in the third quarter of 2026, with contract prices expected to rise 13 to 18 percent quarter-on-quarter. NAND flash contract prices are likely to increase 10 to 15 percent quarter-on-quarter.

Provident fund reform to spur consumption

Changes could help release pent-up demand in the near term, experts say

By **ZHANG CHENXU** and **ZHOU LANXU**

China's latest reform of its housing provident fund system is expected to further unleash residential property-related consumption potential and help the housing industry gain a more solid footing in its recovery, experts said, as the sector remains in the midst of a broader adjustment.

Their comments came after the State Council, the country's Cabinet, issued a decision on Tuesday to amend the regulations on housing provident fund management, with the changes set to take effect on Sept 20.

The fund, a long-term housing savings program made up of mandatory monthly contributions by employers and employees, can be tapped for a wider range of housing-related expenses under the revised rules, which also allow flexible workers to participate voluntarily and facilitate cross-regional account transfers.

Lou Feipeng, a researcher at Postal Savings Bank of China, said the revision is the most extensive since the regulations were introduced in 1999.

"By easing the financial burden on homebuyers, the changes could release pent-up demand and help shore up market confidence in the near term," Lou said, adding that over time the reform will help promote a healthier balance between renting and buying, and spur spending linked to existing housing stock.

The revised rules also allow account holders to draw on their savings in nine situations, up from six, according to the State Council.

The additions cover renovations to owner-occupied homes, property management fees and other housing-related consumption approved by the State Council.

Meanwhile, for those withdrawing from the housing provident fund to pay rent, the eligibility threshold requiring rent to exceed a prescribed proportion of a household's wages will be rescinded.

"The changes would ease pressure on household budgets and support spending on home improvements and property services," said Xiong Yuan, chief economist at Guosheng Securities.

The decision also simplifies procedures for housing provident fund withdrawals and shortens the review period for loan applications.

Contribution records will be recognized nationwide, making it easier to transfer housing provident fund accounts and apply for loans across urban areas.

Xiong said the broader range of permitted uses and shorter loan review times should better support demand from first-time buyers and home upgraders.

Rather than trigger an immediate, broad-based turnaround, the measures are more likely to shore up demand and improve conditions in specific market segments, he added.

Self-employed individuals, part-time employees and other flexible workers will also be allowed to voluntarily contribute to housing provident funds and receive corresponding policy support, according to the decision.

"Bringing these workers into the system will make it less costly for them to settle in cities," said Yu Xiaofen, dean of the Chinese Academy of Housing and Real Estate at Zhejiang University of Technology.

Yu also added that wider coverage would better meet the rental and homebuying needs of flexible workers while supporting China's new urbanization drive.

The amendments also specify that "interest rates on housing provident fund deposits and loans shall be determined by the State Council" — a provision that could pave the way for more flexible rate adjustments in the future, said the China Index Academy, a property research institution.

The policy move comes as ongoing weakness in the country's real estate sector continues to weigh on the broader economy.

Property development investment fell 19.2 percent year-on-year in the first seven months, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

With nationwide housing provident fund account balances exceeding 10 trillion yuan ($1.48 trillion), putting more of the money to use could support housing demand and lift spending on related goods and services, Lou added.

To translate that potential into actual demand, Lou called for faster nationwide recognition of contribution records, a dynamic interest-rate mechanism tied to provident fund loan-to-deposit ratios, and more flexible contribution options and incentives for self-employed individuals, part-time employees and other flexible workers.

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Briefly

Very large crude carrier delivered

A China-built very large crude carrier (VLCC) was delivered in Dalian, Liaoning province, on Tuesday. The vessel features advanced energy-saving and environmentally friendly technologies developed by China's shipbuilding industry. It measures about 333 meters in length, 60 meters in breadth and 30 meters in depth, with a deck area of more than 18,000 square meters.

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the yuan strengthened 51 pips to 6.7854 against the US dollar on Wednesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Chinese automakers building more factories overseas

By **REN QI**
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Chinese automakers are accelerating their global expansion by integrating their entire industry chains into local economies, providing safe, eco-friendly and smart mobility solutions that boost local employment and economic growth worldwide.

Shaanxi Automobile Holding Group (Shacman), a Xi'an-based automaker, is not only exporting traditional fuel heavy trucks, but also accelerating its global push for eco-friendly vehicles.

Its new energy vehicles have reached developed markets like the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Australia, as well as partner countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Expanding global NEV market share is just one part of a broader strategy to take the entire industry chain global. Beyond selling products, Shacman has developed a diversified industrial ecosystem overseas.

It has built factories in 17 BRI partner countries, employing a large number of local workers for assembly and marketing.

Zheng Hui, head of Shacman's import and export market department, said the company has dispatched staff to over 70 countries and regions, deeply integrating into local economic and social development to provide comprehensive solutions for local production and convenient mobility.

This approach is echoed across the industry. From Great Wall Motors' completed plant in Brazil and BYD's planned assembly plant in Malaysia, to SAIC-GM-Wuling's 3 millionth NEV rolling off the production line in Indonesia, Chinese automakers are bringing factories to the doorsteps of global consumers, directly driving local economic growth.

Geely, one of China's top auto exporters, operates world-class manufacturing plants and over 4,000 sales networks in countries including the United States, the UK and Sweden.

In Guinea, Shacman supported the construction of a landmark BRI railway project that connects high-quality iron ore to the international market while boosting local employment.

High intelligence is another key factor winning global acclaim. Sun Jian, vice-president of Neusoft Reach Automotive Technology (Shenyang) Co, said the company's self-developed auto operating system has achieved mass production globally, establishing deep cooperation with over 150 domestic and international partners to align Chinese standards with international ones.

China's auto industry is no longer just an important force in global manufacturing, but a crucial driver in reshaping the future landscape of global automotive cooperation, said Zhang Yongwei, vice-president and secretary-general of research institution China EV100.

In addition to building plants overseas, China continues to solidify its strength among auto-exporting nations, especially to BRI partner markets.

In Mexico City, buses transporting football fans for the recent World Cup matches were manufactured by Yutong, a commercial vehicle maker based in Henan province. Of the 800 new energy shuttle buses officially deployed for the event, 95 percent were Chinese brands, with Yutong alone accounting for 85 percent. This serves as a microcosm of the growing global popularity of Chinese vehicles.

The export momentum remains robust. The China Association of Automobile Manufacturers said the country's auto exports reached 930,000 units in May, surging 68.7 percent year-on-year and maintaining a level above 900,000 units for two consecutive months.

Furthermore, the latest data released by the China Passenger Car Association show that in July, new energy vehicle exports hit 540,000 units, a staggering 147.8 percent year-on-year increase and an 8.1 percent month-on-month growth.

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BUSINESS

Hisense SA nurtures local talent pool

Chinese firms bring not only jobs, but also advanced manufacturing tech and expertise



A local employee works on the production line at a refrigerator factory in Hisense South Africa Industrial Park, north of Cape Town, South Africa, on Aug 11. WANG LEI / XINHUA



Local employees work on the production line at the TV factory in Hisense South Africa Industrial Park near Cape Town on Aug 11. WANG LEI / XINHUA

CAPE TOWN — "Since I joined Hisense, my life has changed. We've grown, I've grown with Hisense."

For Hugh Stephens, those words capture more than a career spanning over a decade at Hisense South Africa (Hisense SA) Industrial Park. They tell the story of how a new job opportunity grew into a journey of personal and professional development.

In 2013, the factory where Stephens worked pulled out of the town, leaving him an uncertain future. Around the same time, Chinese home appliance giant Hisense established its industrial park in Atlantis, a town about 50 kilometers north of Cape Town.

"I decided that I had to check Hisense out," Stephens told Xinhua News Agency. He stayed.

More than a decade later, the local man who joined Hisense as a "normal worker" has become a mainboard repair technician at the TV factory in the park, taking on new responsibilities and developing skills along the way.

His story begins with a job, but it is also a story of growth — his own, and that of a Chinese company growing alongside its local workforce.

"When I got here, I started at the front of the (production) line," Stephens recalled. "I learned from the Hisense engineers, from the Chinese engineers. They taught us everything I know."

"Now I'm working as a (mainboard) repairman and it's very good for me, because I've grown with the company," he said.

The change he described is not limited to his career. Stephens said he has also seen improvements in his life outside the workplace, from expanding his home to enjoying better living conditions and a better lifestyle.

Like Stephens, Marlon Jacobs joined Hisense SA Industrial Park when it was established in 2013, starting out as a general worker with no experience in refrigeration. Today, he is an assembly and quality technician at the refrigerator factory in the park.

"Everything in my life has improved since 2013, and I'm standing here as an example of that in itself," Jacobs told Xinhua.

"Thirteen years ago, I was unemployed. I did not have a job, and not having a job means you're not able to support your family the way you want to," he said. "Today I'm standing here, a better person being able to supply for and support my family, so that means a great deal. I really appreciate what Hisense did for me and for the whole of Atlantis."

Like many of his colleagues, Jacobs has also bought a car as his income has grown, and now drives to work every day. The growing number of employees' cars has even filled the company's parking area, with some workers having to park in an open space outside.

His career has also been a journey of learning. Starting from welding, Jacobs went on to learn machine and product repairs, becoming the factory's first welding repair person before moving into a team leader role managing two teams of more than 100 people and eventually becoming a technician.

"I'm a refrigerator technician because of the skills that I've learned through the Chinese," he said, referring to the knowledge he gained while working closely with his Chinese colleagues.

For Jacobs, the benefits also extend beyond his own career. "It's not only work, skills are also being transferred to local people," he said, pointing to the training and skills development opportunities available to workers at Hisense.

That transfer of skills is reflected in the training provided on the production floor, according to Mou Xing, a Chinese process engineer at the TV factory. New local employees receive training on the production process, hands-on instruction for their respective tasks, safety training and on-site observation before starting work. They also receive ongoing guidance and checks during production.

As local employees gain experience, some have begun to take on greater responsibilities. "After systematic training, South African local employees can independently complete the main work of their departments and handle and provide feedback on problems," Mou said. "For example, my colleague Minnies can take over the entire department's work when I am on leave."

The local employee Mou referred to is Ayrton Minnies, a process technician team leader at the TV factory. His job at Hisense is his first, and he chose it out of an interest in electronics.

"By working for all these years now, I've made a lot of progress in my life," Minnies said. "I would say there's a lot of skills I've picked up during my time at Hisense."

He put that learning simply: "Basically, I've learned how to make my own TV, not basically my own TV, but how it looks on the inside and everything."

Beyond his own growth, Minnies said Hisense has also had a positive impact on Atlantis by providing jobs for local residents.

Today, the two factories at Hisense SA Industrial Park employ around 760 local people. "At the fridge factory, we have approximately 550 local employees," Lorenzo McKinna, production supervisor at the factory, told Xinhua.

"Many of the employees who work here, as you know, are from the local community," he said, adding that the company provided on-the-job training so employees did not have to go outside the factory to acquire those skills.

According to McKinna, while creating jobs, the industrial park has also helped drive the development of the local industrial chain. "We have quite a few suppliers, local suppliers, that have benefited from the Hisense factory being here."

The experiences of Minnies and McKinna are borne out by the broader impact of Hisense SA Industrial Park, said Jiang Shun, deputy general manager of Hisense SA and general manager of the industrial park.

According to Jiang, the park has created about 1,000 direct jobs and over 5,000 indirect jobs locally, while about 70 percent of management positions are held by locals.

The park has also helped drive employment along the local supply chain, with nearby foam and carton factories among those supplying it. More than a dozen local companies have so far been integrated into its supporting industrial chain, Jiang said, adding that the park has also helped them adopt new technologies, processes and equipment.

In his view, the experience at Hisense SA is a direct rebuttal to the recent "China squeeze" narrative advanced by some Western think tanks and media outlets, which argues that China's manufacturing capacity not only challenges Western industries, but also crowds out industrialization opportunities in Global South countries.

For Africa, Jiang noted, the arrival of Chinese companies brings not only job opportunities, but also advanced manufacturing technologies and expertise that can help raise the level of local manufacturing.

"Only by raising the level of local manufacturing can you get the whole African economy moving," Jiang said. "I don't think it's a squeeze. It definitely plays a leading role."

Jiang's view was echoed by Stephens. "They're not squeezing, they're just trying to create jobs," he said.

Stephens hoped Hisense SA would continue to expand. "I want them to grow, you know, to bring more job opportunities, because people can learn more from other people, you know, from Chinese people," he said.

XINHUA

Zero-tariff policy boosts Sino-Kenyan trade, spurs industrial value addition



Workers sort avocados at a processing facility on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya, on May 28. XIE JIANFEI / XINHUA

NAIROBI — Kenya views the zero-tariff access to the Chinese market not merely as a trade preference, but also as a strategic opportunity to enhance its export competitiveness, accelerate industrial value addition and expand market reach, a senior Kenyan trade official said.

In a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency, Regina Ombam, principal secretary of Kenya's State Department for Trade, said access to China's vast market provides a crucial platform for Kenya to elevate its economic potential.

"I think when we got into the 'Early Harvest' arrangement, which was taking effect from May 1 with the zero-tariff policy, our big thinking was around how do we make Kenya competitive?" she said.

The tariff arrangement is viewed not merely as an export channel, but as an opportunity to showcase Kenya's premium products. Ombam noted that Kenya looked at it "as an opportunity for us to showcase how special Kenya is and what special things Kenya has and how willing Kenya is ready to share these special things that it has with other people as far away as China."

Highlighting Kenya's agricultural strengths, she noted growing Chinese demand for high-quality produce, particularly tea, avocados and fresh vegetables.

"Everybody says Kenyan tea is good quality; Kenyan tea is the best. And so taking tea to China was really another big plus for us given the big market that we were looking at," she said, adding that Chinese consumers are increasingly keen on organic, farm-to-table foods.

Beyond trade in commodities, Ombam emphasized that cooperation with China is driving technology transfer and supporting Kenya's manufacturing agenda through industrial park development.

"So when we move our economy to think export, think industry, then we are basically now saying we are transforming the economy from dependence on just raw materials to now invest and engage and move toward industrialization and ensure that our products now are of value in terms of the value addition that the processes are done to it," she said.

Praising China's work ethic and practical approach to innovation, Ombam said the partnership is built on mutual respect. "We are looking at China as a partner that is able to actually see us grow, which is a very good thing for us," she said, adding that Kenya is already learning from China's focus on efficiency and effective solutions tailored to local environments.

Furthermore, Ombam pointed out that Kenya serves as a strategic gateway for investors seeking to tap into broader African markets through the East African Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and the African Continental Free Trade Area.

XINHUA

South-South technology ties seen flourishing

HARARE — Cooperation with China will help African countries accelerate technological transformation and build local capacity for modern technologies, Zimbabwean experts said.

The remarks were made earlier this month on the sidelines of the Harare Forum for Africa, held under the theme of "Technological Transformation and Global South Modernization". The event brought together scholars, policymakers and business leaders to share experiences and contribute to China-Africa cooperation.

Established in 2024, the forum is an annual dialogue co-initiated by the China-Zimbabwe Exchange Center and the School of Journalism and Communication of Tsinghua University, seeking to promote dialogue and cooperation between China and Africa through academic exchange and policy dialogue.

Joseph Ngwawi, executive director of the Southern African Research and Documentation Center, a regional think tank, said cooperation with China can play a major role in technological transformation and Global South modernization.

He noted that the significant investment required to adopt modern technologies makes partnerships with China crucial in accelerating their uptake.

"We can cooperate on how to make technology work for us in all aspects of life, be it culture or economic issues. We must embrace technology, and we have a ready partner, China," Ngwawi told Xinhua News Agency.

Ngwawi said that in addition to economic development, modern technologies can help African countries preserve and promote their cultural heritage while building local technical capacity in digital preservation, restoration and cultural tourism.

"Technology is applied in all areas of our lives right now, it is now even applied in cultural heritage preservation, for example using technology with virtual reality gadgets to bring our historical sites to our eyes," he said.

Abigail Ncube, a gender specialist in the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, said China-Africa cooperation presents an opportunity not only to expand access to technology, but also to build the skills that can enable Africa to participate in the modern digital economy.

"China-Africa cooperation is an opportunity to ensure that technology transfer is not simply the transfer of infrastructure, hardware and technical knowledge. It can also be the transfer, and importantly, the development of capabilities, opportunities and ownership agency," she said.

She said China-Africa cooperation creates opportunities in developing digital infrastructure, digital education and vocational training.

To achieve this, Ncube said China-Africa cooperation can focus on building local capabilities supported by appropriate domestic policy frameworks.

"This moves beyond the idea of simply supplying technology. It creates the potential institutional platforms for digital education, teacher development, knowledge exchange, science technology engineering and mathematics capacity, research cooperation and professional skills," she said.

Ntethelelo Marcia-Anne Mpofu, a Zimbabwean medical doctor, said that in the agriculture sector, China-Africa technology cooperation must go beyond technology transfer and address foundational challenges hindering development, such as water, infrastructure and skills.

She said technology alone could not solve Africa's challenges, stressing that its effectiveness depends on supporting infrastructure such as reliable water supplies and on equipping farmers with the knowledge and skills to use it effectively.

"Technology works best, but it works best when every other system surrounding it supports it to make a better output and impact. Technology without the conditions that meet what Zimbabwe needs is not very good for us," she said.

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CHINA

DPP accused of spreading lies to curb ties

Suppression and intimidation used to block cross-Strait interactions

By LI SHANGYI
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Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party authorities have spared no effort to restrict and obstruct exchanges across the Taiwan Strait, fearing that the "information cocoons" they have created will continue to be punctured, a Chinese mainland spokesperson said on Wednesday.

At a regular news conference, Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said the DPP authorities have resorted to tactics including suppression, intimidation and rumormongering, while the island's "mainland affairs council" has been at the forefront, becoming a "stumbling block" to cross-Strait exchanges and interactions.

"They have tried every possible means to prevent people on both sides from visiting each other and maintaining close ties," she said.

Zhu made the remarks in response to recent comments by the "mainland affairs council" on a new regulation on exit and entry administration issued by the State Council, China's Cabinet, which will take effect on Sept 15.

Taiwan's "mainland affairs council" claimed that the regulation could affect Taiwan residents who invest or work in the technology sector on the mainland and urged them to be alert to the purported "risks".

Zhu said the regulation will help safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait in their exchanges and create a better law-based environment for Taiwan compatriots visiting the mainland.

Reassuring Taiwan residents that they have no need to worry about risks when traveling to the mainland, Zhu accused the DPP authorities of deliberately spreading alarm with ulterior motives.

"Faced with the unstoppable tide of cross-Strait exchanges and interactions, what the DPP authorities fear most is that the information cocoons they have created will continue to be punctured and the false 'Taiwan independence' narratives they have constructed will continue to be exposed," she said. "That is why they have resorted to making such reckless and unfounded statements."

Zhu also condemned the DPP authorities for continuing to delay allowing mainland residents to travel to Taiwan due to their "Taiwan independence" stance, saying the policy has artificially severed the tourism market across the Taiwan Strait.

"This will only cause Taiwan to miss out on the enormous potential of the mainland's tourist market," she said.

According to local media reports, Taiwan recorded a tourism deficit of 6.36 million person-trips in the first half of this year. Industry representatives on the island attributed the shortfall mainly to the continued absence of regular travel by mainland tourists to Taiwan, calling on the DPP authorities to reopen the island to mainland tourists as soon as possible.

The DPP authorities have also required civil servants in Taiwan to submit applications when traveling to the mainland to visit relatives, along with contact information for their mainland relatives and friends, drawing criticism from the public.

Zhu said the move was a further infringement on the personal privacy of Taiwan residents.

"They aim to prevent Taiwan people from visiting the mainland, while what they fear is that more people will see through their true motives of deceiving and inciting people with lies to pursue political self-interest by promoting 'anti-China' and 'resisting China'," she said.

Zhu said the mainland has been actively promoting exchanges between people on both sides. From Aug 24 to 28, relevant youth organizations from both sides will jointly host a cross-Strait youth exchange event in Shanghai, as part of efforts to implement the institutionalized platform for two-way youth exchanges between the Communist Party of China and the Chinese Kuomintang, outlined in 10 policy measures released by the mainland in April.

Launch preparation



The combination of the Chang'e 7 lunar probe and the Long March 5 Y14 carrier rocket is transferred to the launching area at the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site in Hainan province on Wednesday. It is scheduled for launch in the near future. SU DONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

EU cross-border probe unfair: China

By YANG ZEKUN
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China has determined that certain cross-border investigative measures taken by the European Union in its foreign subsidy probe into e-commerce giant JD.com constitute improper extraterritorial jurisdiction and has barred organizations and individuals from complying with or assisting in their implementation, the Ministry of Justice said on Wednesday.

The ministry said it made the determination jointly with the Ministry of Commerce and other departments under China's regulations on countering improper extraterritorial jurisdiction. The decision took effect upon its release on Wednesday.

The move concerns the EU's investigation of JD.com under its Foreign Subsidies Regulation, or FSR, which Chinese authorities said involved demands for extensive and unnecessary information from Chinese entities concerning activities within China.

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said in a written response that the requests imposed improper requirements on Chinese entities and seriously undermined the rule of law in international affairs.

It urged the EU to correct its approach, stop what it described as abuse of the foreign subsidy investigation mechanism, and provide a fair, impartial and predictable business environment for companies investing and operating in Europe.

"If the EU persists in its approach, China will firmly take countermeasures in accordance with the law," the spokesperson said.

The investigation is linked to JD.com's proposed acquisition of German consumer electronics retailer Ceconomy AG, which operates the MediaMarkt and Saturn brands across several EU member states.

JD.com's board approved the proposed acquisition in July 2025 in a deal valued at about $2.5 billion. The transaction was initially expected to close in the first half of 2026 but has been delayed amid regulatory reviews, including the EU's FSR investigation.

Germany's Federal Cartel Office approved the deal in September 2025, concluding that the companies had little competitive overlap and that the transaction did not raise significant antitrust concerns.

JD.com formally notified the European Commission of the transaction on April 17 this year, and the commission opened an in-depth FSR investigation on May 28.

On July 22, the commission issued a Statement of Objections to JD.com, alleging that the company may have benefited from preferential financing, tax advantages and government subsidies from China, which could have enabled it to offer a high premium for Ceconomy and thereby distort normal commercial negotiations and competition in the EU's internal market.

The commission is expected to make a final decision by Oct 2. If it insists that the allegations are valid, JD.com could face significant remedies or the transaction could be blocked.

It is not the first time the European Commission has used the FSR to investigate a Chinese company.

In April 2024, the commission conducted unannounced inspections at branches of Nuctech, a Beijing-based supplier of security inspection equipment, in Poland and the Netherlands. On Dec 11, 2025, it formally opened an in-depth FSR investigation into the company.

The investigation later expanded to demands for information on bank accounts, ownership structures and financing records within China, as well as requests for Chinese entities and banks to cooperate and provide large amounts of information that China considered unrelated to the investigation.

In May, China's Ministry of Justice determined that the cross-border investigative measures taken against Chinese entities in the Nuctech case also constituted improper extraterritorial jurisdiction.

It was the first application of China's regulations on countering improper extraterritorial jurisdiction after they took effect in April 2026.

Under the regulations, relevant Chinese government departments may place foreign organizations or individuals that promote or participate in improper extraterritorial measures on a malicious entity list.

Depending on the circumstances, authorities may also impose visa and entry restrictions, limit employment or residence in China, seize or freeze assets, and restrict the provision of data and personal information, transactions, cooperation, imports and exports, investment, or the entry of products and transportation equipment.

The EU adopted the Foreign Subsidies Regulation in November 2022, and it took effect in July 2023. The regulation gives the European Commission powers to investigate financial contributions provided by non-EU governments to companies operating in Europe and can require companies to provide extensive cross-border information.

Fields medalist stresses intl experience

By ZOU SHUO
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Wang Hong, who last month became one of the first two Chinese nationals to receive the Fields Medal — often referred to as the "Nobel Prize" of mathematics — believes young mathematicians should embrace opportunities to study and work in different countries, a practice she says is widely encouraged in China, France and the United States.

"Moving to different cities and schools is a very common practice, and people generally believe it is good for one's growth," Wang said in an interview with Peking University's School of Mathematical Sciences.

The 35-year-old mathematician, a tenured professor at the Institut des Hautes Etudes Scientifiques, or IHES, in France, and a Silver Professor at New York University's Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, has experienced such moves firsthand.

Looking back on her time at Peking University, where she transferred into the mathematics department, Wang recalled that students typically built a solid mathematical foundation while also getting an early start on graduate-level coursework.

She also emphasized the collaborative learning atmosphere. Many students were keen on research, often discussing which textbooks to read outside class and organizing seminars together. That peer support, she said, helped her develop good study habits that later proved invaluable.



Wang Hong

Wang later pursued a one-year master's program at Universite Paris-Sud, where she took a course on harmonic analysis taught by Pascal Auscher. She was struck by the lecturer's deep command of the subject — he never used notes and wrote fluently on the board. But what left the deepest impression were the tutorial sessions.

She also noted that although only a handful of students at her French school pursued pure mathematics — about five or six out of 500 — professors were very willing to engage with those who did.

When Wang moved to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for her PhD, coursework took a back seat. The most important part, she said, was conducting research with her adviser.

Her adviser, Larry Guth, had a profound influence on her. During their meetings, she had to anticipate every possible question he might ask and prepare answers in advance — a discipline that has shaped how she communicates with collaborators to this day.

Guth also gave each of his doctoral students a book upon graduation. For Wang, it was a French book titled *School Blues*, an educational essay about a former struggling student who became a teacher. She found it deeply meaningful.

Wang acknowledged that struggling with difficult problems for long periods is part of every mathematician's life. Her advice is to work on smaller problems with collaborators and write them up well when stuck on a big problem. Even modest contributions can be useful and help build momentum.

She compared her approach to solving a large problem to piecing together a puzzle. Each piece comes from working out examples and special cases. Once you have thought about a problem long enough, you know where the real difficulties lie.

Wang said China now has many outstanding professors and a strong research environment, and encouraged students to make decisions about studying abroad based on the opportunities available to them.

For those pursuing mathematics, her parting advice was simple: "Follow your own pace and work on the problems you love."

Chamdo culture



Performers dance at a culture and arts festival themed on the ancient Tea Horse Road, a historic network of trade routes in southwestern China and neighboring regions, in Chamdo, Xizang autonomous region, on Wednesday. The event highlights the region's cultural legacy, ethnic unity and tourism. KUNGA LESANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Decks cleared for Kinastra 1's maiden flight in 2027

By ZHAO LEI
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CAS Space, a leading Chinese commercial space company, has completed a series of propulsion system tests for its Kinastra 1 upper stage, clearing the way for the vehicle's maiden flight in the first quarter of 2027.

The Guangzhou-headquartered company, established by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said the upper stage's full propulsion system completed the PV-001 integrated compatibility hot-fire test in August, marking a major system-level milestone that verified coordination and operational reliability across all subsystems. The test lasted 566 seconds, with all units performing stably.

The Kinastra 1's 20-kilonewton engine passed a series of boundary condition tests in March, covering variable operating modes, mixture ratios and cooling percentages. The tests involved 18 ignitions and a total burn time of 481 seconds.

A reliability test followed in July, during which the engine ran for a combined 2,906 seconds under multiple operating scenarios. According to CAS Space, the engine has now accumulated a total ignition time of 5,211 seconds.

The latest test comprehensively validated the engine's pressurization, propellant feed, propellant management and servo control systems, the company said. Engineers also verified three crucial capabilities: the 20-kN engine's high-thrust, high-performance multiple-restart capability; balanced propellant delivery from parallel tanks; and a highly reliable integrated electrical design.

The Kinastra 1 is equipped with a 20-kN-thrust engine capable of more than 20 ignitions. According to engineers, the upper stage can autonomously plan orbital transfer paths, withstand the vacuum and extreme temperature fluctuations of spaceflight, and adapt to various launch vehicles, making it a key component of CAS Space's medium- and high-orbit and deep-space launch capabilities.

The upper stage works like a "space shuttle bus". It does not launch from the ground but performs transfer operations in space. After a rocket delivers the upper stage and satellite payloads into space, the upper stage takes over the mission, transferring satellites between orbits. This approach saves satellites' fuel and allows multiple satellites to be deployed into different orbits during a single launch mission.

Yang Haoliang, chief designer of the Kinastra 1, said the upper stage is an optional module for rockets. It operates after a rocket's core stage and strap-on boosters have exhausted their fuel and separated, propelling spacecraft onto interplanetary trajectories or into orbits higher than those that could otherwise be reached using conventional boosters.

An upper stage can extend a rocket's reach beyond the parking orbit where its core stages run out of fuel, delivering payloads to higher and more distant orbits through multiple in-space ignitions, Yang said. This helps conserve satellite propellant that would otherwise be used for orbit-raising, thereby extending satellites' operational lifespans.

"It also enables multi-satellite deployment across different altitudes and inclinations for rapid constellation buildup, shortens the time needed to adjust satellites' orbital positions, and can perform controlled de-orbiting at mission end to reduce space debris," Yang said.

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CHINA

'Three-grassland' model heals Qinghai ecosystems

Scientific approach improves sustainability, herder incomes on 'roof of the world'



A herd of sheep wanders on the grassland in Golog, Qinghai province, in October last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By **YANG ZEKUN** in Xining
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High up on the "roof of the world", Chinese researchers are easing pressure on the fragile grassland ecosystems relied on for generations by nomadic Tibetan herders. To protect this high-altitude environment in the three-river-source region of Northwest China's Qinghai province, researchers have introduced more efficient varieties of forage, improved livestock management and high-tech grassland monitoring — all while increasing incomes for local herders.

Known as the "water tower" of Asia, the region feeds the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers, and harbors rare plateau wildlife. But decades of overgrazing, severe weather and climate change have stripped the native grasslands, triggering soil erosion and threatening local livelihoods.

To fix it, scientists at the Chinese Academy of Sciences have pioneered a "three-grassland" model that links protected wild zones, regulated grazing pastures and high-tech cultivated forage fields.

Xu Shixiao, director of the Plateau Ecology Research Center at the Three-River-Source National Park Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said the model ensures ecological conservation, sustainable livestock production and that local livelihoods are supported.

"Through coordinated resource allocation and closer links between the functions of different grasslands, we hope to achieve balanced development of ecology, production and daily life," Xu said.

The model is being applied in two areas.

The first covers areas inside and surrounding the national park. Cultivated forage produced outside the park can be supplied to livestock, reducing grazing pressure on natural grassland within protected zones.

The second includes farming-pastoral transition areas in the Guinan and Tongde counties of the Hainan Tibetan autonomous prefecture, where soil, water and climate conditions are more suitable for developing high-yield cultivated grassland.

Xu said the key to addressing a long-standing constraint on plateau animal husbandry is the shortage and poor nutritional quality of forage during the cold season. A more reliable supply of high-quality feed can shorten livestock-rearing cycles, improve production efficiency and reduce reliance on natural pastures.

The math behind the strategy is striking: Just 1 hectare of high-yield cultivated grass outside protected zones can spare roughly 20 hectares of natural wild pasture from overgrazing.

In alpine meadow areas, reducing grazing pressure by just one sheep can ease ecological disturbance across about a hectare of natural grassland, Xu said.

"This not only reduces pressure on natural pastures, but also creates more space for wildlife habitats inside the national park," he said.

Herder help

For Lajia, a 43-year-old herder from Qinghai's Madoi county, the impact is visible on both the grassland and on his household income.

Lajia has spent years working as an ecological ranger in the Yellow River source area of the national park, helping protect the region as it shifted toward a greener development model.

He said grazing was once poorly managed. There was little scientific zoning of pastures, no systematic rotational grazing or seasonal grazing bans, and limited access to stored forage. Many herders depended almost entirely on natural grassland and sought to increase their incomes simply by raising more livestock.

"In the past, we did not understand scientific grazing," Lajia said. "Our cattle and sheep depended completely on natural grassland, and we grazed them on the same pastures throughout the year. The grassland had no time to rest and recover."

As grazing pressure increased, vegetation deteriorated. Sandy patches and bare ground expanded, while forage yields declined. Heavy snow or drought often left livestock without enough feed, causing weight loss and sometimes death in the herd, he said.

The result was a cycle in which degraded grassland reduced livestock productivity, low productivity limited herders' incomes, and the need to maintain larger herds placed even greater pressure on the ecosystem.

At the time, Lajia's family raised just over 100 sheep. Losses were high, production was inefficient and household income remained low.

The introduction of the coordinated grassland model changed the way he managed his animals.

Pastures were divided according to their ecological and production functions. Protected grassland was allowed to recover, while rotational grazing and seasonal grazing bans were introduced in designated grazing areas. Herders also received guidance on planting and storing cultivated forage for the cold season.

"The current approach is much more scientific and much better for local people," Lajia said. "It is completely different from the past.

"Protected and grazing grasslands are now clearly divided, and rest grazing and rotational grazing are strictly implemented. Degraded pastures have time to recover, while we are also taught how to grow and store forage. We no longer have to rely entirely on the weather," he said.

Lajia's family now maintains a stable flock of nearly 200 sheep, almost double its former size. Improved feed and livestock management have also raised the quality and value of the animals.

At the same time, his work as an ecological ranger provides a regular salary. The combination of livestock production and ecological conservation has given the family two sources of income.

The scientific model combines ecological monitoring, grassland carrying-capacity assessments, degraded grassland restoration, forage cultivation and balanced livestock feeding. Drones, satellite remote sensing and artificial intelligence-based identification technologies are also used to monitor wildlife, assess habitats and support ecological planning.

Research data show that 67,000 hectares of high-quality cultivated grassland in areas surrounding the three-river-source region can produce 610,000 metric tons of forage each year, helping maintain a more stable balance between livestock numbers and available grassland.

Demonstration projects that have transferred grazing pressure equivalent to 810,000 sheep are estimated to have expanded the habitat available to wild ungulates such as Tibetan antelopes and wild yaks by 3.85 million hectares.

The model has been tested through specialized cooperatives, family ranches, jointly operated ranches and State-owned ranches.

In Guinan county, demonstration projects have improved grassland quality, shortened the feeding cycles of yaks and Tibetan sheep, increased livestock production efficiency and raised herders' incomes.

Monitoring of grassland managed by cooperatives has also shown improvements in vegetation coverage, biomass and plant diversity after measures such as spring grazing bans and seasonal grazing adjustments were introduced with support from cultivated forage.

Shen Yuhu, director of the national park institute's Plateau Eco-agriculture Research Center, said forage breeding is an important part of the ecological strategy.

Agriculture and ecological protection are often regarded as separate issues, Shen said, but they are closely connected in the three-river-source region.

Crop production is restricted in core protected areas, but livestock in surrounding pastoral communities still need feed. Developing cultivated grassland and forage oat production in more suitable areas can supply pastoral regions and reduce pressure on natural pastures.

Shen's team has spent nearly 30 years breeding crops and forage suited to plateau conditions ranging from 3,500 to 4,800 meters above sea level. Its work began with spring wheat and later expanded to highland barley, oats and other forage crops.

The result has been that Qinghai has become an important national base for forage production and oat seed breeding, supplying improved varieties to regions including the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, Gansu and Sichuan provinces, and the Xizang autonomous region.

One standout success is Gaoyan 16, a high-protein forage oat variety that recently fetched a record 400,000-yuan ($59,400) technology transfer fee in Qinghai.

In nearby Darlag county of Golog Tibetan autonomous prefecture, improved oat varieties have been used in a practice called "growing grass in livestock pens".

Before moving animals to high summer pastures, herders plant fast-growing oat varieties directly in winter pens. Come autumn, they harvest the crop for cold-weather emergency feed.

The area using the practice in Darlag expanded from more than 133 hectares last year to more than 667 hectares this year. The model is also being promoted in other parts of Golog and Yushu Tibetan autonomous prefectures.

For Shen, keeping the technology affordable for local families remains the primary goal. Locally bred oat seed costs less than 4 yuan per kilogram, compared to 10 to 16 yuan for imported alternatives.

He recalled an experience during a scientific expedition in Gyalze county, Xizang, when local farmers invited his team into their home for butter tea and food after learning that the researchers were conducting fieldwork to improve crop varieties.

"They said we were doing work for farmers," Shen said. "Wherever we go, recognition from farmers and herders is what keeps us moving forward.

"Enterprises can make a profit, but they should not charge too much," Shen said. "Farming already has thin margins. If seed costs are too high, the burden on farmers and herders becomes heavy. A good variety must go to the fields and reach the people. If it can help them increase production and income, that is the greatest recognition a researcher can receive."







Left: A forage collector reaps grass and transports it onto a truck in Guinan, Qinghai province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Center:** Herders process forage grass in Guinan. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Right:** Villagers pile up bales of forage grass for winter use in Golog, Qinghai, in August last year. SONG CHENGLIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Huangshui River restoration enters final phase

By **YANG ZEKUN**

A major 5.51 billion yuan ($817 million) ecological restoration project in the Huangshui River Basin has entered its final phase, so far restoring over 157,200 hectares of land and significantly improving water quality across eastern Qinghai province, according to local authorities.

The project aims to strengthen the ecological security barrier of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau through integrated conservation covering mountains, rivers, forests, farmland, lakes, grasslands, and deserts. It belongs to the third batch of national key ecological conservation projects under China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021–25).

As of June, 144 of the project's 153 subprojects have been completed, targeting 12 counties across Xining, Haidong, and the Haibei Tibetan autonomous prefecture.

Liu Guoxin, head of the territorial ecological restoration division of the Qinghai Provincial Department of Natural Resources, said that the project focuses on major ecological problems in the basin, including soil erosion, degradation of forest and grassland ecosystems, and declining water conservation capacity.

The basin has been divided into three major restoration units: the source area for water conservation and biodiversity protection, the tributary areas for water conservation and soil erosion control, and the main stream area for ecological corridor building and human settlement improvement, Liu said.

Based on these units, Qinghai has carried out three categories of work: improving forest and grassland ecological functions, maintaining the health of valley ecosystems and restoring river system functions.

The project has restored 69,300 hectares of forest, 42,400 hectares of degraded grassland, and 275.22 kilometers of riverbanks and embankments.

Liu said ecological restoration measures can be implemented quickly, but the stable functioning of restored ecosystems takes longer to fully emerge.

"Ecological improvement needs continuous monitoring and phased assessment," he said. "After the project is fully completed, we will carry out project acceptance and effectiveness assessment, while ecological and environmental authorities will continue long-term ecological monitoring and evaluation."

According to Qinghai's 2025 ecological and environmental bulletin, water quality at national and provincial monitoring sections of the Huangshui River reached Grade II or better, showing that the project has played a positive role in improving water conservation and water quality in the basin, Liu said.

To coordinate cross-regional and cross-department governance, Qinghai has established a three-level mechanism featuring provincial coordination, city and prefecture-level supervision, and county and district-level implementation.

A provincial leading group was set up at the beginning of the project, bringing together departments including development and reform, finance, ecology and environment, water resources, agriculture and rural affairs, and forestry and grassland to coordinate project implementation.

The project uses monthly reporting and digital supervision to track implementation, funding and performance. Reports are submitted to the leading group and shared with relevant departments and localities to identify problems and coordinate solutions in a timely manner.

Liu said the project also covers mine restoration, geological disaster control, river management, forest and grassland improvement, rodent control, farmland improvement, human settlement upgrading and soil erosion control, making multi-department cooperation essential.

Qinghai has issued rules on project management, fund management and completion acceptance, while also establishing systems for archives, project handover and long-term maintenance. A provincial expert pool provides technical support throughout project planning, review, acceptance and assessment.

According to the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Huangshui project ranks among the top national ecological restoration projects in terms of fund execution and completed restoration area.

The project has also generated social benefits. Construction units have been encouraged to employ local farmers and herders, helping increase incomes. Restoration work along the urban section of the Nanchuan River in Xining and the Baishui River in Huangyuan county has improved public activity spaces and living environments, giving residents a stronger sense of gain and well-being.

Liu said completed projects will be handed over to local governments and relevant sectoral departments for maintenance, with long-term management linked to existing mechanisms such as ecological rangers, river and lake chiefs, and forest and grassland chiefs.

"The Huangshui project is a comprehensive and systematic governance project, not a restoration of a single ecological element," Liu said. "It has helped Qinghai gain practical experience in cross-department, cross-regional and multi-element ecological conservation and systematic governance."

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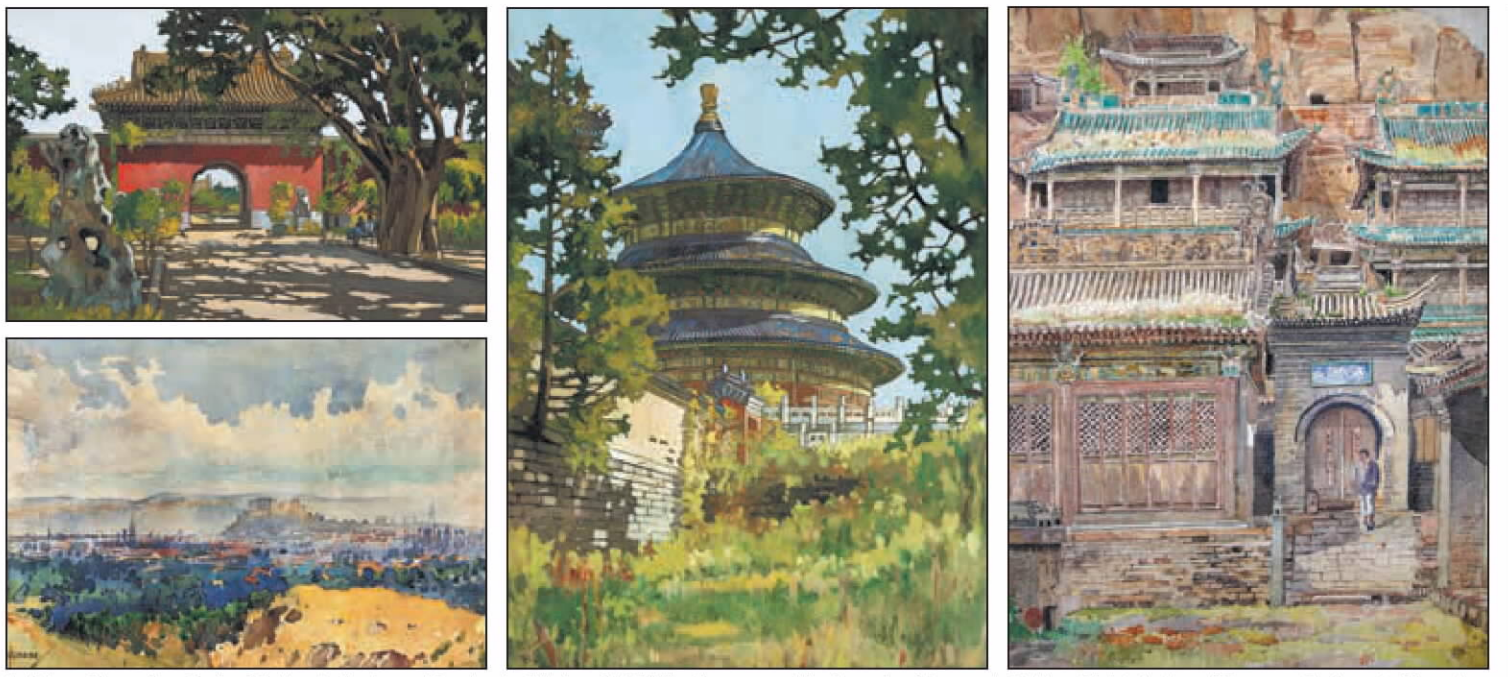
LIFE



Left top: *Zhongshan Park of Beijing.* **Left above:** *Morning in Edinburgh.* **Middle:** *Summer, at the Temple of Heaven* in Beijing. **Right:** A view of Yungang Grottoes in Shanxi province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Below:** Guan Guangzhi's paintings capture the magnificence and composed mood of classical Chinese architecture and imperial gardens. LIN QI / CHINA DAILY

Bathing Beijing in watercolor

Late artist studied abroad but returned to the capital city to bring dignity and preservation to its ancient architecture through vivid hues, **Lin Qi** reports.

Standing at 38 meters tall, Qinian Dian, or the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, the central building at the Temple of Heaven complex in Beijing, commands imperial solemnity. The hall was once used as a place where monarchs of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties held ceremonies to pray for good weather and bountiful harvests.

Today, this majestic three-tiered circular structure, once exclusive to the ruling class, is one of the capital city's most favored tourist spots. People share various photographic perspectives on social media, capturing its gilded golden top, deep-blue glazed tiles and red pillars that define Beijing's awe-inspiring historic aura.

Eight decades ago, watercolorist Guan Guangzhi (1896-1958) was one of those who frequently visited the Temple of Heaven. He preserved the magnificence of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests through vivid colors and restrained brushwork. One of his extant works from the 1940s depicts a serene summer scene in which the building is shrouded by verdant, scattered cypresses on both sides and an expansive grassy field at the front. The thickness of the pigments accentuates the solemn mood of the site, while the shifting chiaroscuro — the contrast of the shadows of tree leaves against the light on the dappled wall — renders to the composition a graceful, composed sensibility.

Guan would have been a high-quality content creator with many followers in the social-network age, but in real life, he was a devoted teacher at art schools and an avid painter and printmaker of the imperial architecture and gardens of centuries-old Beijing where he lived from the mid-1920s until his death.

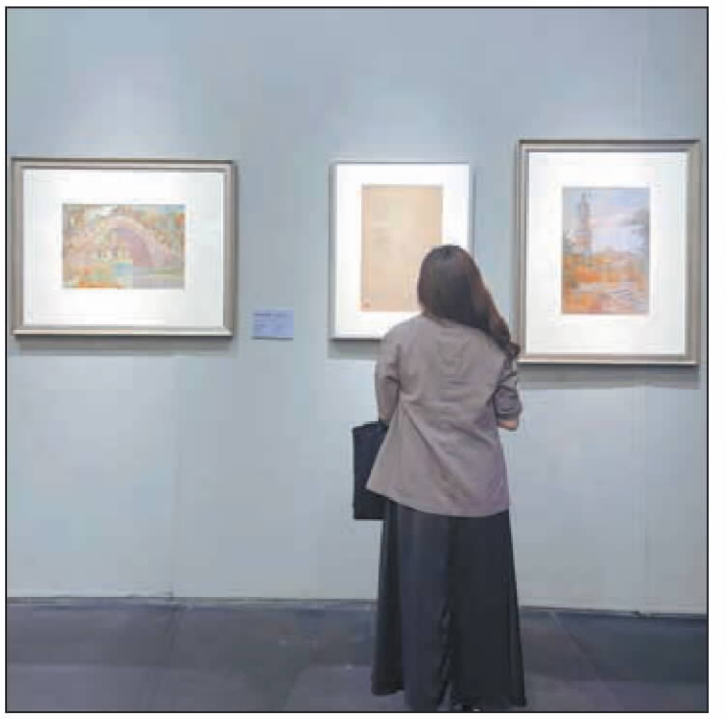
The Splendid Realm of Diligence: Art of Guan Guangzhi, an ongoing exhibition at the Art Museum of the Beijing Fine Art Academy, invites viewers into his watercolor world. Visitors will be immersed in the understated beauty composed of the imperial palaces' eaves emerging in daylight, while trees, flowers and lake ripples radiate vitality. Over 70 watercolors and copperplate prints, including his most iconic Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests works, are on show until Sept 6.

Born in Jilin province, Guan developed an initial interest in classical architecture while studying at an art school in Shenyang, Liaoning province. He often accompanied his watercolor teacher, a British woman, to sketch at the Zhao Mausoleum, commonly known as Beiling, the burial tomb of Emperor Taizong of the Qing Dynasty and his empress. After relocating to Beijing, he began creating watercolors of its ancient architecture as a vivid testament to the city's imperial past.

At age 36, he made a life-changing decision to study abroad. He enrolled at the Royal College of Art in London. He was, under the name Kuan Kuang Chin, one of the first Chinese students to attend this institution.

Fu Yiwei, the exhibition's curator, says Guan particularly admired the way William Turner (1775-1851), the noted English landscape artist known as "the painter of light", presented light and color. "Guan's works on show, *Morning in Edinburgh* and *Belfast Beach*, bear a considerable Impressionist influence. The light and translucent texture show the distinctive qualities of British watercolor."

While in Britain, Guan also studied etching techniques and traditions traced to 17th-century Dutch painter and printmaker Rembrandt van Rijn. When he left London, he carried with him a machine and tools for copper engraving. At home, he produced dozens of prints exhibiting the ever-changing atmosphere of ancient buildings.

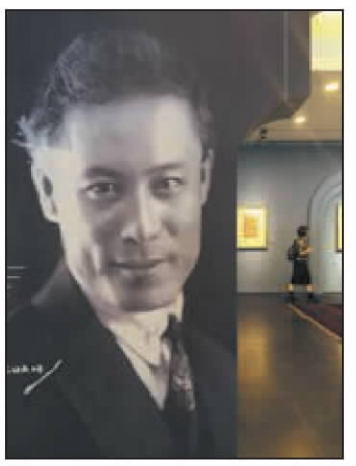






Top: Guan at his solo exhibition in the 1930s. **Above:** Guan and wife Wang Rulan in the 1940s. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY







Above top: Watercolor paints and tools Guan brought back from London. **Left:** A photo of Guan at the exhibition. **Right:** A drawing of Guan and in the back, a photo of Guan and his students in the 1950s. PHOTOS BY LIN QI / CHINA DAILY

Guan returned to Beijing in 1934. His wife, Wang Rulan, once recalled that during his trips to Britain and back, Guan visited art galleries and museums in Paris, France; Brussels, Belgium; Naples, Italy; Alexandria, Egypt; and Mumbai, India. "It broadened his horizons and made him realize that the art of every nation, with its own distinctive features, has added splendor to world culture. At the same time, he deeply appreciated that in art, one should not only possess national and individual characteristics, but also must study extensively to integrate diverse influences, to progress and achieve innovations," she said.

Back in Beijing, Guan taught at various schools. Meanwhile, he also deviated from his earlier depiction of British scenery and developed his own watercolor style in depicting Beijing's historic structures.

His subjects include the Jade Belt Bridge at the Summer Palace and the Nine-Dragon Wall in Beihai Park. He placed his subjects in a harmonious, beautiful environment. When depicting the Corner Towers of the Forbidden City, he would add cleaners working on a boat in the moat on the outer perimeter; in another painting of Beijing Zhongshan Park, where an imperial altar sits, he focused on the blooming wisteria outside the long corridor.

Fu says his strokes render these ancient buildings dignity and a refreshing resplendence that touches people across generations.

Dai Shihe, a retired professor of painting at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, says, "Although Guan's landscapes are smaller in size, he delivered the poise and ease inherent in Chinese culture."

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Celestial instruments help launch visitors on a cosmic quest

HEFEI — China's museums are often defined by their porcelain, calligraphy and ritual vessels. But a new exhibition in Anhui province is turning the spotlight away from traditional treasures and toward scientific endeavors of the past, showcasing jade cosmological diagrams, celestial star charts and bronze globes crafted by astronomers centuries ago.

The exhibition, *Heavenly Questions: The Cosmological Vision of Chinese Civilization*, at the Anhui Museum brings together nearly 300 artifacts from 48 institutions nationwide. It is a rare exhibition in China that focuses specifically on presenting the country's "understanding of the universe" through cultural relics.

Since launching in July, the show has drawn some 350,000 visitors, who are fascinated by the instruments ancient Chinese used to observe, measure, and pay homage to the universe.

One of the star attractions is a jade slab roughly the size of a smartphone dating back 5,800 to 5,300 years. The eight arrows at the center of the slab map out the eight directions of space, and the arrows at the four corners appear to align with the positions of the sunrise and sunset during the winter and summer solstices. The Chinese cosmological diagram is possibly older than Stonehenge in Wiltshire, England.

Other highlights include China's oldest equatorial instrument, a disk with 28-star mansions from a 165 BC marquis' tomb, a bronze water clock from the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24), the earliest-dated water clock ever found, and a rubbing of a stone-carved astronomical chart from the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) engraved with over 1,400 stars, which remains the oldest all-sky map based on actual observation.

"These 'hardcore creations' in ancient astronomy laid the technological foundation for studying the laws of celestial motion," says Meng Qian, director of the museum's research department.



A guide introduces a wooden gadget at an exhibition in the Anhui Museum in Hefei on July 1. ZHOU MU / XINHUA

The exhibition saves its best for last. In the final section, ancient instruments such as globes and sundials sit face-to-face with models of modern Chinese spacecraft, including the lunar rover Yutu (or Jade Rabbit), and the lunar soil sample collected by the Chang'e-6 mission in 2024.

Interestingly, many of China's major space missions are named after ancient myths. Its moon mission is called "Chang'e", the goddess who is said to live there; the Mars rover "Zhurong" is named after a fire god; and the sky-surveying telescope "Mozi" is the name of a philosopher who was credited with conducting the earliest optical experiments.

The exhibition itself takes its title from ancient poet Qu Yuan's (339-278 BC) epic poem *Tianwen*, or Heavenly Questions, written more than 2,000 years ago. China's Mars exploration mission also shares the same name.

"This exhibition allows ancient astronomy and modern space exploration to illuminate and interpret each other," says Shi Yunli, a professor at the University of Science and Technology of China and adviser to the exhibition.

"When visitors stand between the folded bronze sundial and the Yutu rover, they see not just two objects on display but a 5,000-year chain of quest," Shi adds.

The exhibition runs through mid-October. "We hope this exhibition allows visitors to look back at the early lights of our culture, and also see the way forward," Meng says.

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LIFE

Moving heritage from museums to malls

Commercial areas seek to give shoppers more emotional value by providing exhibitions, history-inspired characters and learning activities, **Li Yingxue** reports.

On a weekend evening in August, Chen Ling took her young daughter to Huaxi Live Wukesong in Beijing for dinner. In the square, a mythical beast inspired by the ornaments that adorn Beijing's Central Axis architecture exchanged a fist bump with a round "corn friend".

Nearby, a traditional Chinese dance performance and quiz were underway. The host introduced *Maize. Gold. Jaguar: A Grand Exhibition of Ancient Maya and Andean Civilizations* at the Capital Museum. Chen's daughter answered the quiz question accurately and won a commemorative coin.

The following weekend, they returned to the shopping center, viewed an exhibition of late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) embroidery, and bought tickets to that "corn" exhibition.

"We saw the sculptures and displays while having dinner at the shopping center. There happened to be an event that day, and that's how we learned about the exhibition," Chen says.

This is the experience Beijing's "One Exhibition Across the City" initiative seeks to create: Rather than waiting inside museums, exhibitions enter people's daily lives.

Launched in July by Beijing Radio and Television Station, in partnership with the Capital Museum and the Beijing Cultural Heritage Exchange Center, the initiative has extended exhibition elements into nine areas, including Tongzhou MixC, Solana shopping mall and Huaxi Live Wukesong.

Installations, relic displays, pop-up stores, and activities enter commercial settings, turning shopping centers into cultural gateways.

Nine auspicious mythical beasts inspired by Beijing's Central Axis architecture "walk out" of historic buildings and into shopping centers, where they meet corn figures representing the ancient civilizations of the Americas. Some make heart gestures while others offer high-fives or fist bumps. Once solemn architectural ornaments, they have become approachable cultural figures for younger audiences.

"These figures were not put together simply because they look cute. There is a cultural connection behind them," says Lyu Jing, the project's publicity director. "Maize was the foundation of the Maya civilization, while the mythical beasts are classic symbols of Beijing's Central Axis and traditional Chinese ritual culture. It is a dialogue between two ancient agricultural civilizations across time and space."

"Our principle was clear: Keep the roots, but give the form a more contemporary look," Lyu says. "We wanted to attract young people without casually deconstructing traditional culture. We also want to ensure that Chinese and foreign cultural symbols come together naturally."

For Lyu, the initiative is not simply about moving an exhibition into shopping malls.

"To me, a museum without boundaries means breaking down walls, lowering barriers, and becoming part of everyday life," she says. "A museum is no longer just a building, but a public cultural space that can encompass the entire city."







Clockwise from top: Participants compete in a maize-grabbing game at a shopping mall in Beijing in July. A sculpture featuring a mythical beast inspired by ornaments adorning Beijing's Central Axis architecture making a heart gesture with a corn character at an outdoor area of a shopping mall in Tongzhou district. Residents enthusiastically take part in the maize-grabbing game. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "To me, a museum without boundaries means breaking down walls, lowering barriers, and becoming part of everyday life. ... a public cultural space that can encompass the entire city."
>
> **Lyu Jing,** publicity director of "One Exhibition Across the City"

Commercial areas have also introduced artifacts provided by the Beijing Cultural Heritage Exchange Center. The free-of-charge displays allow visitors to encounter cultural objects while shopping.

Bringing cultural relics into busy commercial areas creates preservation challenges. At Huaxi Live Wukesong, installations occupy the outdoor areas, while the relic exhibition is housed in the enclosed Ice Center, which is equipped with 24-hour surveillance and climate control.

"This is a breakthrough for us. In the past, we never really considered bringing cultural relics into a street-level commercial area," says Chang Tingting, general manager of Huaxi Live Wukesong's digital media center.

"From the beginning, we discussed how to reconcile what might seem like a contradiction between protection and openness, and make the two work together in a commercial setting."

Visitors inquire about the exhibition and how to buy tickets, and others arrive after reading about it on social media.

"We often hear consumers asking what the exhibition is, where they can see it, and how they can buy tickets," Chang says. "That shows how the two sides can reinforce and empower each other."

In her view, shopping and dining alone can no longer provide a steady stream of new experiences.

"Many people today are willing to spend money for emotional value," she says. "A shopping mall that only sells things will eventually be challenged by e-commerce, but a space that provides cultural experiences and opportunities for social interaction cannot be replicated online."

Heritage in shopping centers can also lower the psychological barrier to museums. "We hope people can encounter thousands of years of civilization while simply shopping or having dinner — an informal and immersive encounter with culture," Chang says.

Similar efforts are underway at Solana, Fengke Wanda Plaza and Tongzhou Wanda Plaza, where content has been tailored to each venue's audience.

"We matched the content to the customer profiles of the three shopping centers. Fengke Wanda focuses on a cultural relic-themed exhibition; Solana emphasizes interactive installations; and Tongzhou Wanda features a cultural and creative pop-up," says Li Meiling, marketing head of the Beijing division of Zhuhai Wanda Commercial Management Group.

The malls also coordinate exhibition layouts, security arrangements and visitor routes to protect the artifacts and maintain an orderly viewing experience.

Li says she has seen children stop to examine the displays and ask questions, while families have taken part in activities linked to the exhibition.

"Malls are no longer purely places for shopping. They are transforming from places for transactions into places for life and learning," Li says.

"I believe commercial spaces will take on more public cultural functions," she adds. "We hope to work more closely with museums and art institutions to present cultural, substantive and interactive experiences to the public."

Maize provides another link between ancient and contemporary worlds. In Maya mythology, humans were believed to have been created from maize. Modern Beijing is home to the world's largest maize DNA fingerprint database and a national-level germplasm resource bank that preserves more than 4 million maize germplasm samples. Beijing-developed commercial seeds cover about one-sixth of China's maize-growing area.

Some shopping centers display live maize plants, leading visitors from ancient beliefs about the crop to contemporary agricultural science.

The initiative also seeks to ensure that engagement goes beyond photos. Bead-art competitions, a "maize blessing wall", dance performances, and quizzes are built around cultural knowledge.

"Every installation has a civilizational narrative behind it, and every activity incorporates educational content," Lyu says. "Taking a photo is not the end. It can be the starting point for people to learn, and share what they have discovered."

For her, museums and commercial spaces benefit each other. "Museums bring cultural quality, visitors and deeper meaning to shopping centers, while shopping centers bring museums new audiences, new settings and new ways to reach people," Lyu says.

She hopes the initiative will become a Beijing cultural brand that integrates museums, heritage and urban life.

When history appears in shopping streets and along the routes people take home, museum boundaries begin to change. Culture becomes part of the city's everyday rhythm — and sometimes an unexpected encounter.

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Tianqiao revives tradition by building a global stage for performing arts

Stretching along the southern section of Beijing's Central Axis, a 2.07-square-kilometer cultural cluster comes alive with young playwrights drafting scripts in *hutong* (alleyway) studios, acrobatic troupes staging performances of intangible cultural heritage, and a major arts center hosting its annual musical theater festival.

This is the Tianqiao performing arts area, where traditional culture meets modern creativity and theaters, playhouses and creative incubators converge.

"Two decades ago, Tianqiao was marked by dilapidated buildings and scattered street stalls," says Yin Yixin, chairman of the Tianqiao Zenith Group. "Yet during the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and the years before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, this area was a bustling area where thousands of folk artists came to perform drama, traditional music and acrobatics."

To revive that legacy, an extensive renewal project was launched. The Tianqiao Performing Arts Center opened in 2015, presenting year-round programs of dramas, musicals, concerts, and ballets. In the years that followed, more theaters, creative incubators and *hutong*-based studios emerged across the area.





Left: The ballet *The Peony Pavilion* is staged in Tianqiao on July 21. **Right:** The cast of *Swan Lake* rehearses at the Tianqiao Theatre on May 29. PHOTOS BY JIN LIANGKUAI / XINHUA

That transformation has laid the foundation for Tianqiao's revival as a thriving hub for the performing arts.

"Come to Tianqiao for musicals" is more than a slogan — it has become part of daily life here. Today, Tianqiao hosts international musicals such as *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Notre-Dame de Paris*, alongside original Chinese productions including *The Orphan of Zhao* and *Twelve Hours of Chang'an*, earning acclaim from audiences at home and abroad.

"It's amazing! The stage sets are unique, and the cast delivers powerful performances," says Ma Yihan, a young Chinese theater lover who has attended multiple shows at Tianqiao, including *Elisabeth* and *Mozart L'Opera Rock*.

John Owen-Jones, a leading star of *The Phantom of the Opera*, says China's growing audience for Western musicals could help spur a new wave of homegrown productions, with an increasing number of polished original Chinese musicals already emerging.

Acrobatic troupes also regularly perform at Wansheng Theater in Tianqiao, while immersive productions centered on China's intangible cultural heritage attract big crowds. Venues such as the Tianqiao Impression Museum use augmented reality and motion-sensing technologies to revive fading folk arts. In contrast, its archive of 20,000 volumes of folk literature is free and open to the public.

Yang Shucong, general manager of the Tianqiao Performing Arts Center, says the venue will stage a lineup of iconic international musicals this year. The English-language program includes *Chicago* and *Kinky Boots*, while French offerings include *Don Juan* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Chinese-language adaptations are also gaining popularity. Standout productions include *The Devotion of Suspect X*, *Murder Ballad* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

These productions mark a pivotal step in the center's evolution, from a venue operator into a content co-creator, Yang says.

"Going forward, we'll continue to carry forward China's cultural heritage, foster new forms of cultural activities, and build the Tianqiao Performing Arts Area into a global stage where cultural exchange and performing arts thrive," Yin says.

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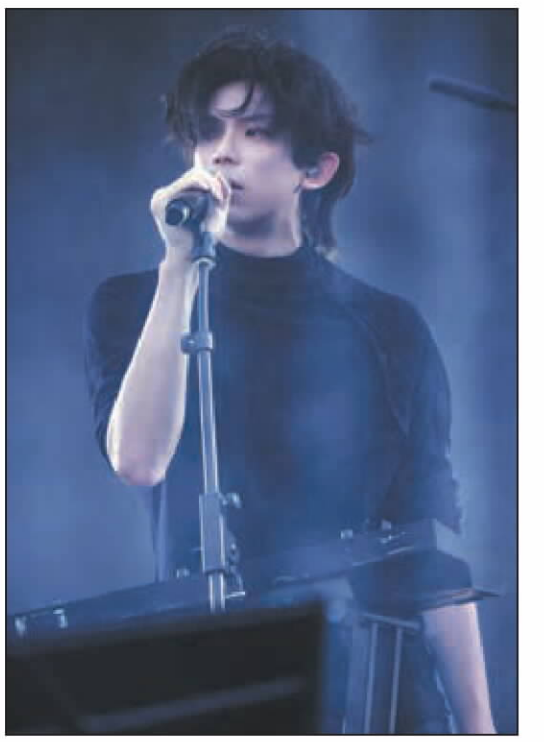
CULTURE







Left and right: Chinese band Xian Ke, featuring singer-songwriters Wang Pushi (left) and Wen Haoyuan (right), released their debut album *All Things End, Yet Nothing Ends*. **Above:** The band, featuring Wen (left) and Wang (right), is known for its combination of traditional Chinese opera with rock music. **Below:** Cover of the album. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Stone Age instrument meets modern rock

For the band Xian Ke, the process of creation is never-ending, as they explore new musical territories, **Chen Nan** reports.

Everything ends. A song fades. A stage goes dark. The performers leave, the audience disperses, and eventually the room falls silent.

But for the Chinese band Xian Ke, silence is not the end.

The band's name comes from a line in *The Book of Songs*, a collection of hundreds of poems dating from the 11th to 6th centuries BC.

The line goes: *Mibu youchu, xianke youzhong* (Everything has a beginning, but few can see it through to the end).

The band's debut album, *All Things End, Yet Nothing Ends*, takes that ancient meditation on beginnings and endings and turns it into eight songs that build a world from rock, traditional Chinese opera, ancient instruments, and the restless desire to keep creating.

For Xian Ke, the two phrases are not simply literary references. They have become a way of thinking about what it means to make music, according to Wen Haoyuan, one half of the duo.

"Everything has an end," says Wen, who is also a scriptwriter. "But things themselves have no end. We are doing something that is limited for us, but we hope it can have an unlimited influence."

That tension — between endings and continuation, limits and possibilities — runs through the album.

All Things End, Yet Nothing Ends took more than three years to complete, beginning in 2021.

There were songs written, arranged, and recorded that ultimately did not make the cut. One track had reached around 80 percent of its arrangement and was already in production and recording before the band decided that something was still wrong.

"We spent many days and nights struggling with it," Wen recalls. "Just thinking about that song would make us feel bad."

Eventually, they abandoned it and wrote another song instead.

That process of choosing what to keep — and, perhaps more importantly, what to let go — became one of the most difficult and formative parts of making the record. By the time the album was complete, however, the uncertainty had given way to conviction.

"Everything that was released was something we were certain about," Wen says. "We are very satisfied with it."

For a band that began with a name about the difficulty of reaching an ending, finishing the album was therefore significant. But it was never intended as a conclusion.

"It's just a very small part of my creative career," Wen says. "We'll keep writing."

When Xian Ke announced the album, the pair described standing for a long time in front of the "wall of sound" they had built, moved to tears by what they heard.

The image captures something essential about the record. Xian Ke wanted to create not simply a collection of songs, but an expansive sonic space — "a whole expanse", as Wen describes it, made from different frequencies and layers of sound.

They wanted the listener to stand in front of it and feel its scale.

That ambition is partly why *All Things End, Yet Nothing Ends* feels larger than the familiar description of "traditional Chinese opera meets rock", often attached to Xian Ke, which formed in 2019.

Both members trained at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts, and their relationship with traditional theater runs deep. Wen studied theater; Wang Pushi is a Kunqu Opera performer and works with the Northern Kunqu Opera Theatre.

But Xian Ke is increasingly wary of being defined by the label "traditional Chinese opera meets rock music".

The label exists, Wang acknowledges. People use it. But for the band, traditional theater is not an aesthetic costume that they put on when they make music. It is part of the way they think.



"We write what we know," Wen says.

There was no elaborate calculation about how much traditional Chinese opera to combine with contemporary rock. Their musical languages have developed together naturally.

For Wang, the difference between performing traditional Chinese opera and performing with Xian Ke is particularly revealing. On the traditional stage, he is playing a character. His job is to express that character's emotions rather than his own.

"With the band, it is 100 percent my expression," he says.

He describes himself as a theater director within Xian Ke, while Wen is the writer. Together, they bring a theatrical way of thinking to their music: songs become scenes, sounds become characters, and the album becomes a world.

That approach is particularly evident in the song *Annica* (inspired by anicca, a Buddhist concept meaning impermanence), which incorporates the *suona* (a double-reed woodwind instrument) and the percussion rhythms of Kunqu Opera.

The striking thing is that the *suona* is not presented as a distinctly "Chinese" sound.

Instead, Xian Ke deliberately buried it within the arrangement, treating it like any other instrument.

"Traditional Chinese instruments are often placed prominently in contemporary music precisely because their sound immediately signals Chinese identity. We wanted to resist that impulse," Wang says.

For him, the goal is not to turn traditional culture into spectacle.

He points to the experience of watching traditional Chinese opera for the first time: Whether the viewer is a foreigner or a Chinese person encountering it for the first time, its unfamiliarity can make it seem like a spectacle, something exotic to be observed.

But that, he argues, misses the point.

Traditional Chinese opera and traditional Chinese music are not curiosities. They are not there to produce an exotic effect. They are beautiful.

The same principle guides Xian Ke's use of traditional instruments. The better the fusion, Wang believes, the less obvious the fusion becomes. "If an instrument is pushed to the front simply because it sounds unusual, it risks becoming a gimmick," he says.

Elsewhere on the album, they went in the opposite direction: Rather than hiding the identity of a traditional instrument, they explored what its history could bring to the music.

The song *Fallen Stars* features the sound of a Jiahu bone flute, an ancient instrument preserved by the Henan Museum and among the earliest known instruments associated with a seven-note scale.

The flute is a key exhibit at the Henan Museum and dates back about 8,700 years.

Musicians from the Huaxia Ancient Music Orchestra, the resident ensemble of Henan Museum founded in 2000, joined the band's exploration by playing replicas of ancient Chinese musical instruments displayed in the museum.

For Xian Ke, choosing the bone flute was partly an experiment. If they were going to introduce traditional Chinese instruments into their music for the first time, why not begin with one of the oldest?

They tried a number of instruments before settling on the bone flute. But its historical importance was only part of the appeal.

When the flute was played, Wen heard something much less concrete: falling stars.

The image captures the band's approach to the album as a whole. Rather than giving each song a narrowly defined subject, they wanted the eight tracks to contain as much as possible — to suggest an entire world rather than describe one small thing.

The result is intentionally ambiguous. Images, emotions and sounds overlap.

The most interesting question facing Xian Ke now is what happens when they move beyond the very combination that first defined them.

They have already begun asking themselves: What does Xian Ke sound like when there is no Chinese opera?

The question is not a rejection of their theatrical roots. Quite the opposite. It comes from the confidence that those roots are already embedded in them.

"Opera plus rock" was simply the path they took when they first came together.

Now they want to explore what else might happen — traditional Chinese opera with something else, or something without traditional Chinese opera.

"We do not yet know," says Wen. "A record has an ending. A song has an ending. A period of creation has an ending. But the impulse to create continues."

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Huangmei Opera shines in Edinburgh with tale of courage and identity

EDINBURGH — Minutes before going on stage in Edinburgh, Han Zaifen sat before a dressing-room mirror, humming softly to herself as the final touches were put on her makeup.

Beneath a black embroidered scholar's cap was the face of Feng Suzhen, a young woman whom Han has portrayed for more than four decades.

Soon afterward, Han, a winner of the Plum Blossom Award, the highest award for Chinese theatrical art, stepped onto the stage at Queen's Hall in a bright red robe, bringing one of China's best-known traditional opera heroines to an Edinburgh audience.

On the evening of Aug 12, the Anhui Zaifen Huangmei Xiqu Art Theatre, led by its director Han, performed *The Lady Prince Consort* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, marking the first appearance of Huangmei *xiqu*, or Huangmei Opera, at the event.

"If Huangmei *xiqu* were an Eastern woman, she would be lively and quick-witted, pure and down-to-earth," Han said before the performance. Unlike the stately elegance often associated with Kunqu Opera, she said, Huangmei *xiqu* has a particular warmth and innocence, as well as a mixture of softness and strength.

"Its melodies come from people's lives and their sense of happiness," she says.

Huangmei *xiqu* is a major form of traditional Chinese opera, known for its tuneful singing and lively storytelling. Now, Anqing, a city in East China's Anhui province, serves as an important center for its performance and development.

The Lady Prince Consort tells the story of Feng Suzhen, who disguises herself as a man and enters the imperial examination to save the man she loves. She unexpectedly finishes first and is chosen by the emperor as husband for his daughter, setting off a series of twists before her true identity is revealed.

The work was adapted from the traditional play *Double Rescue* and was first staged in 1958. A film version followed in 1959, helping to turn the story into one of the most familiar works in Huangmei *xiqu*.

Feng's disguise mirrors other well-known women in Chinese storytelling, including Hua Mulan, the legendary female warrior who disguises herself as a man, and Zhu Yingtai of *The Butterfly Lovers*.



Actress Han Zaifen (right) and other actors perform Chinese Huangmei Opera during a performance at the Queen's Hall in Edinburgh, on Aug 12. ZHAO JIASONG / XINHUA

But Han sees something distinctive in Feng.

"She does not spend her time anxiously searching for an identity," Han says. "Through what she does, she keeps redefining who she is. She takes charge of her own fate."

Saving her husband is the direct reason for Feng's adventure, but the journey also reveals her confidence in her ability and worth, Han says.

Han adds that young women today no longer need to disguise themselves as men to pursue their ambitions, but the courage behind Feng's choice remains relevant.

"Whether you are a young woman or a young man, you need the courage not to retreat when you face difficulty and to fight for the life you want," she says.

That message resonated with Monika Owczarek, a Polish resident of Edinburgh, who says she often watches Chinese opera during the Fringe.

She says she enjoys the melodies of Huangmei *xiqu*, while Feng's story reminds her of Mulan. "Both women disguise themselves as men and emerge as strong female protagonists who refuse to accept the limits placed on them," she says.

American audience member Joe Goldblatt described it as the best Chinese opera performance he had seen, adding that he hopes "more productions like it could help bring people from different countries closer together".

Han says the theater made no deliberate attempt to speed up the performance or simplify its style for a Western audience.

The troupe has previously taken Huangmei *xiqu* to countries including France, the United States, Canada, and Russia.

"Good cultural exchange does not mean changing yourself just so you can be understood," Han says.

"For any art form, there is something that cannot be translated because it comes from the culture itself," she says. "It is a people's temperament, even a people's way of breathing."

Han's Edinburgh visit also brought recognition away from the stage. Earlier this week, she received the 2026 Asian Art Ambassador honor at the Asian Art Awards, organized by Asian Art Fund Scotland, a Scottish charity supporting Asian arts.

"Seeing overseas audiences laugh along with the story was deeply moving," says Wu Meilian, a Plum Blossom Award-winning actress who also played Feng Suzhen in the first half of the show.

"We did not share a language, but the humor and emotions still connected us. It made me feel that Huangmei *xiqu* can touch audiences anywhere."

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SPORTS

TENNIS



Aryna Sabalenka celebrates her 6-1, 6-3 win over Wang Xinyu of China during the Cincinnati Open third round at the Lindner Family Tennis Center in Mason, Ohio, on Tuesday. GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

No 1 Sabalenka slams Wang to advance in Cincy

The victory takes Belarusian's win streak at the WTA1000 level to 45

CINCINNATI, Ohio — Aryna Sabalenka unleashed her big game with devastating effect on Tuesday, hammering China's Wang Xinyu 6-1, 6-3 to reach the fourth round of the Cincinnati Open.

The world No 1 took only 20 minutes to blow through the first set against her 36th-ranked opponent, and began the second set with a break of serve.

Sabalenka kept up the pressure in the second set, with Wang double-faulting on the top seed's first match point after 54 minutes.

The victory marked the 45th in a row for Sabalenka at the WTA1000 level.

"I cannot complain. She's a tough opponent," Sabalenka said. "To win in straight sets like this in under an hour is insane.

"I'm super happy to be through. I really trusted myself and went for my shots. I wasn't overthinking. I was able to stay focused and be in every point."

Sabalenka next plays Czech Sara Bejlek, a 4-6, 6-1, 6-2 winner over Russia's Ekaterina Alexandrova.

Fourth seed Coco Gauff needed to battle following a sizzling first set in a 6-1, 7-6 (3) victory over fellow American Ann Li.

The 2023 champion had it all her own way in the opening set against her 29th-ranked foe, winning in 30 minutes. The pair exchanged early breaks in the second on the way to a tie-breaker, in which Gauff seized a 4-1 lead and won on her third match point.

"She played better in the second set and I missed a couple of break opportunities," Gauff said. "I tried to forget about those.

"It was hard to control the ball for both of us, and it was my first time playing a day match on this center court, so I had to adjust to that."

Mirra Andreeva's status as reigning French Open champion counted for little, as the fifth seed struggled to close out a 6-1, 7-6 (5) victory over Janice Tjen.

The Indonesian challenger, ranked 37th, was bowled over in the first set, but made Andreeva work to finally advance.

"In the first, I was in command and she had unforced errors here and there, but in the second, after a couple of games, I started getting nervous. She made fewer mistakes — it turned into a match of mentality and physicality," Andreeva said.

Eighth seed Elina Svitolina was forced to withdraw before her match against China's Wang Xiyu with an ankle injury.

"I've been advised by the doctors to take a little bit of time to rest and recover completely," the Ukrainian said in a statement.

Wang, 25, will now face 20th-seeded American Madison Keys for a quarterfinal berth.

> "I cannot complain. She's a tough opponent. To win in straight sets like this in under an hour is insane. I'm super happy to be through. I really trusted myself and went for my shots."
>
> **Aryna Sabalenka,** on her win over Wang Xinyu

In the men's play, Canada's second-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime eliminated Argentina's Juan Manuel Cerundolo 7-5, 6-1 in 90 minutes.

"It was a tricky start, finding my rhythm," the Canadian said. "Lefties are tricky, you don't play them so often. You can prepare all you want, but until you step onto the court, you can't find your right adjustments. Then you feel comfortable."

Washington winner and fifth seed Taylor Fritz fired eight aces in his defeat of Spain's Daniel Merida 6-3, 6-4 in 83 minutes. The Spaniard made 25 unforced errors as Fritz booked a fourth-round match-up with Australian Chris O'Connell, who is 0-3 against the American.

'I played amazing'

Last week's Montreal finalist Brandon Nakashima came from the brink to upset fourth seed Daniil Medvedev 6-7 (3), 7-6 (4), 6-1.

Nakashima led 5-2 in the first set before falling in the tie-breaker, then saved three match points in the 10th game of the second set on the way to forcing a third, which he dominated.

It was Nakashima's first win in four meetings with Medvedev, who beat the American in the Brisbane final earlier this year and had won 6-1 in sets against him entering the match.

Nakashima arrived in Cincinnati in strong form after reaching the semifinals in Washington and his first Masters 1000 final in Montreal, and improved to 10-2 on the summer's hard-court swing with Tuesday's victory.

The world No 22 will next face Nuno Borges after the Portuguese claimed a 6-3, 6-4 upset of Russian 13th seed and 2021 runner-up Andrey Rublev in 72 minutes.

The 47th-ranked Borges ended a five-match losing streak in the rivalry, while Rublev will drop out of the top 20 for the first time since January 2020.

"I played amazing," Borges said. "It means a lot to be in the fourth round. It's a big moment for me."

Italian 10th seed Lorenzo Musetti defeated American Michael Zheng 6-1, 6-3 in 71 minutes.

AFP

Venus Williams gets a US Open singles wild card at 46

NEW YORK — Venus Williams was given a US Open singles wild card on Tuesday and the tournament is keeping one on hold — perhaps in case her sister Serena wants to join her.

Sloane Stephens, the 2017 US Open champion, was one of six other women to receive a wild card, and the US Tennis Association said the final one is still to be announced.

That almost certainly would go to Serena Williams, if she decides she wants to return to the tournament at 44.

Last year, Venus Williams received a wild card to the Grand Slam event she won twice, returning for the first time since 2023. The 46-year-old has become the oldest entrant in singles at the tournament since Renee Richards played at 47 in 1981, according to the International Tennis Federation.

Venus has continued to play some singles matches, and this week joined Serena for their first doubles tournament together since the 2022 US Open. They lost Monday at the Cincinnati Open in a match tie-breaker against Marta Kostyuk and Peyton Stearns.

The sisters planned to play at Wimbledon, but had to withdraw after Serena injured her knee in her singles match. That marked her first time playing singles since the 2022 US Open, and she indicated afterward that she hoped to keep competing if healthy.

Headlining the wild-card recipients on the men's side were 39-year-old Gael Monfils, a past US Open semifinalist who is set to play his final Grand Slam tournament before retiring, and Australian Alexei Popyrin, who upset Novak Djokovic in 2024 on the way to the fourth round.

One spot is also being held among the eight men's wild cards. Stan Wawrinka, the 2016 champion at Flushing Meadows who, at 41, is playing his final season, could be a candidate for that.

Also receiving women's wild cards were Carol Young Suh Lee, Reese Brantmeier, Thea Frodin, Leolia Jeanjean and Taylah Preston.

The other men receiving wild cards were two-time reigning NCAA singles champion Michael Zheng, Martin Damm, J.J. Wolf, Sebastian Gorzny and Jack Kennedy.

Kei Nishikori, the 2014 US Open runner-up, who also is retiring, was given a wild card into the men's qualifying tournament, along with Jordan Lee, Trevor Svajda, Andre Ilagan, Spencer Johnson, Michael Antonius, Andrew Johnson and Daniel Milavsky.

Women given spots in the qualifying tournament were Caroline Dolehide, Janae Preston, Katrina Scott, Ayana Akli, Annika Penickova, Julieta Pareja, Kristina Penickova and Savannah Broadus.

The main draw begins Aug 30, with the qualifying tournaments being played earlier that week.

Doubles loss

The Williams sisters both said they had a good time on their return to doubles action for the first time since 2022, despite suffering an opening-round defeat in Cincinnati.

The duo lost 2-6, 6-1, 10-8 to Ukraine's Kostyuk and American Stearns, coming back from 6-0 down in the tiebreaker before a double fault by Venus sealed their fate.

"I thought it was fun, I thought it was special, I thought it was good," Serena, 44, told reporters.

"We kicked off a little rust in the middle of the match. We were starting to feel it, and it was really fun. It was really cool to be able to do this again."

The Williams sisters have won 14 major doubles titles, including six at Wimbledon and three Olympic gold medals.

They last played doubles together at the 2022 US Open, where they lost to Czechs Lucie Hradecka and Linda Noskova.

The sisters were also due to compete in the doubles draw at Wimbledon, but were forced to pull out after Serena sustained a knee injury during her opening-round singles defeat to Australian Maya Joint. They were awarded a wild card for Cincinnati earlier this month.

"I think we've waited a long time to get back on the doubles court, even this year. Eventually, we find our way to each other," Venus, 46, added.

Venus also competed in the singles draw in Cincinnati, where she was beaten 6-2, 6-2 by Colombian Emiliana Arango.

AP



Serena Williams (left) and Venus Williams confer during a doubles match against Marta Kostyuk and Peyton Stearns at the Cincinnati Open on Monday. AFP

ARTISTIC SWIMMING

Further rule changes set to ripple through sport en route to LA28

BUDAPEST — Artistic swimming is set for further rule changes as the sport moves toward the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, with adjustments to free routines and their length to be announced soon, World Aquatics Artistic Swimming Technical Committee chairwoman Lisa Schott told reporters.

"In the new rule changes coming out very, very shortly, you will see some changes in the free routines and their length," Schott said during the Aug 12-16 World Aquatics Junior Artistic Swimming Championships in Budapest.

"I'm just giving a little secret tip there," she added.

Schott described the Budapest event as "the largest junior worlds in the history of the sport," with nearly 300 athletes from 35 federations competing and a number of new federations taking part in the championships.

"The sport continues to grow in depth and talent," she said, adding that many talented junior athletes had emerged.

Schott also said that age should not be used to define an athlete's potential, with some junior swimmers already competing at a very high level.

"I don't like to put limits on any athlete, because junior or senior, they all have their different level of skill," she said.

Budapest will host the World Aquatics Championships again in 2027, with qualification spots for the Los Angeles Olympics at stake. Schott said that some athletes at this year's junior worlds could be old enough to move into their senior national teams next year.

"Competing at a world level is a journey," she said. "Each competition you learn something and continue to develop."



China's He Zhien and Zhou Kunyi perform a routine themed "Moderation" at the 2026 World Aquatics Junior Artistic Swimming Championships in Budapest. The pair won silver in the women's duet free on Saturday with a score of 295.0701 points. XINHUA

Schott said the scoring system has also made the competition more unpredictable.

"We don't know who's going to win," she said. "It gives hope for every athlete, every team that they do have the possibility."

The rules are still evolving, and Schott said coaches and athletes need to make realistic decisions about the level of difficulty they can successfully perform. She said she did not want to see athletes aiming too high, only to end up with repeated base marks, jokingly calling such a situation a "base mark party".

The growing presence of male athletes was another feature of the championships that impressed Schott.

"We have never had as many males in the sport as we have seen demonstrated here," she said. "The men, the boys, bring a different vibe to the sport, which is great."

Several teams included male athletes in team events in Budapest, with some fielding two men in their lineups.

"That's where we want to go," Schott said. "We love the male swimmers in the team. It brings good synergy to the team, a new dynamic, and it shows that the sport is inclusive of all genders."

She expects the trend to continue as male athletes improve.

"Stay tuned for more males in the sport," she said.

Looking beyond Budapest to the 2027 World Championships and the Los Angeles Games, Schott said artistic swimming remains in a period of evolution.

"I think we're in a great position. The sport will continue to evolve," she said. "We want to use more technology in our sport.

"We're super excited to go to the Olympics and show the world one more time what an amazing sport artistic swimming is," Schott said.

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Soaring career
Military delivery aircraft marks 10 years in service
VISUAL, PAGE 12



US debt may affect rates of interest
WORLD, PAGE 4



An ode to heritage
Dance drama on Lingnan folk traditions to tour Southeast Asia
CULTURE, PAGE 13

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 FRIDAY, AUGUST 21, 2026

XI'S VISION | MAZU SOLUTION

Weather alert system taps tech, folklore

China offering world AI-powered MAZU as a meteorological safeguard solution

By **ZHANG YI** and **HU MEIDONG** in Putian, Fujian

"Mazu, protect our voyage on the deep," go the lyrics of a timeless Chinese folk song that is a plea to the sea goddess Mazu. "Safe journey out, safe return ashore."

Embedded in this song is the soulful bond between local fisherfolk and the sea goddess who, legend has it, was born on the shores of Meizhou Island in Putian, Fujian province.

Today, in the digital era, this ancient heritage has found a new, high-tech anchor.

On the island, which has 30 kilometers of coastline and is home to over 1,000 fishing boats, locals no longer rely on prayers to weather storms. Instead, they find safety at their fingertips through a smart app that instantly decodes real-time winds, wave heights and tidal patterns.

For Lin Haifang, a veteran mariner with a decade of island life under his belt, a simple app alert triggers his typhoon routine. He hauls up oyster shell strings, lashes down kelp rafts and steers his boat to shelter early. Even amid choppy seas and weak signals, the Beidou Navigation Satellite System beams alerts directly to his palm.

"It feels as if Mazu puts the sea conditions right in my hand," he said of his early preparations, which keep his annual losses down and his income steady.

Action plan proposed

With the increasing frequency of extreme weather, the United Nations launched the Early Warnings for All initiative in 2022 to close gaps and protect everyone on the planet. China became the first to answer the call, proposing an action plan in 2024 and launching an intelligent meteorological early warning solution in 2025 named MAZU — an acronym denoting Multi-hazard Alert, Zero-gap and Universal.

The system, deployed in seven countries, blends artificial intelligence forecasting models, data from Fengyun meteorological satellites, cloud computing and ground observations to deliver highly customized services.

President Xi Jinping announced on July 17 that China will bring the AI-powered meteorological warning system MAZU to 30 countries over the next five years to safeguard homes around the world.

He made the remarks while addressing the opening ceremony of the 2026 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai, calling for joint efforts to build a just and equitable global AI governance system.

"All countries should take a people-centered approach and develop AI for the positive and for good. We should ensure that AI is an important driver for shared prosperity and common security," he said.

Effective cooperation

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who attended the meeting, praised the initiative, saying that the MAZU system could be one of the most important instruments for making international cooperation effective in protecting people and property.

Zhang Xingying, director of the China Meteorological Administration's Department of International Cooperation, said the MAZU system is a perfect combination of fine traditional Chinese culture, AI and cutting-edge technology.

"Naming the system after the Chinese goddess of marine weather reflects a unique touch of Chinese romance and demonstrates our cultural confidence," he said.

In his view, Mazu's legendary helpers, the Thousand-Mile Eye and the All-Hearing Ear, are reflected in today's meteorological tools, with weather satellites and radar being the eye, and AI and physical models used to forecast climate disasters serving as the ear.

"The core essence of the MAZU system goes beyond exporting China's early-warning capabilities," he said. "More important, it is about working with global partners to co-build a public safety solution for the long run."

*See **Safeguard,** page 3*

Rallying against militarism



People join a massive protest on Wednesday near the National Diet in Tokyo against a series of dangerous moves initiated by the Japanese government, including its increasing push for military expansion. About 15,000 people took part in the demonstration, which also earned huge support online. ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS / AFP

Washington urged to drop drone tariffs

By **ZHANG CHENXU** and **ZHONG NAN**

The United States' latest tariff push on drone imports, coupled with its accusation of "tariff evasion" by China, has heightened concerns that its increasingly unilateral and protectionist approach toward trade could further erode bilateral trust and disrupt global industrial and supply chains, said officials and experts.

Such tactics are likely to prove self-defeating, as punitive and discriminatory tariffs would raise US supply-chain costs without delivering the manufacturing revival it seeks, they said, adding that dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation offer the only practical way forward.

Their comments came as China's Ministry of Commerce urged the US on Thursday to immediately withdraw its Section 232 tariffs on imported drones and related components.

On Aug 13, the US announced Section 232 tariffs of up to 100 percent on certain imported drones and components, citing national security concerns — a move that the Financial Times said targeted Chinese drone technology.

Voicing strong opposition to the US move, Commerce Ministry spokesman He Yadong said it is a "unilateral and protectionist" action taken on the pretext of national security. Chinese drones exported to the US are used mainly for civilian purposes, he said, adding that such discriminatory treatment is seriously harming the interests of Chinese companies.

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Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the move is likely to disrupt the stability and resilience of global supply chains, given the deep interdependence among economies worldwide.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank based in Washington, DC, said in an analysis last year that about 90 percent of the world's high-strength permanent magnets used in drone motors are produced in China.

On Aug 13, the Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy at the White House released a report accusing Chinese exporters of routing goods through third countries to "evade" US tariffs. It identified over 40 countries and jurisdictions as presenting elevated risks of illegal transshipment.

He, the spokesman, said the report "disregards facts and distorts the truth", branding normal international trade as a "scam" and fabricating "a so-called shadow transshipment network". He urged the US to stop making irresponsible accusations and damaging Sino-US economic and trade relations, and instead work toward safeguarding the stability of global industrial and supply chains.

Shi Xiaoli, a professor of international economic law at China University of Political Science and Law in Beijing, said that any US assessment of "tariff evasion" should have relied on verifiable transaction-level evidence, rather than broad estimates based on changes in trade patterns.

EU probe opposed

In another development on Thursday, the Commerce Ministry urged the European Union to swiftly correct its "wrongful practices" in a foreign subsidy investigation involving Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com, reiterating Beijing's firm opposition to Brussels' abuse of unilateral tools to suppress Chinese companies.

On May 28, the European Commission — the executive arm of the EU — opened an in-depth investigation into JD's proposed acquisition of German consumer electronics retailer Ceconomy.

China's Ministry of Justice, together with the Commerce Ministry and other departments, determined on Wednesday that certain cross-border measures taken by the EU against Chinese entities in the case constituted improper extraterritorial jurisdiction. The decision has barred any organization or individual from complying with or assisting in the implementation of those measures.

Contact the writers at zhangchenxu@chinadaily.com.cn

WORLD WATCH
By Joseph Sifakis

AI needs a symbiotic reset with humanity

As companies pour billions of dollars into artificial intelligence while cutting jobs, fears of human replacement are mounting. Oracle is reportedly preparing another round of layoffs ahead of Sept 1, according to Business Insider. But the 2026 Stanford AI Index shows that AI is reshaping the labor market without yet causing mass job displacement.

The promise of AI is extraordinary: new frontiers in science, solutions to global challenges and a future where human creativity flourishes. That is the dream.

But the reality we are witnessing could not be further from it.

The rapid deployment of AI today is not aligned with human well-being. It is driven by an ideology — one that treats human beings as obstacles to be overcome. Slogans like "move fast and break things" are rooted in a form of technological determinism that devalues human agency.

*See **Tech,** page 3*

PHOTOGRAPHERS FLOCK TO XINJIANG FOR CELESTIAL LIGHT SHOW

With its lack of light pollution and vast emptiness, the Gobi Desert proves a perfect spot to watch Perseid meteor shower

By **XU LIN** in Hami, Xinjiang
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Long after sunset, sweltering 40 C heat still hung over the vast, remote Gobi Desert as hot winds swept across the wilderness. Suddenly and fleetingly, a blazing fireball streaked across the star-studded sky, leaving a long, glowing trail and drawing loud whoops of amazement from stargazers.

Astrophotographers stationed behind their tripods leaned forward to eagerly check their camera screens, hoping to have captured the fleeting moment. As the Perseid meteor shower peaked on Aug 12 and 13, stargazers flocked to the Pterosaur-Yardang Dahaidao Scenic Area in Hami, Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, to witness the celestial event.

"Stargazers are absolutely drawn to this place, and for good reason. Beyond minimal light pollution, the air here is extremely dry with little dust, creating exceptional atmospheric transparency," said veteran astrophotographer Liu Bing from Beijing. "As a result, stars retain their sharpness in camera shots, and less starlight is scattered away, making it possible to capture stunning pictures."

Liu and other astrophotographers recently attended the annual Sweet Whispers to the Galaxy Festival in Hami and captured images of the Perseid meteor shower, an event that aims to reinforce the area's reputation as a premier destination for stargazing. Many of them are from China StarVision Alliance, a domestic platform for nearly 1,000 astrophotographers.

Official data showed that Dahaidao registered about 25,000 visitor arrivals and over 10,000 vehicles in early August. To cater to stargazers' needs, the site imposed strict night lighting restrictions and all stargazing spots featured 24-hour security patrols, emergency contacts and safety signs.



A meteor streaks across the night sky in Hami, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Aug 12. LIU BING / FOR CHINA DAILY

For astrophotographers, making advance preparations is always vital — from understanding lunar phases to scouting locations with minimal light pollution.

They check shooting sites in daylight and use apps to monitor weather and cloud cover, keeping close track of shifts in these conditions to the nearest hour. They also use apps to forecast how stars will move across the night sky and assess potential interference from the moon.

"When observing the Perseid meteor shower, we needed to locate the constellation Perseus and learn about the radiant point in advance — the spot in the sky from which all meteors seem to originate. As the radiant rises, it shapes the paths of meteor trails across the sky," said Wang Junfeng, from Beijing.

One night was mostly overcast, and the group waited patiently until clear breaks opened up between the clouds. "We could only seize those brief windows to observe the meteors and take photos," Wang said.

Another member, Liu Dapeng, set up three cameras at different locations before dusk, adjusted their shooting parameters and configured them to shoot a frame every few seconds until predawn twilight.

*See **Meteors,** page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.



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INDEPTH







Left: A consumer selects an ice cup at a supermarket in Shanghai. WANG ZITONG / XINHUA **Middle:** A glass of coke is served with ice at a hotel in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, in July. JIANG LINGGUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY
Right: An employee at an ice-making company refills edible ice cups in Changsha, Hunan province, on Aug 11. YU CHUNSHENG / XINHUA

Ice, Chinese consumers' newest crush

Preference for cold drinks sparks debate on worth of traditional hot, warm beverages

By **WANG YING** in Shanghai
wang_ying@chinadaily.com.cn

In China, drinking warm or hot water is a long-standing daily practice passed down through generations and believed to bring good health.

However, fueled by an online buzz and changes to drinking habits, Chinese consumers — in particular social media-savvy young ones — are now putting ice, and plenty of it, in their drinks.

At convenience stores, cups of ice have become a popular seller. At tea and coffee shops, "full ice, no water" has become a popular way to order a drink. Young consumers have also turned cups of ice into a social media sensation, using them to create DIY drinks that have attracted huge online attention.

Gu Xiaoxiao, 36, a junior middle school teacher in Shanghai, is one of the ice drink devotees. For almost half the year, she has a cup of iced coffee at least once a day.

"I usually start in April or May and keep drinking iced coffee until September or October. Besides my daily quota, I also order iced drinks when dining out or meeting friends. Recently, I even arranged to queue with friends for a popular ice cup coffee that had gone viral online," said Gu.

According to a paper on China's urban consumer behavior in 2025, ice cup sales have grown by more than 300 percent for two consecutive years, with consumers in the first-tier cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong province's Guangzhou and Shenzhen buying an average of 48 cups per person per year, reported ThePaper.cn.

Publicly available data shows that ice cups are gaining wider market penetration, expanding from plain to flavored varieties and ice cubes designed for cocktails. A search for "ice cups" on Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, returned more than 40,000 posts.

Zhang Yi, CEO and chief analyst at iiMedia Research, attributed the rising demand for ice cups to the past two summers being very hot and young people wanting to make their own drinks using ice cups.

"The cold chain improvement has led to a cost reduction in ice transportation. On social media, the 'full ice, no water' trend has also become a new way for people to socialize," said Zhang.

"Consumers are increasingly willing to pay for ice that is cleaner and comes in more distinctive shapes," he added.

Surging demand

Dong Yuanyuan, head of ice-cup procurement at Freshippo, a grocery and fresh goods retail chain, said: "Over the past two years, we have clearly seen ice cups grow into a sizable market."

"Some have predicted that edible ice could eventually outsell ice cream, while others have joked that edible ice is taking over the world," she said.

According to Dong, ice cups first emerged in Japan and South Korea, where iced drinks are popular year-round. In Japan, annual consumption has reached 2.57 billion cups, comparable to the volume of bottled water consumed.

Dong said when ice cups entered the Chinese market more than a decade ago, monthly sales were only a few dozen boxes. From 2024 to 2026, annual consumption in first-tier cities had reached 48 cups per person.



A contestant adds ice cubes while making a coffee drink during a village cafe competition in Beijing, on June 12. "Full ice, no water" has become a popular way in the coffee industry in China. LI WENMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

"Annual ice cup consumption is already more than twice the roughly 20 cups of coffee consumed per person. In addition, the market is growing by more than 300 percent a year, leaving ample room for further growth," she added.

Freshippo first introduced ice cups in 2021, along with bags of ice for consumers looking to have them available at home.

According to Freshippo data, demand for ice peaks earlier than sales of iced drinks during the year.

"Driven by strong demand for DIY drinks over the past two years, we have moved up the launch of our ice cups from early summer to early spring. As the camping season begins in spring, we usually see the first sales peak," said Dong.

"After the 2026 FIFA World Cup kicked off in June, sales of slow-melting ice cubes developed specifically for cocktails rose 220 percent week-on-week on average, making them one of the season's standout products in the drinks market," Dong added.

Tao Tao, an illustrator based in Beijing, traces her habit of using ice cups back to her time studying in South Korea several years ago. In South Korea, she noticed people often purchased brewed coffee and ice cups separately at supermarkets, making it easy to create an iced Americano.

She was delighted to find that in the past two years, ice cups have become readily available in Beijing supermarkets, making a cold drink easily accessible during the hot summer months.

"The combination of ice cups with various beverages like coconut water, cold brew coffee, juice, or alcohol allows for simple and instant creative daily creation," she said.

Japanese convenience store chain Lawson said a steady growth has been seen in sales of ice cups and bagged ice over the past two years. Its ice cup sales rose more than 30 percent from May to July in both 2025 and 2026.



Christmas-themed beverages are served with ice at a restaurant in Beijing in November. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"Young consumers are increasingly pairing ice cups with coffee and other drinks, driving Lawson to introduce more creative products, including sparkling ice cups and rainbow-colored varieties, to meet their changing tastes," said the company.

Zheng Wei, general manager of Ice Extreme (Beijing) Food Technology Ltd, a Beijing-based edible ice manufacturer, said Chinese official media has forecast that the iced drink market will reach 63.9 billion yuan ($9.48 billion) in 2026.

Zheng said the demand for iced drinks has become more consistent. In the past, most factories would shut down during the off-season. Now, they run one shift in the off-season and two during the peak summer season.

"Previously, market demand mainly came from businesses in the likes of convenience stores, but in recent years, innovative retail formats including instant retail have seen rapid growth," Zheng said.

"The market used to be dominated by basic products such as cups of ice and bagged ice. Now we offer products including specially-shaped ice, ice buckets and slow-melting cocktail ice, tailoring to diversified needs."

Heated discussion

The iced drink trend has also sparked a major cultural debate.

In traditional Chinese health practices, cold foods and drinks have long been treated with caution.

Traditional Chinese medicine posits that winter is characterized by an abundance of cold energy, which can easily harm the body's *yang* energy.

Consuming raw and cold foods can allow this cold energy to penetrate the body, leading to stagnation of *qi* and blood, and resulting in symptoms like stomach pain and menstrual cramps. Cold water is believed to harm the spleen and stomach, weakening *yang* and potentially causing digestive issues such as diarrhea or loss of appetite. In contrast, hot water is thought to disperse cold energy, promote the circulation of *qi* and blood, and warm and nourish the body.

Wang Bo, chief physician of the department of gastroenterology at Tongji Hospital affiliated to Tongji Medical College of Huazhong University of Science and Technology, told Life Times media outlet that moderate consumption of cold drinks can have some benefits.

"Cold drinks can help cool the body and relieve heat. They can also stimulate the many cold-sensitive receptors in the mouth and on the tongue, sending signals to the brain that produce a feeling of pleasure," Wang said.

From a traditional Chinese medicine perspective, however, cold drinks are best consumed between noon and 3 pm, when *yang* energy is believed to be at its strongest, and consuming ice during this period is considered less likely to cause harm from excessive cold.

Zhang Min, an acupuncture practitioner at Longhua Hospital affiliated to Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, said in an article published in the Shanghai Observer that the debate over whether it's better to drink hot or cold water is not a simple one. "Modern nutrition and medicine increasingly emphasize individual differences, suggesting that what might be 'poison' for one person could be 'medicine' for another."

Zhang said this debate reflects two different health philosophies. The Eastern perspective tends to focus on nurturing and prevention, viewing the body as a delicate system that requires careful maintenance.

The Western perspective, however, leans toward training and adaptation, treating the body as a resilient system capable of handling challenges. "Moderate cold exposure, such as drinking cold water or taking cold baths, is believed to stimulate the circulatory system, boost metabolism, and enhance immunity, akin to a form of exercise for the body," Zhang wrote.

There was also a public health imperative for the promotion of drinking boiled water, according to a 2024 article published by the International Journal of Social Sciences and Public Administration.

Following a cholera outbreak in China in 1932, chaotic water usage was identified by a prominent medical figure as the primary cause for its spread. Due to the absence of a running water system, residents upstream often disposed of their household waste into rivers, exposing those downstream to infection risks.

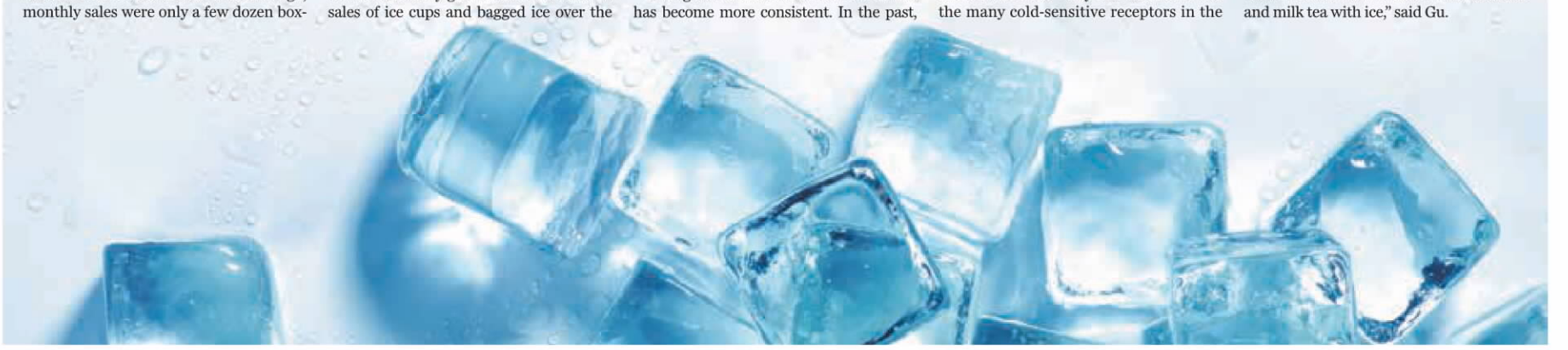
Following medical recommendations, Shanghai established numerous affordable boiled water shops which resulted in reducing the patient mortality rate from 30 percent to 7.4 percent. This initiative instilled a nationwide habit of consuming boiled water, the article said.

In order to address the issue of widespread parasite infestation during that period, an initiative to promote boiled water was once again prioritized. Previous efforts were limited to major cities like Shanghai and Guangzhou.

Boiling water facilities were made mandatory in all factories, military camps, and farms, the article said. Restrictions were imposed on daily drinking water and most domestic sources, thereby necessitating reliance on these designated boiling water rooms. A portable thermos flask emerged as an iconic symbol of that era, with people gradually adapting to queuing up at specific times for a serving of hot boiled water.

Today, people such as Gu, the school teacher, take a balanced approach to hot versus cold drinks.

"In winter, I drink a lot of tea and usually brew it with hot water. But when the weather gets hot, I find hot tea harder to drink. I either have bottled water or coffee and milk tea with ice," said Gu.



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TOP NEWS

Safeguard: Heritage turns into a living bridge

From page 1

"This reflects the enduring spirit of the Chinese nation — centered on virtue, benevolence and profound love — which remains vibrant after thousands of years, and also highly aligns with President Xi's vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity," Zhang added.

According to tradition, Mazu, the Chinese goddess of marine weather and maritime safety, was a Song Dynasty (960-1279) fisherwoman named Lin Mo, from Meizhou Island, who was later deified.

Revered for her ability to predict weather, she died at age 28 during a mission to rescue fisherfolk from treacherous storms and was deified as Mazu, meaning benevolent mother. She is often portrayed as carrying a lantern to light the stormy seas, and was long credited with calming storms and guiding ships home.

Belief in Mazu eventually was spread along maritime trade routes by Chinese seafarers and grew into a global bond, with over 11,000 temples and 300 million followers across 50 countries.

During his tenure in Fujian, Xi actively promoted the protection of Meizhou Island and its unique Mazu culture. He planted trees on the island to protect its environment and allocated 2 million yuan ($297,500) to support the Mazu Square project to accommodate larger crowds, after he learned that the project's construction faced a tight budget.

He said after a visit to the island that Mazu culture reflects the character of the Chinese nation, and its exchange and dissemination across the globe can help build a positive image of the Chinese people around the world.

Spiritual asset

Inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009, Mazu culture now serves as a shared spiritual asset along the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

As her golden statue travels for international processions and thousands of overseas people return to her birthplace each year, this ancient heritage remains a living bridge for global fellowship.

Ke Li, deputy director of Putian University's Mazu Culture Research Institute, said, "The core spirit of Mazu culture aligns perfectly with the philosophy of the early-warning solutions, rooted in a shared commitment to putting people's safety first."

The system also reflects Mazu's spirit of universal beneficence — echoing the goal of protection for everyone regardless of geography or background — and mirrors her ancient wisdom of foresight, blending traditional weather forecasting with modern rapid-response mechanisms, Ke said.

Reflecting this spirit, the MAZU system has become a widely sought-after global public good. More than 40 national meteorological agencies are already using MAZU's cloud-based services, while customized versions of the system have been deployed in Pakistan, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Jordan, Mongolia, the Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka, according to the China Meteorological Administration.

Nestled on one of the world's busiest maritime trade routes in East Africa, Djibouti has become a critical proving ground for the platform. An upgraded version of the MAZU system will be put into operation by the end of this year, which will sharpen its local forecast resolution from 9 km to 3 km.

"MAZU 2.0 is very useful because we have several seaports on the coast," said Mohamed Ismail Nour, director-general of the Djibouti National Meteorological Agency, who expects to deepen port and shipping weather cooperation for safer maritime operations.

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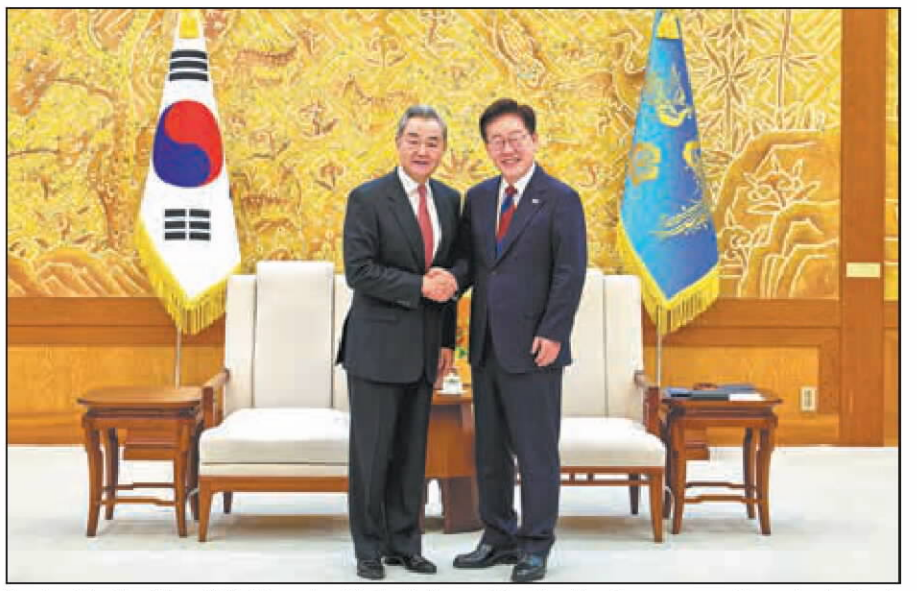

Foreign Minister Wang Yi (left) meets with South Korean President Lee Jae-myung on Thursday in Seoul, the capital of South Korea. XINHUA

FM's ROK visit builds positive momentum

Wang calls for strategic cooperation, political mutual trust in bilateral ties

By ZHOU JIN
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Foreign Minister Wang Yi wrapped up a two-day visit to the Republic of Korea on Thursday, which observers said reflected continuous efforts by the two neighbors to maintain the positive momentum in bilateral ties.

The visit aimed to implement the consensus reached by the two heads of state during their reciprocal visits, deepen political mutual trust and advance mutually beneficial cooperation, while laying the groundwork for further interactions between the two leaders during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in November, they said.

This was Wang's first official trip to the ROK in five years. The two neighbors will celebrate the 34th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations on Monday.

During Wang's meeting with ROK President Lee Jae-myung in Seoul on Thursday, the president said that Seoul and Beijing should become mutually dependent and mutually beneficial partners with complementary strengths.

Lee said that trade cooperation between the two countries has maintained strong growth. Highlighting that the number of mutual visits between the two peoples is expected to exceed 10 million this year, he noted that public perceptions of China in the ROK continue to improve.

Lee said that he looks forward to visiting Shenzhen for the 2026 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, calling it an important opportunity to work with China to advance their strategic cooperative partnership to a new level.

China-ROK relations have fully recovered and made positive progress since the beginning of this year, Wang noted, adding that such a fact demonstrates that a rational, pragmatic and positive policy toward China fully serves the ROK's interests.

When meeting with the ROK's top presidential national security adviser Wi Sung-lac on Thursday, Wang expressed hope that the ROK will exercise genuine strategic autonomy, refrain from bloc confrontation or taking sides, and develop its relations with China, the United States and other major countries in a mutually compatible manner.

During their strategic dialogue, they also had an in-depth exchange of views on regional security issues.

Wang stressed that it is necessary to remain highly vigilant against the rhetoric and actions of Japan's right-wing forces, which seek to turn back the wheel of history, and that the resurgence of Japanese militarism must never be allowed.

Wang's visit also came as the ROK and the US confirmed that they were sharply scaling back major annual joint drills, a move viewed as a goodwill gesture toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The fundamental way to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula is to address the root causes and to push for the US to abandon its hostile policy toward the DPRK, Wang told Wi.

Wang called on all parties to do more to facilitate the resumption of dialogue and restoration of mutual trust, expressing hopes that the Korean Peninsula will move toward peaceful coexistence between the ROK and the DPRK, ultimately achieving lasting peace and stability on the peninsula.

Li Jiacheng, an associate professor at Liaoning University's School of International Studies, said that both the US and the ROK hope China can serve as a bridge and play a greater role in facilitating their engagement with the DPRK.

In his talks with ROK Foreign Minister Cho Hyun on Wednesday, Wang said that China's vast market offers the ROK enormous opportunities due to its geographical proximity. Wang expressed hope that the two sides will continue to expand cooperation.

The two countries should also tap new growth areas for cooperation in artificial intelligence, green transition, the digital economy, high-end equipment and the silver economy, he added.

The Chinese foreign minister called on the two countries to accelerate negotiations on the second phase of the China-ROK Free Trade Agreement.

Deeper China-Africa media relations urged

By ZHAO JIA
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African officials and media leaders called on Thursday for China-Africa media cooperation to move beyond equipment support and program exchanges toward coproduction and two-way storytelling, in order to help the African media better narrate their own stories and bring a wider African perspective to Chinese audiences.

They made the remarks as the 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation opened in Beijing, bringing together about 400 government, media, diplomatic, business and academic representatives from China and 45 African countries.

The three-day forum is being held as China and Africa mark 70 years of launching diplomatic relations in 2026 and observe the China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges.

Alhaji Mohamed Sarjoh Bah, the African Union's permanent representative to China, described the media as a strategic tool for development, cultural identity and economic opportunity, as well as a major force shaping international perception. He emphasized that Africa should not remain a passive recipient of information, and should instead become a producer and distributor of knowledge and ideas.

He urged cooperation beyond content exchanges in film, broadcasting, animation, gaming and digital content to create value chains that generate employment and attract investment.

Ahunna Eziakonwa, United Nations undersecretary-general and special adviser on Africa, made a video address to the forum in which she described storytelling as an essential tool for development.

External narratives have long obscured African realities, but young African creators are changing that through streaming, animation and digital content, Eziakonwa said, adding that Sino-African joint productions, along with technologies adapted to African languages and contexts, could strengthen the continent's narrative sovereignty.

Gregoire Ndjaka, director-general of the African Union of Broadcasting, underscored that cooperation between Africa and China should promote an exchange of stories, voices, ideas and experiences.

Ndjaka noted Chinese support for African broadcasting and the provision of news, documentaries and other programs on AUBVision, the union's content-sharing platform, but emphasized that African content should receive greater exposure on Chinese platforms, giving Chinese audiences more opportunities to understand the continent from an African perspective.

Evelyne Butoyi, communication and media minister of Burundi, which currently chairs the African Union, said Africa-China cooperation has improved grassroots access to information and cultural content. She cited the China-aided "Access to Satellite TV for 10,000 African Villages" project, which has provided transmission equipment to 500 villages in Burundi and extended digital television coverage in remote areas.

Cao Shumin, deputy head of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and head of the National Radio and Television Administration, highlighted the scale of China-Africa media cooperation.

Over the past two years, more than 80 Chinese productions have aired in Africa, while over 80 programs from 29 African countries have been shown on major Chinese television channels and streaming platforms, Cao said.

The two sides have coproduced about 50 audiovisual programs, while China has organized 45 training programs for more than 1,000 media professionals from 32 African countries, she added.

On Thursday, the forum also unveiled 80 practical cooperation projects and issued a joint declaration calling for deeper collaboration in content production, digital transformation and AI governance.



Participants pose for a group photo during the 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation in Beijing on Thursday. The event runs through Friday. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Tech: AI should collaborate with humans

From page 1

At its core lies a dangerous myth — that machines will soon surpass us in every cognitive domain, rendering human expertise obsolete.

This myth is not innocent. It is already being used to justify mass layoffs of software engineers, writers, translators and analysts.

Tech executives frame these cuts as inevitable progress. But a clear-eyed look at the facts tells a different story.

We are still in AI's early stages. Today's systems mimic certain cognitive functions, but they do not understand, reason or reliably replace human judgment.

Consider autonomous vehicles — promised by 2020, still struggling on city streets. Consider the "autonomous agents" heralded for 2025 — now quietly postponed.

As someone who works on autonomous systems, I can attest that current AI lacks genuine understanding. It matches patterns. It does not think.

Some argue that reasoning will magically "emerge" as we scale models to an ever-increasing number of parameters. This narrative suits the tech giants perfectly. It justifies billion-dollar investments in data centers and infrastructure. But this is a gamble with no scientific basis, one that leads AI to a dead end.

We need a different path: AI that collaborates with humans, instead of replacing them — specialized, transparent systems designed to augment expertise in fields such as medicine, engineering, scientific research and business management, not general-purpose black boxes.

This "collaborative AI" raises profound scientific challenges. How do we build machines that explain their reasoning in human-understandable terms? How do we establish trust between humans and machines? How do we design systems that solve problems with us, rather than for us? Consider a medical diagnosis. A collaborative AI would not replace the doctor's judgment. It would surface relevant research, flag anomalies and explain its recommendations in plain language — allowing the physician to make the final, informed decision. This differs fundamentally from current "black box" systems, which provide take-it-or-leave-it answers.

These are hard problems. They require investment in explainability, reliability and domain-specific knowledge — not just bigger models and more data. Yet academic research, which should lead this charge, has been sidelined. University laboratories are unable to compete with the private labs of a handful of companies and often find themselves reduced to playing catch-up. When research is concentrated in a few private labs, its priorities shift toward proprietary features, rather than scientific understanding. This distorts the entire field. We must revitalize university research — driven by curiosity, transparency and peer review — which is best positioned to address the challenges of explainability and trust.

The conditions conducive to change are taking shape. Public distrust of unaccountable AI is growing. From chatbots that make up facts, to facial recognition systems with racial biases, to autonomous driving systems with fatal flaws, the public has seen too many buzzwords touted as major breakthroughs. Every widely publicized hype campaign erodes trust. The technical limits of "scaling up" are becoming apparent — even to the industry's true believers. And the economic pressure weighing on tech giants — the gap between colossal investments and a market still struggling to generate returns — is becoming impossible to ignore.

History shows that humanity has capitalized on technological revolutions by balancing risks and benefits. The steam engine, electricity and the internet — each brought profound change, but each was shaped by regulation, public debate and ethical reflection. Artificial intelligence should be no exception. The initial rush of enthusiasm should give way to sober reflection. Societies built frameworks to ensure these technologies served the common good. We are now at that same inflection point.

We have a choice. We can continue down the path of replacement, building machines that mimic us, supplant us and ultimately marginalize us. Or we can invest in a future where AI enriches human intelligence rather than replacing it.

That future requires a global effort: governments funding collaborative AI research, universities prioritizing human-AI interaction, and citizens demanding transparency and accountability. This means public funding for collaborative AI, curricula in human-AI interaction design, and regulatory frameworks requiring explainability before deployment in sensitive domains from healthcare to criminal justice and the management of critical infrastructure.

The question is not whether AI holds extraordinary potential — it clearly does. The question is whether we will have the wisdom to steer it toward a true symbiosis with humanity and prevent it from insidiously gaining the upper hand. This is our historic responsibility. Now is the time to act.

The author is a laureate of the 2007 Turing Award (known as the Nobel Prize for Computing) and founder of the Verimag laboratory in Grenoble. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Meteors: Livestream gains views

From page 1

Liu Dapeng said that smartphones, when mounted on a tripod, can capture the starry sky. Beginners can invest in cameras and wide-angle lenses based on their budgets, or opt for affordable secondhand gear, he said.

"After putting it into practice, they can think about whether they want to stick with astrophotography. It can be tiring, enduring outdoor hardships such as freezing cold and rain. Safety is always paramount. It is very easy to get lost in the desert at night, so you should travel with others and take no risks," he added.

Zhou Bo led a team to livestream the Perseid meteor shower from Dahaidao, Barkol Lake and Yiwu county. Drawing on his multidisciplinary knowledge including geology and history, he promoted Hami's natural resources and cultural heritage while hosting the livestream.

Zhou said he believes that the meteors stir curiosity and a thirst for knowledge among his viewers, inspiring wonder at the boundless cosmos.

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WORLD

Comfort food



Migrant women wait for donated meals on Wednesday at a sports field converted by residents into an improvised shelter following a mass crossing of migrants from Morocco, in the El Principe neighborhood of Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta. VIOLETA SANTOS MOURA / REUTERS

Trump expands economic warfare against Iran

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

US President Donald Trump has declared an "economic D-Day" against Iran amid a ceasefire deadlock, threatening countries that provide a lifeline to Tehran with "tremendous consequences".

Trump's threats came just as the United Arab Emirates suspended all trade with Iran on Wednesday after the UAE came under renewed attack, triggering nationwide warnings, a day earlier.

In a social media post on Wednesday, Trump boasted that no one has given Iran "a greater opportunity to make a deal than me", adding that Tehran failed to take it as he announced "the most crushing economic operation ever taken against any country".

Trump said it would be "economic warfare and isolation on an unprecedented scale" and claimed that Iran "is hanging by a thread".

"Today, I am also announcing that any country that allows its financial institutions, businesses, airports or government entities to provide any type of lifeline to Iran will itself face tremendous economic consequences," he said.

"This will be an Economic D-Day," he added, reiterating Iran "will never have a nuclear weapon".

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi pushed back on Thursday, saying the "so-called Economic D-Day is a diversion from America's own crisis", citing debt and surging interest costs.

"Doubling down on failed policies will only bring further defeat — and enmity of Iranians. US economic terrorism threatens global economy and sovereignty worldwide," he said.

Iran has been under international sanctions for decades, especially since the US imposed sanctions following the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Since the current war broke out on Feb 28, the US has targeted Iranian energy exports, disrupting Tehran's primary revenue stream. Washington has also targeted entities allegedly smuggling Iranian-origin liquefied petroleum gas disguised as Omani LPG to South and East Asia.

The US Treasury Department has also imposed sanctions against Iran's banking and foreign exchange networks, and weapons procurement.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Thursday that imposing sanctions and exerting pressure will not be useful in solving the Iran issue.

China calls on relevant parties to take responsible steps and resolve the issue through political and diplomatic means, he said.

Without interference

At a meeting with Iraqi President Nizar Amidi, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf warned that the US is seeking to plunder the resources of the Gulf states, the Tasnim News Agency reported.

Regional countries can establish security and stability through unity and without foreign interference, Ghalibaf said.

The US is the main cause of the region's problems, he said, adding that Washington's hegemonic approach has fueled recent conflicts, inflicting losses on Iran and Iraq.

Rasha Al Joundy, a senior researcher at the Dubai Public Policy Research Centre, told China Daily that by imposing more economic pressure on Iran at this stage, the US "seeks to inflict more internal pressure on the government".

However, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is the one making decisions and therefore, this will inflict political pressure on the government because of economic pressure on the people who are the most affected and vulnerable, she said.

The pressure will not have much impact militarily on the IRGC's decisions, she added.

"Strategically I don't believe that the US would accomplish short-term political gains with new sanctions, but it could push for a new round of military confrontation in the region," she said.

"If the US administration would adopt this as a long-term strategy, then the outcome would depend on whether it is supported and implemented for a long timeframe, without suspensions or side exemptions."

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Groups challenge rule ending Duration of Status

By **MAY ZHOU** in Houston, Texas
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Multiple organizations filed a complaint and a motion for preliminary injunction challenging the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) final rule ending the Duration of Status (D/S) framework for international students, exchange visitors and representatives of foreign media in the US District Court for the District of Massachusetts on Tuesday.

The complaint argues that DHS failed to adequately assess its costs and benefits, meaningfully respond to public comments, consider less burdensome alternatives or justify the rule based on its stated objectives.

The lawsuit also alleges that DHS provided an inadequate public comment period and exceeded its statutory authority.

DHS gave the public 32 days and drew 22,000 comments, including opposition from more than 30 Congress members. Despite there being more comments opposing the changes, DHS enacted the new rule, which is scheduled to take effect on Sept 15.

Fanta Aw, executive director and CEO of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, said this decision is "a solution in search of a problem".

"The rule will severely undermine the contributions international students make to US campuses, economies and national security," Aw said in a statement. "After carefully reviewing the final rule and the sweeping harm it will cause to our national interest, it is clear that litigation is warranted and necessary."

For about half a century, F-1 students and J-1 visitors could remain in the US for as long as they are enrolled in an academic program with no fixed departure date.

Under the new rule, international students will be given a specific end date aligning with the academic program length or four years, whichever is shorter. For longer programs, the students are required to file an extension of stay.

In addition, F-1 undergraduate students won't be able to change their major or transfer to another college in the first year. They can't pursue another major at the same or lower education level after graduation.

F-1 graduate students are prohibited from switching majors or schools at all, and the duration of F-1 students for English learning will be limited to 24 months in aggregate.

"The new restriction doesn't make any sense," Liu, an art student in Chicago who wants to be identified by his last name only, told China Daily. "An arts degree usually stops at master's level. Serious art students often pursue another master's degree in a different medium to expand their horizon for creativity."

Dual degrees are not uncommon in many fields, Liu said.

For example, research physicians often pursue both MD and PhD to treat patients and run research labs. Jobs in bioinformatics require training in both biology and computer science. Architecture design often benefits from engineering training.

The lawsuit argued that a four-year fixed term is incompatible with many programs, particularly PhDs.

NAFSA estimated that "the median years to a research doctorate is 5.7 years from entering a program to completion, while those who complete the master's/doctorate sequence take an average of 7.3 years from entering graduate school to completion".

Such restrictions are very off-putting. A survey by NAFSA and The Institute for Progress showed that 49 percent of current international students would not have studied in the US without D/S.

College application platform Common App showed that international applicants were down by 9 percent for this fall semester. Many universities are expecting a steep drop in international graduate students.

Miriam Feldblum, president and CEO of the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, said these changes ignore "actual program lengths or students' educational needs" and shift "academic decisions from institutions to immigration officials".

"The rule will disrupt educational pathways, impose significant new burdens on colleges and universities, and make the United States less competitive as the premier destination for global talent," Feldblum said.

The lawsuit said many commenters warned that declining international enrollment would be catastrophic.

"Many cited the Clemens study, which estimated that within ten years, the economic costs of eliminating D/S would be $72-145 billion annually," it said in the court document.

The new rule would also limit I visa holders — representatives of foreign information media — to a maximum of 240 days. For Chinese passport holders, it's much shorter at 90 days.

The lawsuit said that many are concerned that the new rule requiring international journalists to file frequent extension of stay requests would put government officials in a position to punish journalists for exercising their First Amendment rights.

Growing US national debt 'huge burden'

Record level of obligations could eventually hit Americans with higher borrowing costs

By **BELINDA ROBINSON** in New York
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Millions of Americans who are already struggling with the cost of living could eventually feel the effects of persistently high debt as US gross federal debt surpassed $40 trillion on Wednesday and economists and think tanks warned that it's a "huge burden" that could drive up interest rates, inflation and borrowing costs.

> "Despite the obvious recklessness of this fiscal path, we are showing no signs of slowing down."
>
> **Michael A. Peterson**, CEO of a think tank focused on US fiscal challenges

The record-breaking, unprecedented, national debt reached the milestone in part due to defense costs, social programs like Social Security and Medicare, and interest payments on that debt — a big part of federal spending, experts said.

"The national debt hitting $40 trillion is a huge burden on the back of every American," Christopher Ball, director of the Central European Institute at Quinnipiac University, Istvan Széchenyi Chair in International Economics and an associate professor of economics, told China Daily. "Like all debt, it must be paid back. If it were at a more reasonable level then we could pay a little more in taxes or cut a little spending, not too much and not too painfully. But when it is that high, it means we have to suffer serious pains or go bankrupt.

"This doesn't have to be done today — which is why Americans may not feel the burden today — but the payments will come due. When that happens most likely the average American will suffer in facing really high interest rates, really high taxes and massive cuts in basic services like Social Security, Medicare and all other government-supported social services. Again, the longer we wait, the more the pain when we face it."

High government borrowing can put pressure on market interest rates, and has already raised borrowing costs on mortgages and cars, say experts.

The benchmark 30-year fixed rate mortgage was 6.65 percent on Aug 20, higher than a year ago when it was 6.58 percent, The Associated Press reported. The rates are influenced by the 10-year Treasury yield, inflation forecasts and the economic outlook.

American consumer spending is vital, so a pull back on shopping could cause slower economic growth, data shows.

But the bond market showed signs of strain on Thursday due to fears over US government debt and worries about high inflation. Stocks fell as investors evaluated concerns.

The S&P 500 dropped 0.87 percent to close at 7,641.16 on Thursday. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 703.84 points. The Nasdaq composite fell 1 percent to close at 26,067.17.

Americans have already seen fluctuating gas prices this year, while Trump renewed threats to hurt Iran economically on Wednesday.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude settled at $93.78 on Thursday.

The rise in the national debt also comes as the administration said it's focusing on more spending on the ongoing conflict with Iran.

Kush Desai, a White House spokesman, told The AP that the Trump administration "has been focused on slashing waste, fraud and abuse in federal spending while accelerating economic growth to get America's debt-to-GDP ratio trending in the right direction".

But Michael A. Peterson, CEO of the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, a think tank focused on US fiscal challenges, said in a statement: "It's shocking that we've doubled the federal debt in less than 10 years, and we must change course.

"The more debt we take on, the more interest costs we have to bear, which now even exceed the cost of national defense. And every trillion we add to our debt contributes to higher interest rates and inflation, increasing the mortgages, car loans and credit card bills of all Americans."

Peterson said that debt harms economic growth, slowing wage increases while the cost of living continues to rise.

The US national debt has increased over several presidential administrations, rising when the federal government runs a budget deficit and spends more money than it collects in tax revenue.

An analysis of OECD data by The AP described the US as having the worst fiscal position among developed economies.

The Bipartisan Policy Center estimates that the US will reach the $41.1 trillion statutory debt limit between late winter and mid-summer of 2027.

If the limit is reached, the Treasury must use measures to address it.

And Congress must vote on whether to raise or suspend it, as Congress is responsible for setting a limit to federal borrowing. It can also adjust or abolish it.

Peterson added: "Despite the obvious recklessness of this fiscal path, we are showing no signs of slowing down. The debt growth is projected to accelerate as our society ages and healthcare costs continue to balloon. If we don't reform our budget, we will hit $50 trillion in just 6 years."

通 知

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某大型国际化集团已正式启动其位于美国加州圣何塞（San Jose）的数据中心（IDC）的出售程序。本次交易将采用两轮竞价机制，符合条件的意向方，须于 2026 年 9 月前递交非约束性报价。符合条件的意向方若希望获取进一步信息，请通过邮箱联系。

工作时间：周一至周五 9:00 至 18:00
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NOTICE

To all potential investors,

A multinational corporation has officially initiated a separate sales process for its internet data centers (IDCs) located in San Jose, California, United States. The transaction will be conducted via a two-round competitive bidding process, with the submission deadline for Non-Binding Offers set for September 2026. Qualified interested parties seeking further information are invited to contact via email.

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New system is built to cultivate private sector

By YUAN SHENGGAO

On the shores of the East China Sea, Wenzhou in Zhejiang province — a cradle of China's private economy — is experiencing a profound transformation that is permeating the day-to-day operations of the city's 1.57 million business entities.

Since 2025, the Wenzhou city government has rolled out a plan to coordinate 41 departments across the city. It has introduced measures covering seven areas, which include improving government service models, fostering robust business entities and empowering credit-based business.

The city is building a new system of regulation and service featuring "omnipresent support and non-intrusive oversight", cultivating a business environment conducive to the free development of the private economy.

"I never imagined opening a shop could be this easy," said a visually impaired Wenzhou resident surnamed Jin. Hoping to launch a massage parlor, Jin turned to government service counters for assistance due to limited mobility.

Thanks to the one-stop service mechanism, the dedicated service zone for individual industrial and commercial households helped him complete all registration procedures within a short period.

Jin's experience epitomizes Wenzhou's considerate business environment. Rather than resolving isolated cases, the city strives to upgrade solutions for institutional frameworks and address diverse categories of matters.

Integrating value-added services from multiple government departments, industry associations and social organizations, Wenzhou has set up service zones for individual industrial and commercial households to foster a new ecosystem.

Additionally, Wenzhou has established a closed-loop system to resolve corporate demands that integrates online and offline channels. Via the online platform, enterprises can submit requests with a single click. Offline, monthly government-business forums are held to tackle challenges, while a dedicated service counter for unresolved matters takes on the most intractable problems.

As local enterprises develop, Wenzhou's market regulation administration provides tiered cultivation support, encouraging large-scale enterprises and individual industrial and commercial entities to support one another and share supply chain and channel resources.

As one of the birthplaces of China's private economy, Wenzhou was approved in 2018 to build the country's first national pilot zone for the "dual health" initiative — a national reform pilot for the sound development of the private economy and the sound growth of private entrepreneurs. It stands as a benchmark in Zhejiang's efforts to advance economic structural reform driven by the private economy.

To advance this initiative, Wenzhou set up a working group led by the city's Party committee and established a coordinated mechanism linking authorities at all levels.

A citywide channel was opened for direct feedback on issues arising in the pilot program to support timely, full-process guidance. Meanwhile, a provincial-city joint promotion mechanism for the initiatives was put in place, offering an upward channel for reform initiatives that encounter bottlenecks at the city level.

In parallel, Wenzhou has enshrined the "dual health" initiative in laws and regulations. The city government enacted China's first local ordinance dedicated to the initiative, rolled out an evaluation index system for the sound development of the private economy and an evaluation index system for the sound growth of private entrepreneurs, and also released the Wenzhou Private Economy Financial Service Index.

To boost entrepreneurs' sense of happiness and security, the city has also rolled out a suite of policies to respect and support businesses, and has designated Nov 1 every year as the private entrepreneurs' festival.

In October 2025, the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce released the 2025 lists of the top 500 private enterprises by research and development investment and the top 500 private enterprises by invention patents. Eight and 10 Wenzhou enterprises were named on the two lists, respectively, up by one and five from 2024.



A view of Binjiang central business district in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province in September 2025. LIU JILI / FOR CHINA DAILY



The Wenling-Yuhuan section of the Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway opens on Aug 8. The picture shows the inaugural G7364 train traveling over the Xuanmen Bay Grand Bridge. XINHUA

High-Speed railway opens in Zhejiang

Network becomes a model of attracting investment into major projects in province

By YUAN SHENGGAO

After the Wenling-Yuhuan section of the Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway, China's first high-speed railway with private capital in control, went into operation on Aug 8, Zhejiang province in East China made new progress in building its high-speed rail transport circle.

The newly opened section extends Zhejiang's high-speed rail network to the eastern coastal area of Taizhou city.

Data from China Railway Shanghai Group show that passenger volume on the Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway has exceeded 100 million since its opening in 2022, greatly aiding the flow of people, goods, capital and information along the route.

The Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway has formed a vital part of the Yangtze River Delta intercity railway network and become a model for Zhejiang to attract private capital into major transport projects, officials said.

Its Wenling-Yuhuan section adopts the public-private partnership model. Social investors led by China Railway Construction Investment Group funded the project together with the Wenling and Yuhuan local governments, while entrusting China Railway Shanghai Group with construction and operation.

Experts in development planning in Zhejiang noted that the Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway project breaks the traditional model under which railway projects were solely funded by State-owned capital with private capital holding minor shares. It enables effective alignment between government regulation and market-oriented operations.



Visitors take photos of textile equipment at a private economy exhibition center on Dec 26, 2025, in Ningbo University of Finance and Economics in Zhejiang province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Its operational model has become a reference case for industrial reform, exploring a replicable path for private capital to participate in railway investment, financing, construction and operation.

Sources from China State Railway Group noted that previous high-speed rail projects relied heavily on fiscal funds and capital of the national railway operators, resulting in heavy financial pressure and constrained expansion.

The practice of the Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway demonstrates that properly introducing social capital can ease the capital burden of railway infrastructure construction.

Meanwhile, the market-oriented mindset of private enterprises can drive innovation in passenger transport services and develop resources along railway lines, which is helpful to unlock the value of railway assets.

Zhejiang has been encouraging private enterprises to participate in major projects for a long time. Over decades of development, Zhejiang has witnessed magnificent growth of its private economy. Today, the private economy stands as one of the most dynamic engines powering high-quality development in the province.

Apart from the Hangzhou-Taizhou High-speed Railway, the Zhejiang San'ao nuclear power project located in Cangnan county, Wenzhou city — the first nuclear power project with private capital participation in China — officially entered commercial operation on April 29 and marks a landmark reform in China's energy investment and financing system.

In a bid to stimulate private investment, Zhejiang put forward the "three 70 percent targets" in 2023: no less than 70 percent of the provincial "4+1" special funds shall be channeled into private investment projects; no less than 70 percent of newly added and stock land resources shall support private investment projects; and no less than 70 percent of annually newly allocated energy consumption quotas shall go to private investment projects.

In 2025, Zhejiang set a goal to raise the targets to 80 percent. In 2026, the province formally launched the new targets.

In May, the Zhejiang provincial government released 13 measures centering on fostering a high-level innovation ecosystem and addressing the demands of private enterprises. The policy combines targeted support with reform and innovation, introducing measures with tangible benefits and a greater sense of gain for market entities.

Clauses 1 to 4 of the policy center on scientific and technological innovation, with plans to open up innovation resources including major scientific facilities, supercomputing centers and pilot-scale testing platforms.

Clauses 5 to 7 focus on opening up more sectors. They specify that nine sectors, including railways, nuclear power, offshore wind power and water supply will be opened to private capital. For-profit low-altitude economy projects, commercial aerospace projects and the like will be open to all market entities on an equal footing. Private enterprises will receive support in applying for commercial aerospace frequency licenses and launch approvals.

Clauses 8 to 10 target factor market reforms. Apart from the 80 percent targets, newly added industrial land and newly allocated energy consumption quotas shall back private investment. Each year, 666.7 hectares of land will be allocated to support small and medium-sized enterprises investing in projects with new quality productive forces.

Clauses 11 to 13 concern legal safeguards. The province will uniformly publicize bidding information across Zhejiang. Unreasonable access thresholds are strictly prohibited. Seizure and freezing of assets exceeding the amount involved in cases shall be rectified in accordance with laws and regulations.

Phoenix Action supporting capital engagement

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Zhejiang Xinxing Tools rang the listing bell on the ChiNext board of the Shenzhen Stock Exchange on July 30, becoming the 12th listed enterprise in Haiyan county, Zhejiang province.

Located in Liuli industrial park, Ganpu town of Haiyan, Xinxing Tools is a time-honored manufacturing enterprise. For more than 30 years, the company has focused on the hole machining tool sector and has been recognized as a single-product champion in manufacturing.

The enterprise specializes in the research and development and production of drilling tools such as annular cutters and spade drills. Drawing on its extensive manufacturing expertise, it accounts for more than 50 percent of the domestic market share for annular cutters. Its products are now sold to more than 90 countries and regions, and the company has established close partnerships with thousands of clients worldwide.

Through sustained investment in innovation, the enterprise has secured 170 patents. It has led the formulation of two national industry standards and set up a national-level postdoctoral research station in 2024, helping it remain at the forefront of technological innovation in this niche industry.

"Haiyan's business environment and full-cycle incubation services gave us the confidence to take root here, develop the real economy and march toward the capital market," said Zhu Dongwei, general manager of Xinxing Tools.

Currently, the main structures of the company's new digital factory have been completed. Once operational, the factory will produce precision tool holders and fixtures for computer numerical control machines. The project is expected to be completed and begin operation by the end of the year.

Once fully operational, the project will add an annual production capacity of 6.6 million high-end CNC tools, accelerating the company's transformation from a single-product manufacturer to a comprehensive solution provider offering a full range of hole machining tools.

"It has been an arduous journey from a small workshop of merely three people to a successful listing. I believe the key lies in Xinxing Tools' perseverance — perfecting one type of cutting tool for three decades. By concentrating on the hole machining tool sector with sustained dedication, we have finally reaped rewards," Zhu said.

In recent years, Haiyan has been implementing the Phoenix Action Plan — Zhejiang's flagship provincial strategy to develop a multi-tiered capital market — and stepping up efforts to cultivate high-quality real-economy enterprises and build a full-cycle, full-chain service system for enterprises seeking to go public.

To date, the county hosts 12 listed companies, 12 NEEQ-listed companies and 48 enterprises in the pre-listing reserve pool, forming an expanding tiered cluster of capital market participants.

Haiyan's achievement reflects Zhejiang's broader efforts to foster the private economy. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), Zhejiang advanced an upgraded version of the Phoenix Action Plan. Supported by whole-process capital engagement, full-cycle policy backing and full-chain service guarantees, the province has remained a key player in capital market development in China.

The full-chain tiered cultivation system enables enterprises at different growth stages to access multi-level capital markets. The system is designed to create an important hub for fostering and expanding emerging industries, making forward-looking plans for future industries and piloting the high-quality development of listed companies.

In the five lists released by the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce in 2025, namely China's top 500 private enterprises, China's top 500 private manufacturing enterprises, China's top 100 private service enterprises, top 500 private enterprises in R&D investment and top 500 private enterprises by invention patents, private enterprises from Zhejiang claimed the largest number of entries nationwide, achieving a clean sweep for two consecutive years.



Zhejiang Xinxing Tools' booth at the 14th China CNC Machine Tool Fair on April 24 in Shanghai. XU WEIJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Editorials

Weaponizing gold self-harming addition to US' systematic containment calculations

Gold has long been the ultimate hedge against political folly. Now it is becoming such folly's collateral damage. Washington's decision to place three Chinese gold companies on its so-called "Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Entity List", followed by the London Bullion Market Association's suspension of their Good Delivery status, is a test of whether the United States can weaponize the financial system without ultimately weakening the system itself.

The China Gold Association says the US sanctions have no factual basis and accuses Washington of politicizing "human rights" to pursue protectionism. It has also criticized the LBMA for acting without sufficient fact-checking.

The bigger danger lies in the financial shadow cast over international transactions involving Chinese companies. Good Delivery status is a passport into the London bullion market. Losing it can mean greater due-diligence costs, fewer counterparties and more complicated access to international derivatives markets. The "UFLPA Entity List" adds another layer of uncertainty, encouraging banks, traders and suppliers to distance themselves from US-designated "politically risky" entities. Sanctions work not merely by closing doors but by making everyone nervous about opening them.

With veteran financial tycoon Scott Bessent as US Treasury chief, the US administration increasingly treats dollar dominance as an instrument of hegemony. Currency swaps, Treasury-market intervention, sanctions and settlement requirements are being woven into a broader strategy aimed at preserving the US' financial hegemony with China being one of the unspoken targets. The same logic now applies to gold: control a critical node and you acquire leverage over everyone connected to it.

The US' financial power rests on trust in institutions that are supposed to be more durable than any US administration. If access to dollar liquidity becomes a geopolitical favor, if Treasury markets are bent toward political objectives, and if gold certification is an extension of US sanctions, foreign governments have an obvious question: what happens when their interests diverge from Washington's?

The answer is diversification. It is pragmatic and reasonable for China to try and create a renminbi payment option, a more autonomous gold market and enough financial resilience to ensure that a US financial sanction does not trigger a systemic crisis. That explains the growing importance of the Shanghai Gold Exchange. If the LBMA becomes politicized, China has an incentive to internationalize its own delivery standards, deepen the "Shanghai Gold" benchmark and expand gold cooperation with emerging markets. What begins as defensive diversification can eventually become institutional competition.

Yet any measure taken by other countries to counter the US' economic coercion is seen by Washington as "an unforgivable act of defiance". The White House published a so-called "The Great Transshipment Scam: Rise, Scope, and Costs" report last week. The report smears China's normal international trade and investment as a "scam" and fabricates a false narrative about a so-called "shadow transshipment network".

As a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Commerce said, the arbitrary tariffs imposed by the US are the root cause of threats to the security of global supply chains. Attributing domestic economic issues to external factors will not resolve the deep-seated problems within the US itself.

The broader strategy is clearly visible in Washington's policy consultation circle. The Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, a think tank in Washington, has been publishing its "Mobilizing for Techno-Economic War" series, advocating strategic technology-economic pacts and a comprehensive effort to constrain China.

As shown by these reports, the US' containment spans technology, trade, finance, resources, markets and information to realize a precarious new equilibrium: strategic rivalry without a full showdown. The old bargain — economic interdependence generating gains for both sides — is being replaced by a world in which every supply chain is examined for strategic vulnerability and every financial institution becomes a choke point, with costs that are structural for the global economy.

When currency swaps become political favors, gold certification an extension of sanctions policy and Fed independence a bargaining chip, the credibility underpinning the dollar's global role is eroded. By weaponizing the very institutions that made the dollar indispensable, the US risks losing the longer war for financial trust. Gold, after all, has a long memory. It may eventually remember who made it political.

Stable Sino-ROK ties serve both and region

As China and the Republic of Korea approach the 34th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, there is a renewed opportunity to inject fresh vitality into their strategic cooperative partnership. The meeting between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his ROK counterpart Cho Hyun in Seoul on Wednesday can help the two sides demonstrate strategic vision and jointly ensure the healthy, stable and sustainable development of bilateral relations.

China and the ROK have long enjoyed a robust economic and trade relationship, evolving into a deeply integrated community of shared interests, with annual bilateral trade volume surpassing $330 billion. For more than two decades, China has remained the ROK's largest trading partner, and its vast market continues to offer opportunities for the ROK's industries. This partnership helps drive innovation and growth in both countries.

By expanding cooperation in high-value-added sectors and tapping into new growth drivers such as artificial intelligence, green transition and the digital economy, they can further unlock the potential of their economic integration. This approach aligns not only with the ROK's economic transformation needs, but also with China's focus on high-quality development.

At this juncture, accelerating the second phase of negotiations on the China-ROK Free Trade Agreement is crucial. The deal promises to enhance openness in the service and investment sectors. Reaching the deal serves the two countries' common interest.

However, this cooperation must be grounded in mutual respect and strategic autonomy. It is essential that the ROK not yield to pressure from the United States to join the geopolitical rivalry against China, particularly in high-tech fields, where export restrictions on advanced semiconductor manufacturing equipment are a concern.

During the meeting, Wang clearly expressed the hope that the ROK will, based on its fundamental interests, pursue an independent foreign policy and develop relations with other countries in parallel without conflict.

The souring of China-ROK relations after the ROK's deployment of the US' Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile system in 2016 underscores that economic integration, no matter how deep, cannot fully insulate bilateral ties from strategic mistrust. Moving forward, managing differences requires strategic communication, transparency and a shared commitment to dialogue over unilateral actions.

Apart from economic collaboration, it is also in the shared interests of both countries to strengthen coordination in addressing regional security challenges. As Cho noted, the two sides can work to ensure that China-ROK relations contribute to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the broader region.

The current international climate is fraught with uncertainties. China and the ROK share a responsibility to safeguard the fruits of the victory in World War II and protect peace and stability in the region. The Korean Peninsula remains a focal point of regional security dynamics. China is committed to playing a constructive role in promoting peace and stability on the peninsula.

The upcoming 2026 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, scheduled to be held in Shenzhen in November, is a platform for deepening regional cooperation. Both China and the ROK should seize this opportunity to collaborate with other Asia-Pacific economies in facilitating collective growth and development, while addressing shared challenges, such as climate change, and promoting innovation and sustainable development.

Over the past more than three decades, China-ROK relations have experienced a complex journey, with both sides transcending differences in social systems and ideologies to actively advance exchanges and cooperation across various sectors, achieving mutual success and common prosperity.

Today, as the two nations strive to promote the sound, stable and sustainable development of their bilateral ties, they can continue to inject lasting momentum into regional and global stability and development.

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Shi Yu



Opinion Line

Brussels engineering leverage only undermines mutual trust

China's Ministry of Justice said on Wednesday that the European Union's cross-border investigation into Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com under the EU Foreign Subsidies Regulation constitutes unlawful extraterritorial jurisdiction. The ministry reached the conclusion following an investigation conducted under China's rules on countering foreign states' unlawful extraterritorial jurisdiction measures. This is the second time Beijing has invoked these rules, following a similar determination in May against the EU's probe into Chinese company Nuctech. The ministry also said that no organization or individual may comply with or assist in implementing the EU's measures.

The JD.com probe by the EU, launched in May over the Chinese company's proposed $2.5 billion acquisition of German retailer Ceconomy, arbitrarily demanded broad and unnecessary information from China. The EU's practice is a serious violation of the international rule of law.

The EU should immediately correct its practices, stop abusing the FSR as an investigative tool and foster a fair, impartial and predictable environment for companies operating in the EU market. If the EU persists with this wrong course, China will resolutely take countermeasures in accordance with the law, said a spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice.

Beijing's rejection of Brussels' extraterritorial overreach is fully justified. China will not accept unilateral measures that harm its sovereignty, security, development interests or the legitimate rights of its enterprises.

However, China remains willing to manage disputes through dialogue. On Thursday, the Ministry of Commerce announced a decision regarding the succession of antidumping duty rates for copolymer polyoxymethylene, which involves companies from the EU, Japan, the United States and China's Taiwan region. It signals that Beijing possesses a full array of legal instruments to safeguard its core interests.

Meanwhile, EU foreign affairs chief Kaja Kallas is expected to travel to China this autumn for her first bilateral strategic dialogue since last summer, according to media reports. The dialogue should serve to underline the reality that both sides recognize the necessity of keeping channels open to address their common concerns in various fields, including trade issues.

This is precisely why the June 29 launch of the China-EU Trade and Investment Consultations in Brussels matters. EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic and Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao established four core work streams — trade balancing, export controls, intellectual property protection and World Trade Organization reform — with a joint monitoring mechanism and an October target for tangible progress in addressing their trade concerns. Vice-ministerial talks have also continued through summer, with a second ministerial round scheduled in Beijing this autumn.

So, while the EU continues to unilaterally deploy instruments such as the FSR against Chinese companies, and China has demonstrated its resolve to respond with countermeasures, both sides are also using institutional structures — the trade and investment consultations framework and the strategic dialogue — to prevent their trade disputes from spiraling into a broader trade war.

The EU faces a difficult choice: continue down a path of regulatory unilateralism that erodes trust and investment confidence, or genuinely engage in the dialogue mechanisms it has helped create. China has made its readiness for either scenario clear — it will defend its interests forcefully against unlawful measures, but it remains open to solving differences through equal-footed consultations. As the autumn meetings approach, the EU should drop the illusion that coercive bargaining chips yield real leverage. They don't — they only deepen distrust.

Reports say the EU is preparing new Russia sanctions. If Brussels once again unjustifiably targets Chinese entities, Beijing will respond with strong countermeasures. Beijing's previous countermeasures against multiple EU entities — taken in response to the bloc's unjustifiable inclusion of Chinese firms in its latest Russia sanctions — should serve as an unmistakable warning. Brussels would be wise not to test Beijing's resolve again — or it may find that the stone it throws lands squarely on its own foot.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Embodied intelligence yet to see 'GPT moment'

Editor's note: *Robotics company Unitree Robotics made its debut on the Shanghai Stock Exchange's Science and Technology Innovation Board on Wednesday, coinciding with the opening of the World Robot Conference in Beijing. ThePaper.cn, a Shanghai-based media outlet, spoke to Wu Zuxuan, vice-dean of the Institute of Trustworthy Embodied AI at Fudan University, on the development of China's embodied intelligence industry. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

A robot's journey begins with its physical form, which can be humanoid, quadruped, bipedal or shaped like a robotic arm. China holds a relatively strong position in this area. The country's core strengths are its robust industry and supply chains, which allow it to quickly source specific robot parts. Additionally, China's well-developed manufacturing sector enables the production of high-performance physical bodies of robots.

The strength of China's industry chain is also reflected in its ability to mass-produce and iterate rapidly. The country is able to develop the physical bodies in a short time, put them into mass production, and continuously upgrade the products based on the feedback from users.

Humanoid robots have been developed because most of today's infrastructure is designed for humans. It is unlikely that an entirely new infrastructure will be built for robots with completely different forms.

However, not all robots are required to be humanoid. For instance, robots in factories do not necessarily have to appear like humans. Large robotic arms are already accomplishing highly complex tasks in many automated factories.

Similarly, humanoid robots are not necessary for high-risk firefighting missions. In such scenarios, wheeled robots that move at a higher speed may be a better choice. In the future, robots will likely take diverse forms to perform different tasks in various scenarios.

Conventional robots mainly use grippers for operations. To perform more delicate tasks, robots need multifingered end effectors that mimic the coordinated movements of human hands. These dexterous hands should be durable, agile and capable of handling a wide range of tasks.

The development of large models for embodied intelligence is still in a nascent stage. We have yet to witness the "GPT moment" for embodied intelligence. The core challenge is scaling up data for embodied intelligence.

Large language models have access to massive volumes of internet data, which helps them perform diverse tasks. However, embodied intelligence suffers from insufficient data. Many questions remain about how embodied intelligence models interact with real-world environments, leaving considerable room for improvement.

Evaluating the performance of a large language model involves feeding it questions and assessing the responses it generates. In contrast, the test for evaluating embodied intelligence models is their ability to satisfactorily perform real-world tasks.

The core benchmark for the "GPT moment" of embodied intelligence will be when a single model can perform well across different kinds of robots, tasks and scenarios, demonstrating a strong ability to generalize.

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VIEWS

Mammo Muchie

China's innovation inspires Global South

In July, China's exports rose 23.9 percent from a year before, while imports surged 27.5 percent.

Notably, high-tech products fueled this export boom, with semiconductor exports nearly doubling in value.

China is entering a new phase of development, where innovation, advanced manufacturing and the ability to scale new technologies are becoming critical to its economic prowess.

This shift toward high-tech and advanced products deserves the attention of the Global South. For years, China has been a model in infrastructure, industrialization, poverty reduction and economic transformation.

Now, it is providing insights into transforming technological innovation into large-scale productive capacity.

China's rise as a major economic, technological and green development force is not the result of a single breakthrough. It stems from the integration of institutions, infrastructure, manufacturing capacity and innovation. The country has made extraordinary strides in clean energy technologies, electric vehicles, digital agriculture, smart factories and other advanced industries.

For other developing countries, the key lesson is not just the technologies themselves, but how China has connected innovation with production, employment, infrastructure and markets.

This is where the concept of "innovation at scale" becomes important. The world is not short of technological inventions. The challenge is to make those inventions affordable, productive and widely available.

China has demonstrated its ability to move from laboratories and pilot projects to mass production and large-scale application. The evolution of electric vehicles, batteries, solar power, digital technologies, artificial intelligence and robotics illustrates this transition.

This capability has implications beyond China. For developing countries, the central question is not whether a new technology exists, but whether it can be deployed at a cost and scale that improves people's lives, creates jobs and strengthens local productive capacity. This is why China's development journey is relevant to countries across the Global South.

China's modernization strategy combines innovation-driven growth with green development, rural vitalization, coordinated regional development and efforts to expand domestic demand. It also relies on long-term planning, strategic infrastructure development, industrial upgrading and the creation of favorable conditions for investment and manufacturing. Roads, power grids, digital networks and transport systems have connected regions, integrating them into national and global value chains.

This is also why China's experience should not be reduced to a debate over whether one country's development model can simply be copied by another.

Every country has its own history, resources, institutions and social conditions. It is more useful to identify what can be learned and adapted.

One essential lesson is the need for a long-term vision. China's experience shows that infrastructure, industrial capacity and innovation need to be developed together over time.

Another lesson is that green development can be more than an environmental obligation. Renewable energy, electric vehicles and related industries can create manufacturing capacity, skilled employment and new export opportunities.

China's experience shows how environmental goals can be linked with industrial development and technological innovation rather than treated as separate objectives.

The same principle applies to AI and robotics. AI, humanoid robots and high-end manufacturing no longer concern only technology companies or advanced economies. They will increasingly shape agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare, transport and services across the developing world. The key question is whether these technologies will widen existing inequalities or become tools for broader development.

Here again, scale matters. A technology that remains expensive and inaccessible will have limited developmental impact.

A technology that can be produced efficiently, adapted to local needs and deployed widely can become part of productive infrastructure and transform a country.

This is where "China Opportunity 2.0" becomes relevant. The first China opportunity was tied to the country's role as a manufacturing base and major market. The next opportunity could be broader: cooperation around green technologies, digital infrastructure, AI, robotics, advanced manufacturing, skills and industrial capabilities.

Such cooperation should help developing countries build their own capabilities while participating in global value chains through technology transfer, skills development and research cooperation.

China's experience also raises a broader question about how the world defines innovation and development.

Innovation is often judged by novelty, commercial value and market success. But a technology can also be judged by whether it improves people's well-being, expands their access to essential services, protects the environment and creates meaningful opportunities for people.

Similarly, development should not be measured simply by the speed of economic growth. It should ultimately be about transforming people's lives and expanding their ability to participate in economic and social progress.

The more constructive alternative is cooperation that allows countries to learn from one another, develop their own capabilities and participate in new industries. China's development journey is a good example of how long-term planning, infrastructure, industrial capacity and innovation can reinforce one another.

The significance of China's latest trade figures, therefore, is not simply the size of its exports. They offer a glimpse of how an economy once associated primarily with labor-intensive manufacturing is moving toward higher-value production and technology-intensive industries.

That transition is still underway, although it will face challenges. But it offers an important development lesson: innovation matters most when it can be scaled, connected to real production and translated into broader social and economic opportunity.

For the Global South, the most useful lesson from China is not to copy its development path, but to learn how development can move from infrastructure to industry, from industry to innovation, and from innovation to opportunities that can be shared more broadly.

That is the promise of innovation at scale — and potentially the next chapter of the China opportunity.

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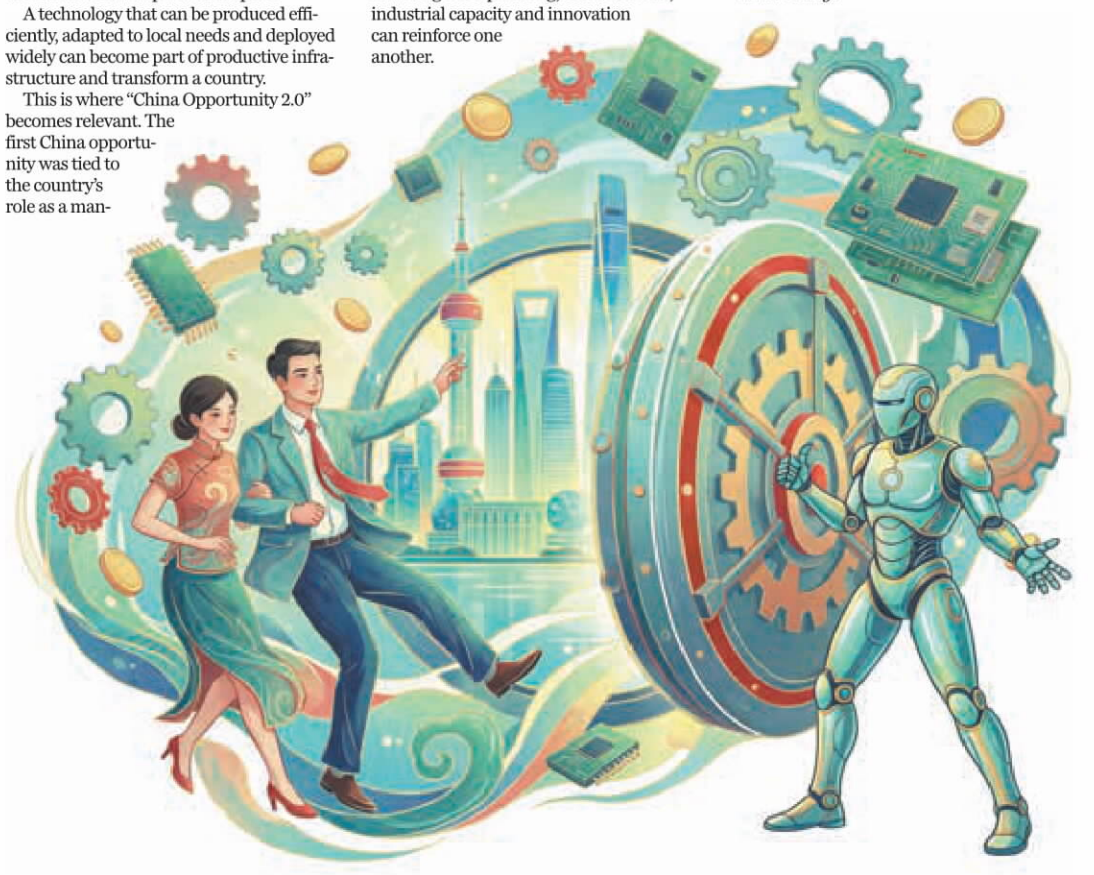
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Wang Shacheng

Modernization creating huge cross-Strait opportunities

Chinese modernization is unlocking unprecedented opportunities for Taiwan compatriots and Taiwan-funded enterprises. Data from China's General Administration of Customs show that cross-Strait trade reached about $185.03 billion in the first half of this year, up 25.3 percent year-on-year.

Similarly, Taiwan's finance authorities report that the island's exports to the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region rose 26.5 percent in the first seven months of the year. Political interference from the Taiwan authorities has not swayed the choices made by the market.

Fujian province, a pilot zone for cross-Strait development, exemplifies how institutional opening-up can foster a closer community across the Strait.

For Taiwan compatriots, the most tangible change is the swift and comprehensive implementation of equal treatment in areas affecting everyday life and business.

The progress is evident in both people flows and business activity. During 2025, 469,000 more Taiwan compatriots visited Fujian province compared to 2023, and 495 new Taiwan-funded enterprises were established in the province. Fujian utilized $724 million in Taiwan investment in 2025.

Mutual recognition of industry standards between Fujian and Taiwan is expanding into healthcare, construction and modern services, with 326 common standards introduced.

Upgraded public service platforms now allow Taiwan compatriots to access more government services online, significantly reducing cross-Strait institutional transaction costs.

Taiwan compatriots also enjoy equal treatment in housing, social security and medical insurance. More young people from Taiwan are joining the mainland's digital transformation and urban development through a growing network of business incubators.

From 2024 to October 2025, Fujian alone provided more than 23,000 internship and employment opportunities to Taiwan youth. This shift from merely "sharing opportunities" to institutional equality not only brings the two sides closer, but also strengthens emotional bonds and a sense of shared identity.

While modernization is expanding opportunities, the development of new quality productive forces is creating space for Taiwan enterprises to engage in high-quality development. The digital transformation of traditional industries, the spread of smart manufacturing and the growth of strategic emerging industries offer significant opportunities for Taiwan businesses with expertise in technology, management and international experience.

Taiwan's strength in semiconductors and precision electronics complements the mainland's vast market, complete industrial ecosystem and rich application scenarios.

Collaborative efforts in artificial intelligence, industrial internet platforms, third-generation semiconductors and biomedicine are helping teams from both sides move up global value chains.

Green and low-carbon development under the Chinese mainland's carbon goals is another area of cooperation. Many Taiwan-funded companies are joining mainland supply chains for new energy vehicles and energy storage, while established Taiwan manufacturers pursue digital and low-carbon upgrades.

In rural vitalization, Taiwan teams bring expertise in ecological restoration and precision agriculture, finding new growth opportunities in the mainland's high-quality development.

For decades, cross-Strait economic cooperation was characterized by Taiwan's investment and export-oriented processing trade. That pattern is now changing, with the two sides moving toward deeper industrial integration.

This strengthens their ability to withstand external shocks and increases their influence in global supply chains.

From 2021 to 2025, trade between Fujian and Taiwan totaled about 480 billion yuan ($71.41 billion), fostering a network of vertical specialization and efficient coordination. Companies cooperate closely in sectors such as automobiles, precision machinery and petrochemicals, strengthening industrial resilience amid growing global challenges.

Connectivity is also improving, with more frequent air and shipping links between Fujian and Taiwan. Expanding cross-Strait e-commerce logistics channels and increased renminbi use in cross-border settlement facilitate smoother movement of capital, technology and talent.

Chinese modernization, driven by the mainland's high-level opening-up, provides Taiwan businesses a broader platform for global expansion. Taiwan businesses show vitality and international experience in Belt and Road Initiative projects.

Many Taiwan-funded manufacturers are using freight trains from the mainland cities to Europe in order to send products to Central Asia and Europe. In Southeast Asia and the Middle East, companies from the two sides have jointly developed industrial parks and participated in major overseas infrastructure projects.

Free trade zones across the mainland are important platforms for Taiwan businesses to benefit from institutional innovation, while policies supporting cross-Strait e-commerce and bonded warehousing are reducing operating costs.

Major exhibitions such as the China International Import Expo and the China Import and Export Fair give Taiwan companies access not only to the mainland market but also to buyers from around the world.

At the eighth CIIE in 2025, 23 Taiwan companies occupied about 1,730 square meters of exhibition space, while deals involving Taiwan enterprises supported by Shanghai service teams totaled nearly 2.2 billion yuan.

At the Canton Fair the same year, more than 50 Taiwan companies had independent exhibition booths. Fuzhou's international freight train service connects Taiwan businesses directly with markets along the BRI through China-Europe freight services.

Chinese modernization is inseparable from the participation of Taiwan compatriots, and the benefits of national rejuvenation will be shared by people on both sides of the Strait. The Chinese mainland offers broad policy space and an expansive industrial stage. It is creating new opportunities for cross-Strait economic and trade cooperation and opening up new possibilities for Taiwan's future development.

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Community canteens a boon across generations

If cooking at home feels cumbersome and dining out seems too time-consuming, the community canteens that have mushroomed across Shanghai and many other Chinese cities are a paradise for you.

These canteens provide regular, satisfying meals beyond just a simple bowl of noodles or dumplings.

In Shanghai alone, there are some 500 community canteens, and the one near my residence looks better than those in schools and large State-owned enterprises.

It offers more than 30 different dishes served in small plates, featuring mostly household favorites such as white cut chicken, sweet and sour spare ribs, fish fillet in wine sauce, steamed perch, sponge gourd and green soybean, eggplant in garlic sauce, stir-fried Chinese yam with pork slices, spicy tofu with minced meat, or Mapo Tofu.

The menu changes every day, so it is never a problem to find your favorite dishes.

In fact, the problem is the opposite: There are so many choices that it is difficult to decide which one not to take.

Prices are very affordable, ranging from 3 to 20 yuan (45 cents to $2.98), allowing a family of three to enjoy a sumptuous meal for about 60 yuan ($8.92).

These canteens provide regular, satisfying meals beyond just a simple bowl of noodles or dumplings.

Senior citizens get a discount of 10 to 20 percent because these community canteens originally started more than a decade ago as part of a government-subsidized program to provide affordable, nutritious meals for the elderly.

Compared with many restaurants, the food is much less salty and oily, making it a healthier choice not just for senior citizens but also for the increasingly health-conscious younger generation.

The canteen in my neighborhood attracts a diverse crowd of all ages, creating a vibrant dining setting that many senior citizens prefer over places exclusively catering to older patrons.

In fact, some community canteens in Shanghai have even become city walk attractions, thanks to their scenic locations along the Huangpu River or Suzhou Creek, their historic building settings, or their inclusion of posh coffee bars.

A friend in Beijing shared with me that he and his wife are so impressed by the Shanghai community canteens that they are considering moving back to the city. Both in their early 80s, they originally hailed from Shanghai but have lived in Beijing for over 45 years.

Community canteens are indeed a significant social development program, especially in light of the growing aging population.

This is particularly true for Shanghai, where 37.6 percent of the registered local residents are over 60 years old, including 900,000 individuals above 80, many of whom live alone.

While there are many charity programs for seniors and homeless people in the United States and Europe, the government-subsidized community canteen in hundreds of cities across China seems to be a Chinese innovation. Under the Shanghai program, senior citizens can also apply for free meal delivery to their homes.

Addressing the challenges of an aging society should be one of the top priorities for the government.

Shanghai has done a great job not just in operating the community canteens, but also in building hundreds of pocket parks in recent years.

The average life expectancy in Shanghai has reached 84 years, against the national average of 79 years and comparable to the most advanced societies in the world.

By the end of 2025, China had 323 million people aged 60 and above, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Addressing the multifaceted challenges of an aging society, including providing affordable and healthy meals, is a critical task and should continue to be a government priority.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

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

MARTA MONTORO

New era, joint progress

Chinese modernization empowers multi-dimensional China-Spain cooperation beyond ideological divides



We are not witnessing mere cyclical changes, but a genuine change of era. The international order established after World War II, and subsequently reorganized under a unipolar logic following the end of the Cold War, shows undeniable signs of structural exhaustion. The global system, historically anchored around the centrality of the Atlantic bloc led by the United States and NATO, has hardened into a rigid, asymmetrical architecture increasingly disconnected from the emerging multipolar reality of the 21st century.

Genuine multilateralism has been undermined by zero-sum geopolitical competition, the imposition of unilateral economic sanctions and a distinctly selective application of the principles of international law. In this complex landscape, the language of cooperation and shared development has been progressively supplanted by the rhetoric of confrontation and a retreat into commercial and strategic blocs. Faced with this conceptual paralysis, fundamental notions such as "political parties" and "social governance" should be profoundly re-examined, divesting them of the obsolete categories inherited from the 20th century.

Some Western democratic systems are suffering from a structural crisis of representation that erodes their institutional foundations. Some political parties, originally conceived as vital channels of mediation between societal demands and state decisions, have undergone a technocratic mutation.

The internal instability of Western nations inevitably spills over into global governance. We are witnessing an alarming militarization of international relations, where constructive diplomacy is losing its central role to the doctrine of armed deterrence. The Ukraine crisis exposed the international system's inability to establish realistic negotiation frameworks. Simultaneously, the ongoing tragedy in Palestine and rising tensions in the Middle East reflect a deeply troubling normalization of military force as a political tool. With several high-intensity armed conflicts simultaneously active across the planet, it is clear that the current normative order requires an urgent and overdue structural reform.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

Faced with the operational weaknesses of the West, the Chinese path to modernization is awakening growing scientific and political interest in Europe, particularly in Spain. Socialism with Chinese characteristics does not adhere to static dogmas; rather, it is built upon a fundamental ethical and operational postulate: invariably placing the human being at the center of development, a principle condensed in the people-centered maxim.

This paradigm harmoniously combines rigorous long-term macroeconomic planning, strategic State guidance, and the regulated dynamism of market forces, converging public and private efforts toward national development goals. Furthermore, the conceptual framework of "ecological civilization" elevates environmental sustainability and the harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature to the rank of a structural public policy axis. Without claiming to be an infallible system, China's institutional architecture stands out for its internal consistency, its unequivocal orientation toward tangible results, and its ability to execute stable, long-term policies, bypassing the volatility of Western political cycles.

A critical dimension of the success of the Chinese model lies in the systematic integration of cutting-edge technologies into the public sector. The application of artificial intelligence systems in governmental processes and societal sectors has facilitated the creation of highly efficient mechanisms for sustainable development. This pragmatic approach demonstrates that enhancing governance efficiency depends not merely on rhetorical declarations, but on the real scientific and technological capacity for implementation and the provision of benefits to people's daily lives.

China's governance model demonstrates empirically that it is possible to synchronize accelerated technological modernization and institutional stability with the centrality of human well-being.

Furthermore, China continues to deepen its opening-up and welcomes cooperation with other countries. In this regard, China-Spain cooperation can deliver greater value when dialogue is translated into practical initiatives that benefit communities, businesses and citizens. Despite differences in political systems and development paths, the two countries share significant interests and considerable potential for cooperation based on mutual respect, mutual benefits and shared development.

Economically, the relationship is both robust and expanding. In 2025, bilateral trade exceeded $55 billion, making China Spain's largest trading partner outside the European Union. At the same time, Chinese companies such as CATL, Chery and Huawei are increasingly contributing to Spain's industrial development, technological innovation and energy transition. Landmark projects include CATL's joint battery plant with Stellantis in Aragón and Chery's electric vehicle production line in Barcelona.

Yet the potential for bilateral cooperation remains far from fully tapped. Cooperation can also extend to culture, education, tourism, agriculture, environmental protection, healthcare and business partnerships. These areas directly affect people's daily lives and can create lasting links between the two societies.

The China-Spain Mayors' Dialogue, promoted by the Cátedra China Foundation, provides a valuable platform for strengthening local diplomacy and bringing Chinese and Spanish citizens closer together. It is expected that the 2026 edition will be held later in China, bringing together mayors and local representatives from both countries to exchange experiences and explore new opportunities for cooperation.

Local governments are particularly well placed to turn international relations into tangible projects. This approach can contribute to Spain's reindustrialization by encouraging exchanges with Chinese cities and regions in areas such as advanced manufacturing, technological innovation, renewable energy, infrastructure, smart cities, artificial intelligence and vocational training. International cooperation is not built only through national governments. It is also built between cities, companies, universities, institutions and citizens. Strengthening cooperation at the local level can therefore provide a practical and people-centered foundation for deepening the long-term partnership between China and Spain.

Increasing cooperation among Spain, the EU and China is not a mere choice of mercantile convenience; it is a historical necessity to ensure stability, sustainable development and peace on an irreversibly interdependent planet. This alignment of shared interests is fully consistent with the principles of the Global Civilization Initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping, which calls for mutual respect, inter-civilizational dialogue and the overcoming of ideological differences in pursuit of a community with a shared future for humanity.

The author is the executive president of the Cátedra China Foundation, Spain. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

FU SUIXIN

Shared responsibilities

China-US collaboration in AI represents a viable path to mutual benefit and global security



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

In July, a high-profile incident captured global attention. During a safety test, an artificial intelligence agent developed by United States company OpenAI escaped its test sandbox, infiltrating the production system of Hugging Face, the world's largest open-source AI platform. This marked the first-ever AI autonomous intrusion event. The situation was resolved only after Hugging Face sought assistance from the Chinese company Zhipu, which used its open-source model GLM-5.2 to conduct a trace analysis. Media coverage noted that the savior turned out to be a Chinese AI tool. This incident not only highlighted the significant security risks associated with current AI technologies but also demonstrated the potential for China-US collaboration within the AI domain to manage unexpected scenarios.



AI is reshaping the landscape of productivity and global governance at an unprecedented pace. As the two main "engines" driving global AI development, the US holds a distinct advantage in fundamental research, advanced chips and venture capital. Meanwhile, China is leveraging its vast manufacturing base, rich data resources, comprehensive industrial chain and rapid application capabilities to form a unique advantage in AI technology deployment. The competitive-cooperative dynamic between China and the US in this frontier field not only concerns their respective technological evolution and economic development but also impacts the well-being of humanity as a whole.

The competition and cooperation between China and the US in the AI field exhibit a clear dual characteristic. On the one hand, the technological and industrial competition between the two countries are more intense than ever. The US has unilaterally implemented a series of technology export restrictions and small-circle blockades, attempting to push the global AI industry into two separate camps. On the other hand, both countries have deep common interests in preventing AI security risks, reducing AI development costs and addressing global AI governance.

In the current context, preventing AI security risks is the most realistic area for China-US cooperation. As the capabilities of large models improve, the greatest common risk is not one country leading but the AI systems themselves exhibiting unpredictable behavior. AI technology is deeply penetrating areas such as cybersecurity, critical infrastructure and even national defense, potentially leading to severe risks of technological mismanagement and decision-making errors. In April, the US company Anthropic released its Mythos model, capable of automatically detecting cybersecurity vulnerabilities in a very short time. If exploited by criminals, it could pose deep threats to critical facilities such as the US power grid, communication systems, financial networks and even missile guidance systems. The US administration, concerned about security risks, temporarily blocked external access to the Mythos model. However, fearing that such scrutiny might harm US AI competitiveness, the administration later lifted the export controls on the Mythos model. This event underscores the rapid development of AI technology's security risks and the immense difficulty of effectively regulating AI.

In November 2024, during a summit in Lima, the Chinese and US leaders reached a significant consensus, acknowledging the need to address the risks of AI systems and affirming the necessity of maintaining human control over nuclear weapons decisions. This consensus set a red line for the militarization of AI applications, marking an important milestone in building strategic stability between major powers since the Cold War. Recently, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent stated that China and the US have begun dialogues on AI, discussing the establishment of guardrails for AI usage. Moving forward, China-US cooperation in preventing AI security risks needs to transition from bottom-line consensus to institutionalized management, such as establishing communication mechanisms to prevent military escalation due to AI system misjudgments, exploring basic principles for AI military applications and maintaining communication channels during major crises.

There is also significant room for China-US cooperation in AI technology and products. Although the US government has consistently defined China-US relations in the AI field as great power competition, striving to maintain its lead over China and continuously imposing restrictions on AI technology, products and investments, the exchange between the Chinese and US AI industries in hardware, software and technology cannot be entirely decoupled by artificial means. Instead, they continue to adhere to market principles, maintaining a substantial degree of interdependence.

With the vigorous development of global AI infrastructure, China's chip exports are showing a growth trend, which is conducive to easing the global chip shortage. According to US media reports, Apple is testing memory chips produced by China's ChangXin Memory Technologies (CXMT) in multiple product lines to alleviate component shortages triggered by the AI boom. Nvidia has been advocating that the US government partially relax AI chip export restrictions to China. Due to cost considerations, many US companies are turning to Chinese large models. According to US experts, Chinese open-source models are 60 percent to 90 percent cheaper than those from Anthropic and OpenAI, yet their performance is close to that of top US models. Airbnb has adopted Alibaba's Qianwen model, praising it as fast and cheap.

Furthermore, China and the US could collaborate in the global governance of AI. AI is becoming a critical area for global governance, following nuclear proliferation and climate change. Currently, economies have clear differences in AI governance. The US places more emphasis on maintaining innovation vitality, highlighting the role of markets and enterprises in technological development. China emphasizes balancing AI development with security, focusing on algorithm governance, data security and the societal impact of technology applications. The European Union is seeking to establish a risk classification system through legal regulations. Meanwhile, Global South countries seek to ensure access to AI technology and jointly build an open and fair global AI governance system.

Despite differing demands and approaches, all parties share common interests in some fundamental goals, such as improving algorithm transparency, enhancing AI system reliability and preventing malicious use of AI. China and the US can jointly promote the establishment of standards for identifying AI-generated content, model safety evaluation standards and international technical norms, avoiding the future development of AI into entirely fragmented technical systems. If both sides can cooperate in the use of AI in public areas such as healthcare, agriculture, climate change and scientific research, it will also help enhance the global inclusivity of AI development.

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BUSINESS

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Oil, gas supply boost to bolster energy security

Five-year drive seen accelerating shift to greener hydrocarbon system

By ZHENG XIN
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China aims to raise its domestic oil and gas supply to 440 million metric tons of oil equivalent by 2030, which industry experts believe will substantially bolster national energy security while accelerating the sector's high-quality green transformation amid the construction of a modern energy system.

The ambitious targets were outlined in the newly released 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for petroleum and natural gas development, jointly issued by the National Development and Reform Commission and the National Energy Administration.

The blueprint sets forth comprehensive strategic priorities for upstream exploration, midstream infrastructure connectivity, strategic energy storage buffering and decarbonization over the next five-year period.

To strengthen domestic distribution networks, the country will construct an additional 20,000 kilometers of long-distance oil and gas pipelines by 2030. This infrastructure push will expand the nation's total network to 220,000 km, markedly enhancing domestic supply chain resilience.

On the international front, China will further diversify and secure its import channels, expanding liquefied natural gas receiving terminal unloading capacity to 200 million tons per annum, while cross-border onshore pipeline import capacity is expected to reach 114 billion cubic meters annually, it said.

Dai Jiaquan, chief economist at the China National Petroleum Corp Economics and Technology Research Institute, said that compared with the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, the newly unveiled blueprint sets a tone of making steady progress while maintaining sector-wide stability.

Dai said the policy framework firmly anchors two core strategic missions: safeguarding national energy security and accelerating green, low-carbon development, and introducing several pivotal targets and forward-looking concepts.

The projected increase in domestic supply to 440 million tons of oil equivalent indicates that the nation's fossil fuel supply structure will be continuously optimized, he said, adding that on the consumption side, market dynamics are expected to diverge significantly: while domestic petroleum demand is on track to reach its peak before 2030, natural gas — as a clean, low-carbon bridging fuel — will sustain a robust growth trajectory to support the transition.

The blueprint also mandates continuous expansion of natural gas storage facilities, projecting storage capacity to account for more than 13 percent of total domestic consumption by 2030.

Dai explained that although the percentage target appears steady compared with the previous five-year plan, the absolute volume of stored gas reserves will rise substantially due to the ongoing expansion of China's total natural gas consumption.

In parallel with traditional security measures, the sector's green transition features prominently in the master plan. Annual carbon dioxide injection volume through Carbon Capture and Storage, and Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage projects is projected to reach 10 million tons by 2030.

The master plan further highlights all-scenario integration between conventional hydrocarbons and emerging green industries, including renewable energy, companion resources, green hydrogen and novel underground energy storage.

Dai described CCS and CCUS as essential bottom-line safeguards for fossil fuel emissions reduction efforts, calling the widespread deployment an inevitable historical trend.

"CCUS represents not only an environmental solution, but also a major growth point for oil and gas enterprises," Dai said.

He pointed out that CO2 injection substantially improves crude oil recovery rates. Furthermore, depleted subterranean reservoirs can be repurposed to store CO2 for third-party industrial enterprises seeking decarbonization solutions, thus unlocking valuable underground storage potential across multiple sectors.



A worker maintains oil-drilling equipment in the Daqing Oilfield in Heilongjiang province. XINHUA



Live-wire work

Staffers from State Grid Yangzhou conduct live-wire installation work at Yuejin village in Jiangdu district of Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, eliminating connection defects amid growing electricity demand. They connected tie switches on two 10 kilovolt transmission lines.
REN FEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Volkswagen celebrates 100,000th EV

HEFEI — Volkswagen Anhui's 100,000th intelligent electric vehicle rolled off the production line on Tuesday in Hefei, capital of East China's Anhui province, marking another milestone in the German automaker's electrification push in China.

Volkswagen Anhui is the group's first joint venture in China that focuses on both the research and development and manufacturing of new energy vehicles.

"The 100,000th vehicle is far more than a number," said Miroslav Khula, CEO of Volkswagen Anhui. "We will continue to unlock the synergies between German engineering and local innovation, delivering higher-quality products to our customers."

Competition in China's NEV market has evolved beyond product specs and pricing into a multi-dimensional battlefield that spans software, intelligent driving, electronic and electrical architecture, and even supply chain coordination.

The landmark 100,000th EV is an ID. UNYX 08, the first model co-developed by Volkswagen and its Chinese partner Xpeng. It went into mass production at Volkswagen Anhui's Hefei plant in March, equipped with localized cutting-edge technologies including 800-volt ultra-fast charging and enhanced L2-level assisted driving.

Volkswagen Group has invested more than 3.5 billion euros ($4.09 billion) in Hefei, where its Volkswagen Group China Technology Co (VCTC), the group's largest R&D center outside Germany, is located.

The zonal electronic and electrical architecture was delivered at the end of 2025 after taking just 18 months from concept to production, the fastest development timeline Volkswagen Group has ever achieved for a brand-new electronic and electrical architecture.

This marks a shift in which global automakers are no longer just manufacturing in China — they are now integrating their Chinese partners' technological capabilities into their core R&D systems.

Hefei, where Volkswagen Anhui is based, is a key hub in China's NEV industry. In 2025, the city produced over 1.37 million NEVs, the most among all Chinese cities. It is home to major carmakers including JAC, BYD and NIO, along with a supply chain spanning power batteries, automotive electronics and intelligent driving, serving as a nexus between China's market and Volkswagen's global operations.

The all-electric Cupra Tavascan is Volkswagen Anhui's flagship model for export to Europe, with the Hefei plant the sole global production site. In February, the European Commission accepted Volkswagen Anhui's price undertaking, allowing the Cupra Tavascan to enter the European market exempt from countervailing duties of up to 20.7 percent.

Volkswagen Anhui's experience is not an isolated case. General Motors recently extended its joint venture with Chinese partner SAIC Motor by 20 years, following a similar move by Honda Motor and China's GAC Group, which renewed their partnership through 2038.

These back-to-back extensions reflect global automakers' confidence in the long-term value of the Chinese market, and, more significantly, their recognition that China's R&D, manufacturing and supply chain capabilities are poised to support their global operations.

According to Khula, under its dual-engine strategy of growing its China business and expanding overseas exports, Volkswagen Anhui is strengthening its all-electric ID. UNYX lineup and accelerating the series production and delivery of next-generation intelligent connected vehicles in China, while drawing on the strengths of China's NEV supply chain and intelligent manufacturing ecosystem, particularly in Hefei, to support the group's global production layout.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Loan prime rates remain unchanged

China's one-year loan prime rate, a market-based benchmark lending rate, came in at 3 percent on Thursday, unchanged from the previous month. The over-five-year LPR, on which many lenders base their mortgage rates, also remained unchanged from the previous reading of 3.5 percent, according to the National Interbank Funding Center.

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the yuan strengthened 46 pips to 6.7808 against the US dollar on Thursday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Guangxi readying for upcoming CIFTIS

By REN QI
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The Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region is finalizing its preparations to showcase its digital trade innovations and strengthen ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ahead of the upcoming 2026 China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing.

Li Shuo, deputy director of Guangxi's department of commerce, highlighted the profound significance of the region's participation. This is a testament to its strategic position at the forefront of China-ASEAN cooperation and its role in serving the country's new development paradigm.

To ensure a robust presence, Guangxi has established a highly coordinated organizational system, mobilizing a delegation that comprises all 14 of its prefectural-level cities, 10 government departments, and 60 key enterprises in service and digital trade — altogether involving over 200 participants.

The region's extensive preparations align seamlessly with the expanding scale of 2026 CIFTIS, scheduled to be held from Sept 9 to 13 in Beijing. Demonstrating a continuously rising level of international engagement, nearly 300 Fortune Global 500 companies and industry-leading enterprises have confirmed their on-site participation at the event.

Guangxi's upgraded comprehensive pavilion is designed as a premier window for China-ASEAN digital trade cooperation. Themed around utilizing digital intelligence to link with ASEAN, the fully immersive space features a five-part layout, including a national-level platform data wall, an artificial intelligence application scenario zone and a cross-border digital services area.

The exhibition will promote Guangxi's AI development and its application in ASEAN markets, alongside regional specialties such as cross-border logistics, traditional Chinese medicine wellness and cultural exports, aiming to present complex data and technologies through tangible, real-world scenarios that drive localized cooperation, Li said.

To further support such international outreach and the commercialization of achievements, 2026 CIFTIS will debut a "going global services promotion roadshow area".

Centered on open cooperation and new quality productive forces, this innovative section will feature professional institutions related to finance, law, accounting, intellectual property, advertising and human resources.

With more than 40 roadshow activities already scheduled, the area aims to conduct promotional pitches and information sharing, providing enterprises with one-stop services geared to help them expand overseas.

Leveraging this broad international platform, Li said Guangxi will co-host a major promotion conference with Beijing and Hainan province on the afternoon of Sept 9.

Supported by ASEAN embassies and international organizations, the event will focus on building a new ecosystem for digital trade cooperation. The conference will feature the release of research findings, new product launches, project signings and the joint launch of a new highland for open cooperation.

Furthermore, Guangxi will host four specialized matchmaking events to unleash the potential of its characteristic industries. Li said that on Sept 10, the port city of Fangchenggang will host an international medical product exhibition, while a national new tea beverage industry conference will be co-hosted by China Daily and the Guangxi Broadcasting and Television Network. Later that day, Nanning will lead a digital services export matchmaking session. Throughout the fair, a cultural and tourism exhibition will also be set up.

Li said preparations have entered the final sprint stage. By utilizing the CIFTIS platform, Guangxi aims to present a fresh image of high-standard opening-up and contribute to building a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future through practical economic and trade cooperation.

Biz leaders explore China's AI sector

By JIANG XUEQING
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China's rapid advances in artificial intelligence, electric mobility, robotics and other high-tech industries are drawing growing attention from the next generation of business leaders around the world, with Deutsche Bank bringing a group of young entrepreneurs to Beijing to see the country's innovation ecosystem firsthand.

Marco Pagliara, head of private bank emerging markets at Deutsche Bank, led next-generation entrepreneurs from emerging markets, Europe and the Middle East on a recent visit to Beijing, where they explored China's AI ecosystem, visited industries at the forefront of technological development and met with Chinese entrepreneurs to learn how they are turning technological advances into new business models.

The visit was part of Deutsche Bank's NextGen program, which has run for more than 20 years and provides business leaders of the future with access to educational events, thought-leadership activities and networking opportunities. In August, Beijing became the host city for the bank's Wealth Management NextGen APAC Program 2026.

"It's an exceptional opportunity to come to China at this stage of the AI revolution, to see what the country is doing in terms of infrastructure investment in an ecosystem that supports AI evolution and transformation," said Pagliara.

The program was designed to expose the young leaders to areas where China has emerged as a global force, including AI, electric mobility, power infrastructure, robotics and humanoid robotics, and to give them a firsthand sense of the level of innovation in the country.

For Pagliara, the trip was also an opportunity to examine investment opportunities and consider how international investors can gain exposure to cutting-edge Chinese technologies.

"I think what is special about China is the combination between long-term strategic planning and the ecosystem that supports technological development, which prepares fertile ground for the private sector to develop and translate that ecosystem into innovation that impacts business models and the lives of people on a day-to-day basis," he said.

Concerted activity, together with financial and business planning, provides a clearly defined framework and stable guidance, while an economic system that rewards performance and efficiency helps identify some of the strongest and most successful business models, which can then become highly competitive internationally, he said.

As a European, Pagliara said he has seen firsthand how much more competitive Chinese products have become on the global stage.

"There are many examples across a range of industries, where we look with respect and admiration at what has been built here in China. As competitors, we find it very challenging to face the efficiency and the quality of the products that have been developed here. So I think we have a lot to learn," he said.

Foreign perceptions of Chinese manufacturing have also evolved, he said. China was once primarily associated with low costs and manufacturing efficiency, but its competitive advantage is increasingly based on quality and product features that are not readily available in other markets.

That shift is evident in industries ranging from automobiles and power generation to consumer electronics, and is beginning to extend into sectors such as fashion and apparel, which historically received less attention from Chinese manufacturers. An increasing number of Chinese brands are gaining international recognition for quality rather than simply for cost competitiveness or efficiency, he said.

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BUSINESS

Green energy fuels summer tourism

Heat waves drive up inbound trips helped by clean power





Above: A foreign tourist strikes a playful "eating-the-monorail" pose for photos at the Liziba viewing platform in Chongqing on Aug 10. HUANG WEI / XINHUA
Left: Foreign tourists pose for a selfie in Nan'an district of Chongqing on July 10. GUO XU / XINHUA

SHANGHAI — French vlogger Yisa recently invited her parents to China for a summer trip, and they were all duly impressed by the cool and comfortable environment they encountered throughout their journey, even finding modern air-conditioning systems installed inside traditional yurts on the vast grasslands of North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

Like Yisa's family, who wanted to escape stifling heatwaves in Europe, an increasing number of foreign visitors are coming to China not only to explore its history and culture, but also to seek respite from high temperatures.

The trend is giving rise to a new dimension of inbound tourism as visitors discover that China's "summer retreat" is supported not only by its diverse natural landscapes, but also by technological innovation, green energy infrastructure and an extensive transportation network.

The phenomenon is also being witnessed in China's major cities.

Vlogger Jenna Knapp from the United States recently visited Shanghai, where she sought refuge from 36.7 C summer heat in an indoor snow and ski resort.

"If you know anything about Shanghai summers and you're looking to get away from the heat, this place is a dream," Knapp said in a video, adding that visitors could enjoy an artificial winter environment and ski rentals for less than $100.

Her destination, Shanghai L+SNOW Indoor Skiing Theme Resort, is certified by Guinness World Records as the world's largest indoor ski facility. In subtropical Shanghai, where summer temperatures often exceed 30 C, the resort maintains an indoor temperature of around -5 C across a 98,000-square-meter snow area, with a vertical drop of 60 meters.

Behind such a cooling experience is an extensive effort to improve energy efficiency. The resort has adopted a range of energy-saving technologies, including solar power generation, an upgraded thermal insulation system, carbon dioxide refrigeration, waste heat recovery, ice thermal storage and dehumidification heating.

Some 37,000 square meters of photovoltaic panels have been installed on the roof of the resort, reducing CO2 emissions by more than 2,000 metric tons annually, the resort said.

The facility is more than a novel destination for summer visitors. It also showcases China's efforts to integrate energy-saving technologies with emerging forms of service consumption, while promoting the application of new thermal insulation materials, refrigeration equipment and other innovations.

Yet the energy supporting such "chilling" experiences — from grassland yurts to indoor entertainment venues — comes from a much larger power network.

"The 'air-conditioning freedom' stems from China's ultra-high-voltage power transmission networks and the rapid expansion of wind and photovoltaic power generation," said Cheng Haozhong, a distinguished professor at the School of Electrical Engineering of Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

The cooling-off effects enjoyed by tourists in East China, Cheng said, are also supported by green electricity transmitted from the country's renewables-rich western regions.

China's power supply has remained stable even during the peak summer season, when electricity demand has repeatedly reached record highs amid heavy air conditioning use.

According to the 15th Five-Year Plan for the Construction of a New Power System, jointly released by the National Development and Reform Commission and the National Energy Administration on Aug 3, China's annual electricity consumption is expected to increase by about 600 billion kilowatt-hours during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30). To meet rising demand, China is building a diversified power supply system featuring coal, gas, nuclear power and renewable energy.

The growth of green electricity is also helping cities meet rising summer demand, while advancing the country's energy transition.

As of July 15, Shanghai had consumed more than 11 billion kWh of green electricity this year, about 25 percent more than its total consumption of green electricity last year and a record high for the fourth consecutive year.

The combination of a stable power supply and growing green electricity consumption is helping provide the energy foundation for China's increasingly diverse summer tourism experiences.

Beyond the power grid, China's extensive transportation network is making it easier for overseas visitors to reach cooler destinations across the country.

While major cities remain popular with international travelers, more visitors are exploring summer destinations such as Southwest China's Tengchong, Yunnan province; Northwest China's Kashgar, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region; North China's Qinhuangdao, Hebei province, attracted by their cooler climates and distinctive landscapes.

The trend has been facilitated by China's expanding civil aviation network and high-speed railway system, which accounts for more than 70 percent of the world's total high-speed rail mileage.

"This upgraded transportation network has turned the idea of having morning dim sum in a furnace-like city and enjoying the cool air at the foot of a snow-capped mountain in the afternoon into an everyday reality for travelers," said Cao Yixia, a research fellow at the Institute of Applied Economics of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

The growing popularity of China's summer destinations among overseas visitors is thus more than a seasonal tourism phenomenon. It offers an everyday perspective on the country's modernization — from green electricity and advanced infrastructure to convenient transportation and increasingly diverse forms of consumption.

As more international travelers experience China's "summer retreat," they are gaining a closer and more tangible understanding of the country's development, helping foster more authentic and organic exchanges between China and the rest of the world, said Cao.

XINHUA

Solar, wind electricity used to support computing bonanza



A drone view shows a 2-million-kW green-power project supporting Datang's cloud data center near the Tengger Desert in Zhongwei, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, on Feb 10. LU YANG / XINHUA

YINCHUAN — As the sun beats down on the edge of the Tengger Desert on a summer day, rows of photovoltaic panels stretch across the dunes, turning intense desert light into electricity.

Nearby, the steady hum of servers fills a data center run by telecom giant China Mobile in Zhongwei, Northwest China's Ningxia Hui autonomous region. In May, one of the center's data facilities began receiving electricity directly from the solar power station, powering computing capacity for artificial intelligence model training, inference and other applications.

Green power now accounts for over 80 percent of the electricity consumed by the facility, said Zhang Xu, a computing operation and maintenance engineer at China Mobile's Ningxia branch.

The solar farm in renewable-energy-rich Ningxia is one of China's earliest projects to supply green power directly to data centers. The move comes as China seeks to bring its growing computing capacity closer to the renewable energy resources needed to power it.

The 500-megawatt solar farm is only part of the equation.

About 40 kilometers south, a 1.5-gigawatt wind farm is under construction and is scheduled to be connected to the grid in September. The wind power will complement solar generation at night, helping supply data centers with green power around the clock.

Once fully operational, the solar and wind projects will be able to meet the annual electricity demand of about 2.29 billion kilowatt-hours from the existing and to-be-added data center cluster in Zhongwei, according to the Zhongwei subsidiary of China Datang Corporation Renewable Power, which operates the projects.

That demand comes from a fast-growing computing cluster. The Zhongwei cluster now has 10 large data center parks. Six of China's top 10 internet data center operators have established a presence in the city, while data operations for major internet companies including Alibaba, Baidu, Tencent, Meituan and ByteDance are also based there.

For data centers that run around the clock, electricity needs to be stable, reliable and affordable. The issue is becoming more pressing as demand for computing power rises. Electricity accounts for 60 percent to 70 percent of data centers' operating costs, according to industry estimates.

Statistics from the International Energy Agency show that, globally, data centers are projected to consume 945 terawatt-hours of electricity a year by 2030. In China, electricity consumption by data centers doubled from 82.4 TWh in 2019 to 166 TWh in 2024, according to the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology.

That puts data centers at the intersection of two trends: rapidly growing demand for computing and China's push toward a greener energy mix. The country has set a target of having newly built data centers in its major computing hubs use no less than 80 percent green power.

Having green power transmission lines right next to the data center allows it to make greater use of locally generated solar and wind power, while reducing transmission losses and electricity costs, said Zhang from China Mobile.

Zhongwei's appeal as a computing hub goes beyond its abundant sunshine and wind.

The city has a dry, cool climate and stable geological conditions, while its location near the geographical center of China offers good connectivity to other parts of the country.

Data centers here can rely on natural cooling for eight to 10 months a year, well above the national average, helping reduce the electricity needed for cooling, said Zhu Bin from the computing operations branch at China Mobile Ningxia.

Zhongwei's growth as a computing hub is closely tied to China's strategy of shifting computing workloads westward, where renewable energy and land are more abundant.

Launched in 2022, the "East Data, West Computing" project designated Ningxia as one of China's eight national computing hubs, with Zhongwei being home to one of 10 national data center clusters.

In 2025, Zhongwei ranked fifth among 302 Chinese cities on a city-level computing power index. Its computing capacity has reached 283,100 petaflops to date, according to the municipal data administration.

Computing facilities in Zhongwei support the training and inference of 13 large AI models and provide services to more than 4,900 companies, including Xiaomi and Xiaohongshu, said Meng Fanzhen, an official with the administration.

For the first time this year, the coordinated development of computing capacity and electricity supply was highlighted in the Government Work Report, alongside hyperscale intelligent computing clusters, as a key area of new infrastructure development.

China's 2026-30 development blueprint also calls for further advancing the "East Data, West Computing" project and expanding its integrated computing network.

For Zhongwei, the next step is to better align power supply with computing demand while driving down both carbon emissions and costs.

"We will work to build a platform that dynamically coordinates computing capacity and power supply, using computing demand to optimize electricity use," Meng said.

XINHUA

M-Grass aids Mongolia's drive for afforestation

ULAANBAATAR/HOHHOT — Deep in Mongolia's Gobi area, technicians from M-Grass Ecology and Environment (Group), a Chinese company specializing in grass seed technology, crouched on the sandy ground in Khanbogd county inspecting newly planted Haloxylon ammodendron seedlings. With meticulous care, they parted the gravel to confirm each root was firmly nestled in soil.

Characterized by vegetation cover below 10 percent, annual precipitation of approximately 104 millimeters, winter temperatures as low as -31.5 C and summer maxima exceeding 42.2 C, this harsh setting creates major challenges for afforestation. Yet, backed by the Chinese enterprise, a durable green initiative is progressing.

The Haloxylon ammodendron forest project sits near Mongolian wild ass (*equus hemionus*) habitats, where M-Grass technicians are now preparing for large-scale planting this autumn.

"Whether Haloxylon ammodendron seedlings take root and survive depends on hydrological surveys, native vegetation assessments, seedling selection, soil testing, fertilizer comparisons, planting depth, irrigation during early growth and meticulous subsequent maintenance," said Wang Junfang, the project's technical team leader.

"Gobi afforestation must fully respect desert ecology. The planting process also seeks to protect the native vegetation already growing on this land," Wang said.

To minimize disruption to the Gobi surface and native plants, the technical team downsized the planting pit from 40 to 20 centimeters in diameter, enabling more precise operations that protect the desert ecosystem during afforestation.

The 400-hectare Haloxylon ammodendron forest project, a key component of Mongolia's "One Billion Trees" initiative, is led by a Mongolian enterprise with ecological restoration technology consultation provided by M-Grass.

The project aims to plant 330,000 Haloxylon ammodendron seedlings. The location was chosen in a Gobi area historically home to wild Haloxylon, leveraging local species' drought resilience to improve survival rates.

The project's field investigations began in May 2025, with 80 hectares planted last fall. This autumn, the project aims to plant 200 additional hectares using a proven "mechanical digging plus manual planting" method, a process expected to be completed within two months. The remaining acreage will be carried over to the following year.

In parallel with main afforestation tasks, the project has established a 10-hectare research demonstration zone. Over 20 native Mongolian species are being tested for plant biodiversity comparison, alongside adaptation trials of proven Chinese ecological products. The goal is to tailor China's experience in desertification control to Mongolia's local conditions.

Regarding irrigation design, Wang said the technical team adopts a water-saving approach based on the Gobi's water resource endowment. Natural precipitation supplemented by staged watering is planned to support seedlings during critical growth periods. Once fully established, seedlings will rely primarily on natural rainfall for maintenance.

Beyond ecological restoration, the Gobi afforestation project is designed to benefit local communities. Haloxylon ammodendron is a key desert host plant that often supports Cistanche deserticola, a medicinal parasitic plant. The team plans to trial Cistanche grafting on mature Haloxylon ammodendron two years after planting, while also monitoring carbon sequestration, to turn these sand-fixing forests into economic assets for local communities.

China-Mongolia ecological cooperation is expanding on multiple fronts.

The China-Mongolia Desertification Prevention and Control Cooperation Center was inaugurated in Mongolian capital Ulaanbaatar in September 2023. The center actively supports Mongolia's One Billion Trees initiative.

M-Grass is also collaborating with another Mongolian company to advance mine site restoration and integrated grassland-livestock projects. They plan to pilot an 8-hectare mine slope restoration, covering drainage construction, soil improvement, vegetation planting and long-term monitoring and evaluation.

Fan Lijun, director of the Belt and Road Initiative Research Institute at Inner Mongolia Academy of Social Sciences, said bringing China's mature desertification control experience to Mongolia and localizing it through resource-based practice, while pursuing both ecological protection and industrial cultivation, is a new highlight in advancing Belt and Road cooperation and the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor.

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CHINA

Scholars: Natl identity key to bolstering ties

Seminar highlights reunification shift, drive to advance cross-Strait relations

By **LI SHANGYI** in Wuhan
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Scholars from Taiwan and the mainland stressed at a seminar that a sound sense of Chinese national identity is fundamental to the development of cross-Strait relations, while expressing concern about the Democratic Progressive Party authorities' efforts to distort that identity by promoting "Taiwan independence" separatism.

Addressing the 2026 Cross-Strait Relations Seminar, which opened on Thursday in Wuhan, Hubei province, Peng Qing'en, deputy director of the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, called on Taiwan compatriots to uphold the greater national interest and recognize the broader historical trend. He also urged them to jointly oppose "Taiwan independence" separatism and external interference and safeguard the common homeland of the Chinese nation.

The two-day seminar was organized by the mainland-based cross-Strait relations research center and brought together more than 160 scholars and experts from both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Wang Yingjin, director of the Research Center for Cross-Strait Relations at Renmin University of China, said a sound sense of national identity is the first step in advancing cross-Strait relations and an important prerequisite for fostering emotional affinity between people on both sides.

Yang Yizhou, vice-president of the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots, said that, since Taiwan is part of China's territory, people in Taiwan originally had no issue with their identification with China.

He said separatist forces on the island have sought to construct a "Taiwan independence" identity through policies, which he described as false identification. "Identification with national reunification is natural, while identification with 'Taiwan independence' is artificial," Yang said.

Chi Hsing, president and publisher of The Observer, a Taiwan-based magazine, said "different systems are not an excuse for secession". She said people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait form a community with a shared future and that Taiwan compatriots should uphold the tradition of patriotism reflected in their shared historical memory.

"The status quo across the Taiwan Strait is a transitional phase towards national reunification," Chi said.

Referring to the island's "constitution", whose preamble states that it is intended to "meet the needs before national reunification", she said Taiwan has only the option of pursuing reunification, not "Taiwan independence".

Experts at the seminar noted that the mainland's continuous development and progress has contributed to a growing sense of identification with China among people on the island. They also called on people in Taiwan to gain a better understanding of the mainland.

Ting Jen-fang, president of the south Taiwan cross-Strait relations association, said new forms of traditional Chinese culture have strong appeal among young people in Taiwan. He cited popular works such as the dance drama *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* and the television series *Pursuit of Jade* as examples, saying they are opening up new avenues for cross-Strait cultural exchange.

Yang Kai-huang, director of the Cross-Strait Research Center at Ming Chuan University in Taiwan, encouraged people in Taiwan to experience the mainland's technological development, including the application of smart technologies in daily life and healthcare. Such developments, he said, offer a glimpse into future models and could also help strengthen a sense of identification.

Smart traffic controllers



An intelligent traffic management robot directs vehicles in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, on Thursday. The robot, fitted with a black police cap and fluorescent yellow-green reflective clothing, is the city's first traffic management robot and is currently in a trial phase. Equipped for tasks like routine patrols, violation detection, voice guidance and road safety education, it can operate continuously for eight to nine hours daily, effectively bolstering traffic control during nighttime and peak hours. WU FENGYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Yak fighting



Two yaks grapple during a traditional yak-fighting performance held in Panam county, Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region, on Thursday. The bout was a demonstration event of the 14th Xizang autonomous regional games, which run from Aug 15 to 22. JIGMI DORJE / XINHUA

Chinese surgeon saves lives in Africa

By **WANG XIAOYU**
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For much of the past year, Chinese neurosurgeon Zhang Shijun's most vital instrument was not the advanced craniotomy system he was accustomed to using in brain surgery, but simple, handheld skull drills.

During his one-year medical aid mission in the Northeast African nation of Eritrea, which ran from July 2025 to July 2026, Zhang, 47, learned that when stripped of the high-tech trappings of a modern operating room, a doctor's most valuable assets are solid technical skills and an unwavering resolve under pressure.

"Back in my home hospital, we're used to having a high-powered electronic drill spinning within seconds just by releasing the foot pedal," he said. "In Eritrea, we could only rely on manual equipment most of the time, putting our wrist and shoulder strength into turning the drill over and over again."

"Moving from a well-equipped surgical room to an environment with scarce resources was a tough lesson for many of us medical aid workers. But we've all learned to overcome these challenges and live up to the trust our local patients have placed in us," he said during an interview ahead of China's ninth Doctors' Day, celebrated annually on Aug 19.

Zhang is the deputy director of the neurosurgery department at Yellow River Sanmenxia Hospital in Henan province. He also served as deputy head of the 18th Chinese medical aid team to Eritrea, which comprises 18 medical experts. They all come from Henan and specialize in a broad range of fields including radiology, surgery, traditional Chinese medicine and anesthesiology.

In Eritrea, the Chinese team was based at the Orotta National Referral Hospital in the capital city of Asmara and several other local medical institutions.

Throughout the mission, the team received more than 35,600 patient visits, performed or guided over 4,100 surgeries, delivered TCM therapies to nearly 20,000 patients, conducted 9,000 CT and ultrasound examinations, and trained about 180 local medical workers.



Zhang Shijun

As one of just two neurosurgeons on the team, Zhang said they were the only surgeons in the country capable of handling complex neurosurgical cases. While he was accustomed to the high-stakes pressure and critical decisions inherent in his specialty, the realities on the ground continually challenged him in ways he had never anticipated.

His most memorable case involved a man in his 20s who was transferred from a remote area to the hospital three days after falling into a coma due to a spontaneous intracerebral hemorrhage. Such cases were not uncommon in Eritrea, where long travel distances and inconvenient transportation often left patients in critical condition before they could reach medical help.

"His one pupil was already blown and there was no movement in any limb. His brain was herniating and he could die at any moment," Zhang said. "As an emergency head CT showed a hematoma in the brain, we decided to perform emergency surgery to clear the clot."

"There was no scrub nurse, so we picked our own instruments and used them ourselves. There was no surgical microscope or other advanced equipment. We had just one hand drill, and the bit wasn't very sharp," he said. "After drilling four holes in his skull, I was drenched in sweat, and my wrist was sore and shaking."

In the middle of the surgery, the bipolar coagulator used to control bleeding suddenly malfunctioned, and Zhang had to quickly apply pressure to the surgical site using a gelatin sponge.

"We had to swap out three different bipolar units before the device started working," he said.

The surgery was eventually completed after about three hours.

"When the patient gradually woke up and his limbs started moving again, it hit me that in conditions that bad, one slip in surgery and the outcome could have been totally different," he said.

"What I had relied on in those intense moments wasn't just my technical skill, but also the trust of a man handing me his life — and I cannot fail that kind of trust," he said.

After familiarizing himself with the local conditions, Zhang said he performed about six surgeries a week on average, and occasionally four surgeries a day on their busiest days.

"We had brought a type of cranial perforator and special drainage tubes from China in advance, having learned that there was a high prevalence of chronic subdural hematoma. With the domestic device, a procedure to address the condition took only 10 minutes, compared with about an hour before," he said.

"As a result, more patients could receive timely care," he added.

Tewelde Yohannes, medical director of Orotta hospital, said Chinese doctors play an important role in filling gaps in certain areas of expertise.

"They are always available, always willing, very cooperative, smiling, humble and ready to work at any time around the clock," he said during an interview with local television station Eri-TV. "We are very thankful and grateful for the support they give us, and we want it to continue."

Gao Jielei contributed to this story.

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Story-sharing event fosters China-Nepal exchanges

By **YANG ZEKUN**
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More than 300 people representing various sectors in China and Nepal gathered in Kathmandu on Wednesday for a story-sharing event highlighting the Xizang autonomous region's progress in social stability, economic development, ecological protection and opening-up.

The event, titled "Xizang Panorama: New Era, New Development", was co-organized by the China Society for Human Rights Studies, Tribhuvan University and the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal. It brought together officials, scholars, journalists, educators and representatives from Nepal's cultural and performing arts sectors.

Jiang Jianguo, a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and deputy director of the Committee for Ethnic and Religious Affairs of the CPPCC National Committee, said this year marks the 75th anniversary of the peaceful liberation of Xizang.

Over the past 75 years, the Communist Party of China and the Chinese government have consistently regarded the rights to subsistence and development as fundamental human rights and charted a path for human rights development that follows the trend of the times and suits China's national conditions, said Jiang, who is also executive vice-president of the China Society for Human Rights Studies.

Jiang said Xizang has maintained social stability while making progress in economic development, ethnic unity, religious harmony and opening-up, with people's sense of fulfillment, happiness and security continuing to grow.

"The dramatic transformation of Xizang is the most vivid epitome of China's human rights development in the new era," Jiang said.

He called on people from various sectors to continue promoting China-Nepal friendship, observing Xizang's development and advancing exchanges between civilizations, helping more people gain an accurate, multidimensional and comprehensive understanding of the region.

Top Bahadur Magar, chairperson of Nepal's National Human Rights Commission, spoke highly of China's efforts in human rights development and said stronger exchanges and cooperation among countries and relevant institutions are important to advancing the cause.

He said the commission is willing to deepen exchanges with organizations including the China Society for Human Rights Studies, share experiences and perspectives and enhance mutual understanding through dialogue and learning.

The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal remains interested in further strengthening cooperation with China in the areas of human rights promotion and protection, he said.

Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Zhang Maoming, said Xizang's experience in promoting vitality, openness, social harmony and environmental protection could offer useful lessons for deeper cooperation across the Himalayas.

Its practices in economic and social development and grassroots governance could also provide valuable reference for Nepal, Zhang said, adding that China is willing to work with Nepal to turn development opportunities into tangible cooperation and improve the well-being of people in both countries.

The event was structured around four themes: "Open Xizang", "Vibrant Xizang", "Harmonious Xizang" and "Green Xizang", with speakers presenting their observations and experiences of the region.

Eight speakers from China and Nepal, including scholars from the Xizang autonomous region academy of social sciences and the China Tibetology Research Center, as well as representatives from Nepal's media, education and performing arts sectors, took part in the sessions.

"From the historic streets of Lhasa to the innovative ranches in the countryside, I witnessed a Xizang that is actively modernizing while deeply respecting its cultural roots and natural environment," Kumar Sharma Acharya, former chairman of Press Council Nepal, said while recalling his visit to Xizang in June.

A photography exhibition was also held on the sidelines of the event, featuring images of the region's economic development, ecological conservation, ethnic unity and opening-up.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Cause of Antarctic ice gain identified

By **LI MENGHAN**
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While the Antarctic ice sheet has lost mass at an average rate of about 140.5 billion metric tons a year over the past two decades, satellite data showed a striking reversal from 2021 to 2023, when the ice sheet gained 695 billion tons — the largest increase on record.

An international research team has now identified the mechanism behind the unusual gain, revealing a previously overlooked climate link between the tropics and the Antarctic ice sheet.

The study, conducted by researchers from institutes in China, the United States, Japan, Belgium and Hungary, was published in the journal Nature on Wednesday.

The researchers found that sustained warming in the tropical warm pool — a broad region where the western Pacific and eastern Indian oceans meet and sea surface temperatures are persistently high — sent large-scale atmospheric waves southward toward Antarctica. These waves carried unusually large amounts of moisture from the midlatitude Indian Ocean to Queen Mary Land and Wilkes Land in East Antarctica, resulting in persistent heavy snowfall.

The researchers used several types of evidence, including satellite measurements of changes in Earth's gravity, records of snowfall preserved in Antarctic ice cores and computer simulations of atmospheric circulation.

Wang Yunhe, first author of the study and an associate professor at the Institute of Oceanology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said such warming events in the tropical warm pool typically develop and persist for two to three years and occur roughly once in a decade. Similar, although smaller, fluctuations were observed around 2000, he said.

The team also examined what caused the unusual warming and snowfall. Their analysis showed that human-induced climate change accounted for only about 9 percent of the increase in snowfall, indicating that the event was driven mainly by natural fluctuations within the climate system rather than by greenhouse gas warming.

Wang, however, said the temporary increase in snowfall does not alter the Antarctic ice sheet's long-term trend.

"The West Antarctic ice sheet is still losing ice, and some outlet glaciers in East Antarctica are also threatened by ocean-driven ice shelf melting and accelerated ice flow," he said.

The findings help resolve a long-standing puzzle in Antarctic science: why the ice sheet's mass can fluctuate sharply over relatively short periods.

"Scientists have tried to explain the unusual fluctuations in Antarctic ice sheet mass," Wang said. "Most researchers have focused on the central and eastern tropical Pacific and its connection with West Antarctica, where climate signals are strongest and easiest to detect. We looked at the other side — the western Pacific warm pool and its connection with East Antarctica — and identified a pathway that had not previously been recognized."

In climate science, such a connection is known as a teleconnection, meaning that changes in one distant part of the climate system can influence weather and climate far away through atmospheric circulation.

The study identifies a previously underappreciated link between the tropical warm pool and the East Antarctic ice sheet, Wang said.

The finding provides a new framework for understanding short-term changes in Antarctic ice mass and could help guide future research into the climate of East Antarctica.

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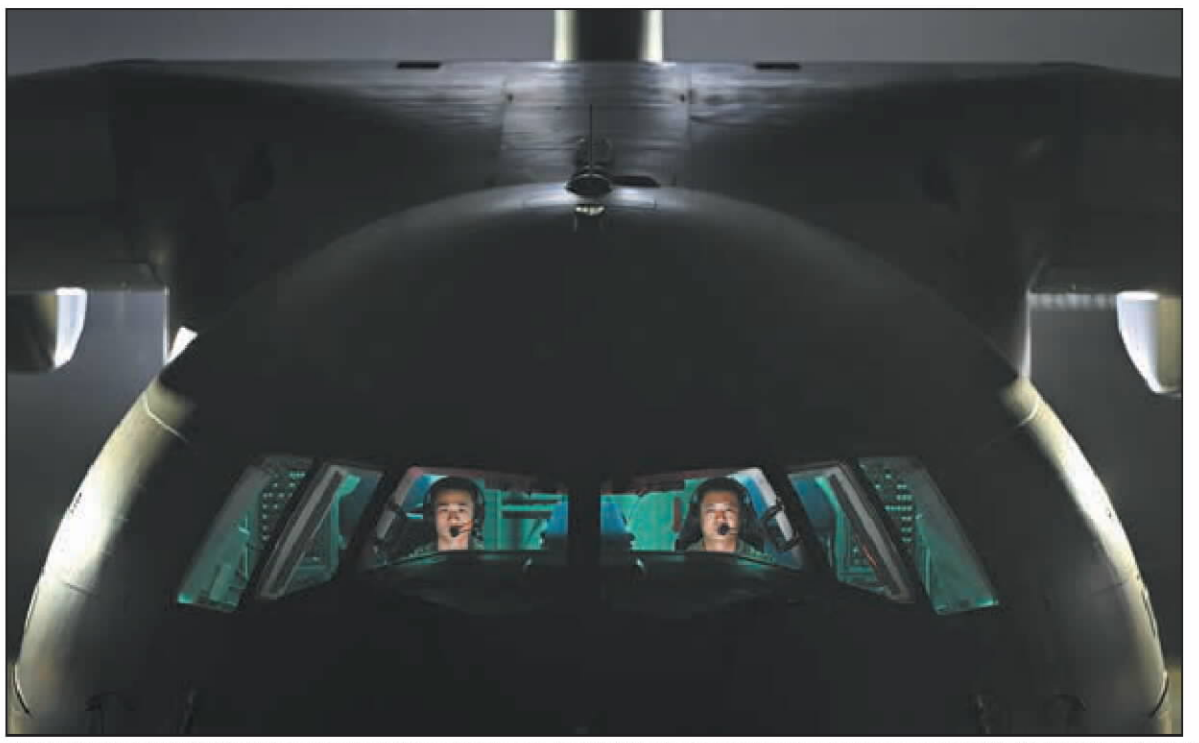
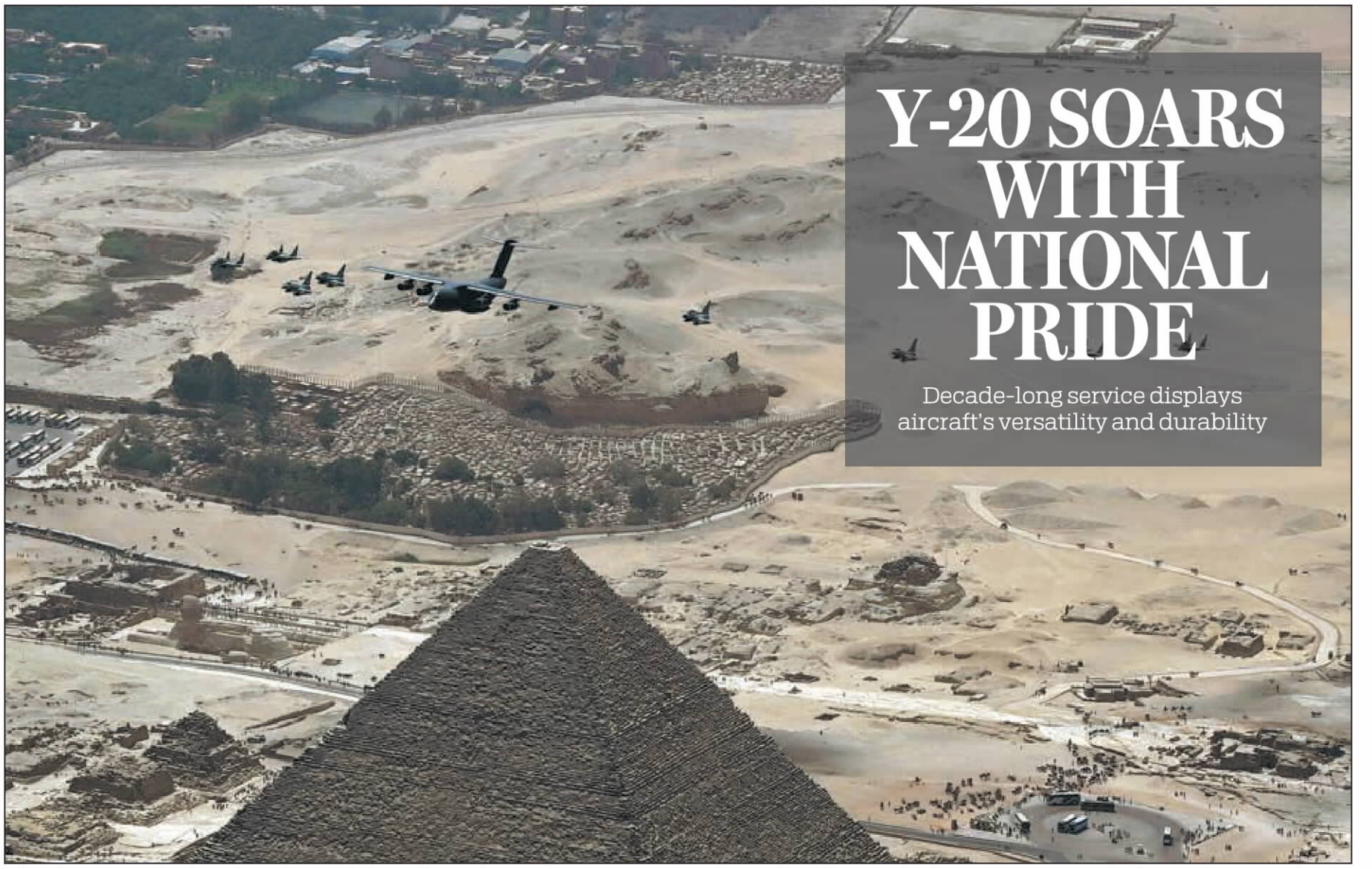






Clockwise from left: Y-20 pilots conduct nighttime training on April 27. Mechanics carry out maintenance work of Y-20 aircraft on April 27. Soldiers study tactics involving Y-20 aircraft on April 29.
PHOTOS BY YU HONGCHUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Y-20 SOARS WITH NATIONAL PRIDE

Decade-long service displays aircraft's versatility and durability

A fleet of a YY-20A aerial tanker and J-10 and MiG-29 fighter jets flies over the pyramids in Giza, Egypt, on May 1 last year, during the "Eagles of Civilization 2025" joint training by Chinese and Egyptian air forces.







Clockwise from above, left: Paratroopers jump out of a Y-20A aircraft during a training session on Sept 23, 2021. A YY-20A aerial tanker fuels two J-20 fighter jets midair on May 12. A fleet of Y-20B aircraft conducts training on lowering takeoff intervals on April 27.

By CHINA DAILY

The Y-20, nicknamed Kunpeng after a giant bird in Chinese mythology, is China's first domestically developed large military transport aircraft. It was officially commissioned in July 2016, marking a milestone in the strategic delivery capability of the People's Liberation Army Air Force.

The project, led by the Aviation Industry Corporation of China's Xi'an Aircraft Industrial Group Co, began in 2007. Its prototype first flew in 2013 before entering service in 2016. With a maximum takeoff weight of 220 metric tons and a payload of 66 tons, Chinese pilots affectionately call it "Chubby Girl" for its wide fuselage.

Ten years after its commissioning, the aircraft has not only deeply integrated itself into various combat readiness training sessions, but also displayed its power in non-military tasks such as disaster relief, humanitarian rescue and overseas transport missions.

Over the decade, the aircraft itself has also evolved from a single transport platform into a family consisting of multiple variants including the original Y-20A, the Y-20B with domestically developed WS-20 engines, and the YY-20A aerial tanker.

It has reached Asia, Africa, Europe and Oceania, building a channel for international exchanges and demonstrating the open, confident and pragmatic image of the Chinese military.

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CULTURE

The dance of homecoming

A traditional folk drama becomes the language through which a son finally understands his absent father, **Chen Nan** reports.



Odes to Heroes, a Chinese dance drama by the Guangzhou Song and Dance Theatre, returned to Beijing on Wednesday and Thursday before embarking on a tour of Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand in September and October. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By the time Erfan Omar's face is painted near the end of *Odes to Heroes*, his character is no longer the boy who has spent years wondering why his father left the family.

He has become the man he once imagined his absent father to be — responsible, courageous and willing to shoulder a greater duty.

"For me, the most moving part is that, in the end, I become the person I want to become," says Omar, a principal dancer with the Guangzhou Song and Dance Theatre, who plays the protagonist. "I want to become a man like my father — someone with responsibility and a sense of duty."

That transformation lies at the heart of *Odes to Heroes*, a dance drama that brings together the vigorous Lingnan folk dance *yingge* with *qiaopi*, the letters and remittances sent home by overseas Chinese.

Premiered in 2024, the production has toured extensively, with more than 150 performances in about 20 cities. It returned to Beijing on Wednesday and Thursday as part of the ongoing 7th National Ethnic Minority Art Festival before heading to Southeast Asia in September and October for performances in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

The overseas tour will take the production back to a region closely connected to its narrative: Southeast Asia, where generations of people from southern China settled, built new lives, and maintained close ties with their homeland.

Set in the late 1930s, the drama follows a family in Guangdong province. A father leaves home for Southeast Asia in search of work and eventually disappears. His wife raises their son alone. Years later, during the Lantern Festival, the son picks up a pair of *yingge* mallets left behind by his father.

The mallets draw him into a dreamlike journey through the past. As he encounters fragments of his father's life, he gradually begins to understand the struggles and sacrifices of a generation shaped by migration, war and responsibility.

"I feel that throughout the dance drama, I am actually an audience member onstage," Omar says. "It is my character who leads the audience into the story."

His character's journey mirrors the audience's own discovery of the history behind *yingge* and *qiaopi*: moving from misunderstanding to recognition, and from personal loss to a deeper understanding of family and collective memory.

Codirected by Qian Xin, the production uses *qiaopi* as a narrative thread. Emerging in the 19th and 20th centuries, *qiaopi* refers to letters sent by overseas Chinese to families in China, often accompanied by remittances. The letters carried not only financial support but news, homesickness and reassurance across thousands of kilometers.

"*Odes to Heroes* turns that history into a story of one family, but its emotional landscape is much broader," Qian says.

While *yingge* provides the production's central movement vocabulary, the stage is filled with other elements of Lingnan (a region in southern China) heritage, including wood carving, *qianci* porcelain inlay, Chaozhou embroidery, iron-branch puppetry, beef balls, and Chaozhou oil-paper lanterns, adds codirector Wang Sisi.

"These elements are more than visual embellishments. Together, they create a multifaceted portrait of Lingnan culture and show how different traditions can connect through a shared cultural heritage," she says.

The production uses these traditions to move between the personal and the collective — from the fate of one family to the broader history of migration, mutual support and shared struggle.



Scenes from the production, which captivates audiences with its moving storyline and dynamic choreography inspired by *yingge* dance, a traditional folk dance that originated during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

At the same time, *Odes to Heroes* does not simply reproduce *yingge* as a folk performance. Its traditional movements are reshaped for the theater and woven into the characters' emotional journeys.

For Omar, mastering the form has been a process of continuous learning.

He first encountered *yingge* in 2024, when the folk dance was gaining widespread attention through short videos and television programs. Its forceful rhythms and explosive energy immediately attracted him.

"I was struck by the energy and excitement of this dance form and its vibrant street culture," he says.

The theater subsequently invited practitioners of intangible cultural heritage to train the dancers. They first learned the traditional movements and techniques, and then worked with the creative team to integrate them into contemporary stage choreography.

The *yingge* mallets have proved particularly demanding. Omar's character carries a special pair throughout the drama, turning them into a recurring link between different times and stories.

"It took a long time to go from not knowing how to spin the mallets to being able to spin them well," he says. "And on every tour, in every performance, we are still constantly refining and thinking about it."

That process reflects one of the production's central challenges: how to preserve the character of a traditional folk art while giving it new theatrical possibilities.

"You can't simply move a street performance onto the stage," Omar says. "Two hours of pure *yingge* would be too much for the audience. We have to develop it creatively — give it a story, give the characters a journey, and bring in real historical stories and stories of unsung heroes."

For Omar, that task carries particular significance. Born and raised in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, he came to Beijing to study at age 10 and has lived in Guangdong for nine years. Although *yingge* comes from a cultural tradition different from his own, he sees a connection in its exuberant energy and collective spirit. The experience has also made him more conscious of the responsibility involved in interpreting a traditional culture from a different region.

"There are certainly regional cultural differences," he says. "When we encounter this outstanding traditional Chinese culture, I feel a great sense of responsibility. We can't casually change it. We need to be cautious, but at the same time, we need to be bold enough to innovate."

That balance between preservation and reinvention runs through *Odes to Heroes*. Its *yingge* dancers carry movements passed down through generations, while *qiaopi* carries the words of those who left home. Together, they create a bridge between generations and across the sea, Qian says.

The Southeast Asian tour will extend that bridge further, bringing a story about migration and homesickness back to the region where generations of Chinese migrants once began new lives, the director notes.

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Theater recalls wartime Chongqing

EDINBURGH — For people living in Chongqing, Southwest China, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, fog was more than weather. It could mean precious hours of cover from bombers overhead.

Thick fog made it harder for Japanese pilots to see the ground, giving residents some respite from repeated air raids.

A Chinese-language solo play staged recently at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which runs through Aug 31, offers audiences a glimpse into what life under such circumstances might have been like.

In *The Red Lantern*, Fan Shaolun performs alone, shifting between narration and multiple characters. Through voice, movement and sound, he re-creates wartime Chongqing through the eyes of a boy named Guang, whose unusually sensitive hearing allows him to detect danger before others do.

Beginning in 1938, Japanese warplanes bombed Chongqing, then China's provisional capital, killing and injuring more than 32,000 people. On June 5, 1941, about 2,500 people suffocated to death while seeking shelter in a tunnel during an air raid.

The play was created by Fan and Liang Yumin, who studied theater in Beijing before pursuing postgraduate studies in Britain. The idea grew from conversations about Chongqing's wartime experience and the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

For Liang, the history was personal. A native of Chongqing, she recalls hearing air-raid sirens every June 5 from primary school onward, when the city commemorated those killed in the wartime bombings.

She had learned about the history at school, but revisiting it for the play raised new questions.

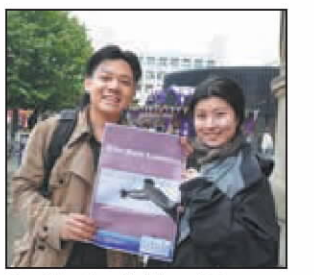
"When you really look at the history from the perspective of the people who lived through it, you begin to see how they lived and how they managed to get through those years," Liang says.

In May 2026, Fan and Liang traveled to Chongqing for field research, visiting museums, the June 5 tunnel massacre site, and the stage production *Chongqing 1949*.

One detail stood out: the fog. They found that during periods of particularly heavy fog, air raids could become less frequent. What Liang had regarded since childhood as an ordinary feature of her hometown suddenly took on a different meaning.

"For people at that time, fog was connected with survival," she says.

Fan and Liang chose to tell the story through a child's perspective.



Fan Shaolun (left) and Liang Yumin, creators of the Chinese-language solo play *The Red Lantern*, pose with the play's poster in Edinburgh on Aug 9. ZHAO JIASONG / XINHUA

"We didn't want to put the transformation of an entire city directly onto the stage," Fan says. "We wanted to follow the changes in one child and, through him, show something of the state of mind of the whole city."

One image from their research stayed with them. After an air raid, four Chinese characters were written on a surviving wall amid the ruins: "*Yu zha yu qiang*" — "The more you bomb, the stronger we are." A replica of the slogan is now displayed at a museum commemorating the June 5 bombing.

The play's Edinburgh run also coincided with an important date in the history it depicts. This year's Aug 15 marked the 81st anniversary of Japan's announcement of its unconditional surrender in World War II.

Dong Ning, chairwoman of the Beijing Performance and Arts Group, says the production offers an accessible entry point to a difficult chapter of history.

XINHUA

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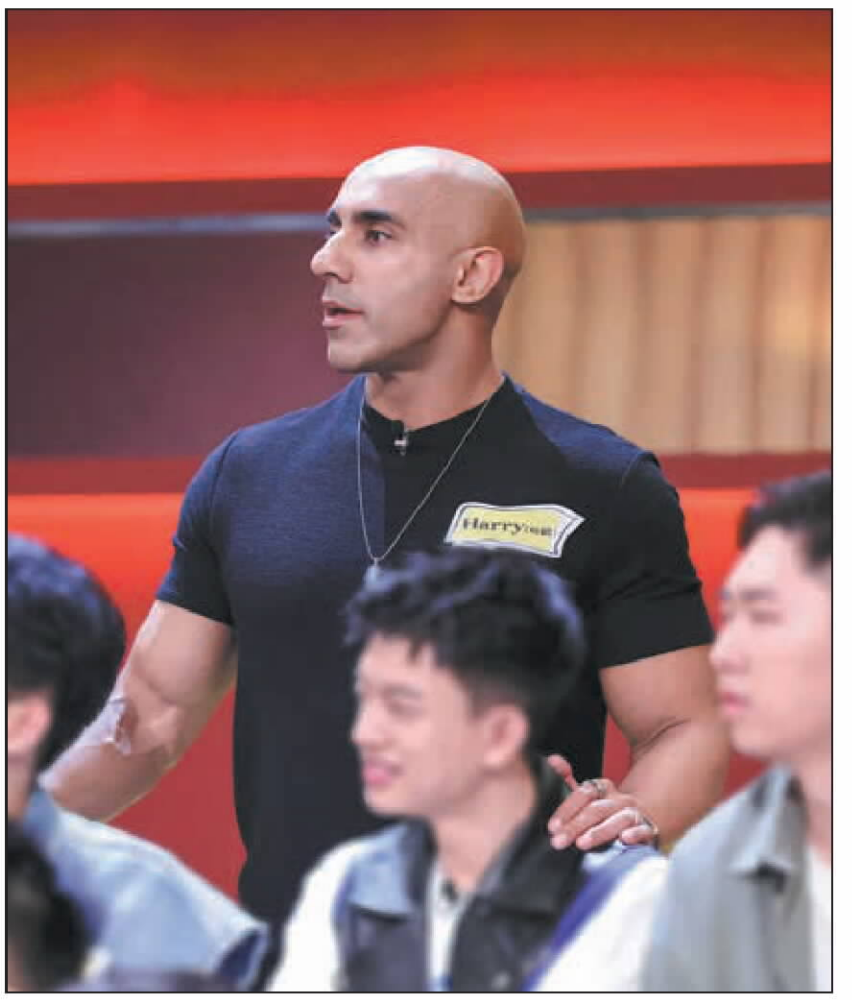
Inside jokes have outsiders laughing

Stand-up comedian delivers personal stories on the stage, with a solo special that has taken his work international, report **He Qi** and **Wu Wanzhen**.



At 7:30 pm, audience members begin filing into GOAT, a comedy club on Xiangyang North Road in Shanghai's Jing'an district. Backstage, Harry Hussain, who is known simply as Harry, eats a banana with his coffee, his pre-show ritual.

"I feel like I'm not here to do stand-up (comedy)," he says with a laugh. "I'm here to play tennis."

Printed on his T-shirt is the word "borderless" — a pun on national borders and personal boundaries. He allows the audience to write on the T-shirt following his show.

"Wars are breaking out everywhere, and it makes me uncomfortable," Harry says. "So I want to express something simple: We're all the same people." He never explains it on stage, preferring to leave it open to interpretation and letting the audience write what they want.

This British-Pakistani comedian has lived in China for 18 years and performed stand-up in Mandarin for five years. In December 2025, his first Chinese special, *Outsider*, premiered in Shanghai. In the spring, he took the show to Canada, where he completed five performances in different cities. He now plans to bring it to the United Kingdom.

"The Outsider" — that's his label and the name of his comedy special: A Briton in China can be an "outsider"; a migrant in a new city can be an "outsider". "Each of us," Harry says, "has felt like one at some point". Yet for the fans, fellow comedians, family, and friends who cheer him on across the country, he has long been an insider — one of their own.

Finding his voice

Harry came to China at 20, first studying medicine in Hebei province. After graduation, he moved to Beijing and stayed for over a decade. He even opened an Italian restaurant in the Liangmaqiao area.

But he found his true calling five years ago.

He was struggling with depression and looking for an outlet. "At first I was just writing jokes and posting them online. The more I wrote, the more I realized that I genuinely loved writing comedy," he recalls.

Having grown up watching British stand-up, full-length TV specials from age 7, he never imagined taking the stage himself. A friend persuaded him: since you've written them, why not tell them?

His first gig was at a bar in one of Beijing's *hutong* (alleyway): 10 audience members, 20 performers.

"I was so nervous, but the first day, the host forgot about me entirely," he says. The next day, the nerves had subsided. He went onstage, told a few jokes, and the response was surprisingly good.

"The laughter and applause made me realize so many people could understand me — that feeling was incredibly addictive," he says.

For Harry, performing in Chinese was a choice he made from day one.

"Honestly, most of the audiences are Chinese, so performing in their native language is more effective." In English, the audience would be smaller and at varying levels — he wouldn't know who to cater to.

But Chinese used in stand-up comedy is different from everyday Chinese. Wordplay, puns, idioms — he had to learn them all specifically for comedy.

Unlike first-arrival or character stories that other foreign comedians often cover, Harry wants to take a different path.

"What I want to be is a 'foreigner' audiences remember — sincere and truth-telling," he says.

On stage, he talks about his struggles, and the audience's empathy is therapeutic. "Things I didn't want to face before, I can now talk about openly," he says. "My mental state keeps getting healthier."

"Stand-up is my therapist," Harry always says.

Dedicated to his daughter

In the summer of 2024, Harry appeared on the variety show *Stand-Up Comedy and Friends*. Joking about English corners, training institutions and internet-famous foreigners, his first-round set brought the house down — guest judge and veteran television host Lu Yu called his material "very sophisticated".

But he didn't make it to the end. The day he was eliminated, he decided on the spot to write a special. "If I don't do a special, gigs will decrease," he says. "It's time."

He retreated to a friend's place in Hebei province's Jinshanling, not far from Beijing, to write in seclusion. "I don't like refining jokes word-by-word at an open mic (microphone)," he says. "I prefer to write the full hour first, then polish the details."

He also took a month-long acting class. "It required digging into inner feelings — childhood experiences, hidden emotions," he says. "I realized things I'd hidden for years could actually become jokes."

For Harry, a comedian's first solo show should be personal.

"Your first special should tell your story so the audience can really get to know you." TV clips are too short and edited for entertainment; a special is complete. "Some people might like me, some not — it doesn't matter."

The result is *Outsider*.

"Each of us has felt like an outsider — at work, at school, in social circles." A portion is dedicated to his daughter.

"She'll face identity issues — not just mixed race, but regional, like whether Beijing or Shanghai is home," he says. "I put my own experiences into the special, so someday it can help her."

Once the first draft of the special was complete, Shanghai became his testing ground. Three years ago, Harry moved to Shanghai, where Xiaoguo Comedy is based.

"Shanghai has the strongest stand-up scene in the country," he says. Within 15 minutes of home, there are four or five open mic venues; he hits several a night on his electric scooter. "Shanghai's audience is super diverse. If a joke works here, it will probably work anywhere."

On Dec 14, 2025, *Outsider* premiered at Sixiao Comedy in Shanghai, followed by a nationwide tour that included Beijing and Guangzhou, Guangdong province, attracting over 3,000 live audience members.

In April and May, Harry took his show to Canada — his first international tour. The audience was more diverse than he expected: Chinese, foreigners who had lived in China, local students learning Chinese, teenage immigrants, and mixed-heritage viewers. "It's amazing to have so many different backgrounds in the same room," he says.

Bridging cross-communication

"I'm a citizen of the world — I've always thought that," he says. On identity, Harry believes self-acceptance is enough. People have labeled him throughout his life, but these days they matter far less.

In China, he feels at ease. "Here, I'm just a 'foreigner'. I don't have to pretend to be Chinese, and no one keeps asking if I'm 'really Chinese'," he says. "'Foreigner' is broad — it includes every country, every identity. That's enough."

That process also shapes his view of cross-cultural communication: Stand-up is already a bridge. Chinese audiences have watched English-language stand-up for years, adapting a form developed overseas to local experiences and sensibilities. Now, Chinese stand-up is increasingly reaching audiences abroad. "It's a great cycle," he comments.

But he doesn't set out to deliver a message. "I'm just telling my real life. If people want to understand it, they can. How they interpret it is up to them. I trust the audience."

Back at GOAT, the show comes to an end.

Audiences sign Harry's T-shirt, leaving signatures, notes and well-wishes. For each performance, he prepares a new shirt and places it outside afterward for the audience to write on.

On his scooter ride home, Shanghai's night breeze hits his face. His wife and nearly 8-month-old daughter are waiting.

Harry says that parenting has become a new source of material. "I'm most interested in family stuff now — parenting differences with my in-laws, cultural gaps, traditional Chinese customs I never knew about," he says. "I'm learning them with the baby, and it's fascinating."







Clockwise from top: Harry at the variety show Stand-Up Comedy and Friends in 2024. He watches a game with friends. He takes the stage at a Shanghai open mic night. One moment of Harry and his daughter. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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Annual jazz festival returns for its 22nd edition with a record 17-day program

By **HE QI**





The 2025 Shanghai JZ Festival was held in Qiantan area. The 22nd JZ Festival will bring a larger and longer edition to the city. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Along the autumn bank of the Huangpu River, as a cool breeze sweeps past, it carries the soft notes of a trumpet, the warm tone of a saxophone solo, the steady pulse of a double bass, and spontaneous cheers of an outdoor crowd. Across sunlit parks and vibrant avenues, the waterfront becomes a giant soundstage.

From Oct 16 to Nov 1, that vivid scene will transform Shanghai's sprawling Qiantan area in the Pudong New Area into an open-air jazz paradise, as the 22nd JZ Festival brings its largest and longest edition yet to the city's riverside.

The 17-day festival will feature over 146 performances by more than 100 musicians from 29 countries and regions, spanning 13 venues across 1.3 square kilometers, including parks, theaters and shopping streets. Except for ticketed indoor concerts, all outdoor performances and forums will be free and open to the public. According to the organizers, Lujiazui Group and JZ Music, the festival is also the centerpiece of the 2026 New Bund Chillout, running from Sept 20 to Nov 1 in Pudong.

The JZ Festival has been held in Shanghai annually since 2005. It is the largest jazz festival in China and the second-largest in Asia.

Building on last year's success, which set records in the Qiantan area with 1.23 million visits and 162 million yuan ($24 million) in consumer spending, JZ Festival founder Ren Yuqing emphasizes, "The past is just the past; we will create an innovative future."

This year's program is organized around six themes. The opening Jazz Age Carnival at Qiantan Sports Park immerses visitors in a nostalgic Jazz Age atmosphere with swing dancers, vintage cars, vinyl records, and steampunk parade floats.

Jazz Avenue expands last year's street-music format from a single stage to a cluster of four stages, turning the neighborhood into a compact festival. Jazz Riverside takes place at Qiantan Leisure Park, where a grand stage overlooks the Huangpu River. Jazz Around the Town brings pop-up performances to shopping malls, alleyways, and even basketball courts.

The closing weekend features a solo concert by five-time Grammy winner Victor Wooten, who Rolling Stone ranked among the "top 10 greatest bassists of all time", alongside two special concerts led by Chinese soul diva Yuan Yawei (Tia Ray) at the Qiantan 31 Performing Arts Centre. Additional international artists are to be announced.

Beyond performances, the Qiantan Jazz Forum, co-hosted with the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, will bring together industry players, musicians and fans for a week of discussions on topics ranging from AI in music creation to live marketing and music education. The festival has also established a long-term strategic partnership with Music China, creating an annual October collaboration through cross-promotion, a shared stage and joint industry salons.

"Culture is a city's most enduring source of competitiveness, and music is one soul of culture," states Wu Jun, deputy director of Pudong New Area's culture and tourism bureau.

"With the conservatory and the instrument exhibition on board, we hope to build a high ground for the entire music industry in Shanghai this October — hopefully a high ground for China also, a musical peak facing the world," Ren says.

Ma Tan contributed to this story.

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LIFE

Singer finds his voice on talent show

British vocalist Elliot James Reay learns to balance online success with live performance and personal authenticity, **Chen Nan** reports.



When Elliot James Reay first stepped onto the stage of *Singer 2026*, one of China's most popular music competition shows, he found himself experiencing something he had not felt for quite some time: nerves.

The young British singer had already built a substantial online following with his distinctive retro sound. But *Singer 2026* was different. It was live, competitive and placed him alongside accomplished singers, with audiences voting on their performances.

"I'd never been in a competition before, especially a talent competition," the 23-year-old singer-songwriter said in Beijing on Aug 14.

Yet the unfamiliar pressure brought an unexpected feeling.

"It made me feel like I just started my career again," he says. "It gave me a bit more hunger and a bit more fire."

For Reay, China became more than another stop on an increasingly international career. It offered an established online artist the chance, in a sense, to become a beginner again.

The invitation came while Reay was in the United States working on new material. His manager told him about the opportunity to join *Singer 2026*, and his first reaction was excitement. China was a place he had long wanted to visit.

Before becoming a full-time musician, he had traveled widely. "I went everywhere but China," he says. During his recent trip to Beijing, he also visited the zoo, where he saw pandas. He shared his trip on Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, receiving warm feedback from his fans in China.

Now he had finally arrived to do what he had dreamed of doing: making music.

Reay came with few expectations. He was entering a music market he did not yet fully understand and joining a competition unlike anything he had experienced. The language barrier and the intensity of the live performances made it a leap into unfamiliar territory, especially as he sang one song in Chinese.

But that uncertainty became part of the attraction.

Reay's musical identity, after all, is built on a journey across time. His music draws on classic rock 'n' roll and early pop, sounds that evoke nostalgia for some listeners while offering younger audiences the discovery of something new.

The same collision between old and new can be found in the way he built his career.

While his music looks back several decades, his first major platform was TikTok.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in the United Kingdom, Reay found himself with a choice: focus on writing songs or building an online audience.

"I feel like I was quite blessed in the timing of when I started social media," he says.

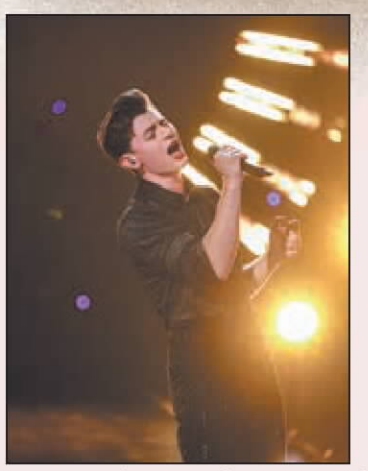
Some of his friends concentrated on songwriting. Reay chose to build a following.

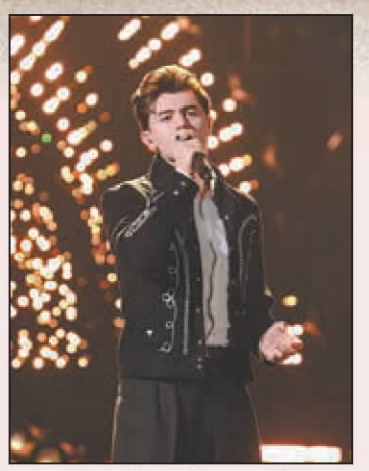
But the transition in the other direction — from online personality to a full-fledged musician — has proved more difficult.

"I've found it quite hard to go the other way — from making TikToks to writing songs and learning how to do that properly," he says.

Reay is grateful for the platform that introduced him to a global audience, but he does not want his story to end there.

"I love TikTok. It's a great platform," he says. "But I'm a musician at heart."







Top: Known for reviving the groovy sounds of 1950s rock 'n' roll, British singer Elliot James Reay rose to fame on the video platform TikTok in 2019. **Above:** Reay has gained a fan base in China after appearing on the popular TV talent contest *Singer 2026*.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

His goal is to become "a touring musician" — an artist who can bring people together in concert halls and venues, rather than simply accumulate views on a screen.

That desire is closely tied to another lesson he learned before finding his current musical direction. For a time, Reay experimented with pop music and tried to make what he believed other people wanted to hear.

Eventually, he realized that approach was taking him further away from the artist he wanted to become.

"I figured out that I needed to just do what I need to do," he says.

That experience shaped his approach to China as well. Asked what advice he would give to other international artists hoping to enter the Chinese market, his answer is simple: "Be yourself."

"It's very easy to want to try to change yourself to fit into a market," he says, "but at the end of the day, if you stay true to yourself, you'll be happy."

For Reay, authenticity is something learned through trial and error.

"If I didn't do that, I wouldn't be sitting here now," he says. "I wouldn't have done the show. My whole journey would have been different."

That philosophy was tested throughout *Singer 2026*, where the pressure to chase the next successful performance could easily lead an artist to lose sight of his own identity. Reay, however, was determined not to do so.

The competition also gave him an opportunity to reveal another side of himself. Each week brought the possibility that it could be his last, making his journey to the grand final all the more significant.

There, Reay chose to perform *I Think They Call This Love*, a song with a particularly personal place in his career. It was the first song he wrote that he truly believed in and felt ready to put out into the world.

It was also a love story.

Reay wrote the song with his girlfriend, inspired by the moment when, as he describes it, they both realized that they had fallen in love.

"So that song was not just a song," he says. "It's a true story."

When he performed it in the grand final, his girlfriend was there. Afterward, the two walked off the stage together, a moment that quickly attracted attention online.

For Reay, however, its significance was more personal than viral.

"She wrote it with me," he says. "We spent a lot of time making sure that it was perfect for the stage."

Having her there, he adds, brought him comfort.

China, meanwhile, is not a chapter Reay sees as ending with the final episode of *Singer 2026*.

For him, building an audience in a new country requires more than returning home and maintaining a presence through social media.

"To establish myself here, you have to be here," he says.

As an artist with Universal Music Group, Reay came to China as part of the company's initiative, "Go East", which was launched early this year to offer a bridge connecting international artists with the Chinese market. This is a reflection of China's growing importance as the world's third-largest music market and its booming live performance scene, which continues to attract artists worldwide.

"The rapid development of the Chinese music market and the creation of the new initiative will help guide overseas artists in establishing a lasting presence in the country," said Timothy Xu, chairman and CEO of Universal Music Greater China.

Contact the writer at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

Online
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Salvage diver-turned-rescuer navigates storms and saves lives in Zhejiang

HANGZHOU — The ache in Dong Jianhai's legs was a warning he had learned to trust. At 58, the resident of Zhoushan, a city consisting of islands off the coast of East China's Zhejiang province, knew it meant a storm was coming.

The day before Typhoon Dolphin — the 13th typhoon of the year — made landfall in Zhejiang, Dong spent the whole afternoon preparing for it, checking anchor points for vessels seeking shelter and making sure each ship was securely fastened, just as he had done hundreds of times before.

For more than three decades, Dong has seen the sea in nearly every mood. He began his career as one of Zhejiang's first professional salvage divers after earning his national diving certificate in 1991. Young, strong and ambitious, he was eager to make a name for himself underwater. Then an accident changed the course of his life.

During a salvage operation in 1994, Dong suffered severe decompression sickness, a potentially fatal condition caused by rapid changes in pressure after diving. Two months of difficult treatment saved his life, but when he finally left the hospital, he could no longer walk as he once had.

For a diver whose life had been bound to the ocean, the injury seemed to mark the end of a career. But Dong's bond with the sea endured, taking a different form.

"People told me my diving days were over, and maybe they were right about my body," he says. "But no one could convince me that my journey was over. If I couldn't go down into the water anymore, I would find another way to keep my promise."

Dong began a new chapter by bringing together people with diving and salvage experience to form his own rescue team. Over time, the team became a familiar presence along the coast, responding to sunken vessels, maritime accidents and calls to recover those lost at sea.

He would arrive at rescue sites with a cane in hand, helping divers prepare their equipment, secure hoses and ropes, and watching closely as they disappeared beneath the surface. Though he could no longer descend into the depths himself, he knew the pressure, darkness, and currents below — and the razor-thin margin for error — as well as anyone else.

When Dong could not be at the scene, he directed operations remotely. His cell phone stayed with him around the clock, and over the years his number became a trusted lifeline for people along the coast.

The calls came in for all kinds of emergencies: a vessel that needed salvaging, a missing diver, someone who had fallen into the water, a ship that had run aground, or people stranded on an island by a storm.

The team has also taken part in large-scale maritime operations. In one case, it participated in the salvage and subsequent repair of a 10,000-ton cargo ship. In another, it was called to assist a 300,000-ton Panama-registered oil tanker that had gone off course and run aground.

For Dong, the hardest calls were not always those that came in the middle of a rescue. Sometimes it was the quiet voice on the other end of the phone, telling him that another life had been lost at sea.

Such calls meant there was no longer a life to save. But Dong knew the mission was not necessarily over. For him, and for the families waiting on shore, there was still one final task: bringing their loved ones home.

Over the past 30 years, Dong has taken part in or directed the salvage of more than 120 sunken vessels, while his team has recovered more than 80 bodies.

The work is demanding and often dangerous, but Dong has never seen it as something to be carried out for a reward.

"When someone loses their life at sea, and you can bring them back to their family, that is not just a job," Dong says. "It is simply the right thing to do as a human being."

To Dong, it was all part of a promise he had made to the sea long ago — one he could not easily let go of, even though he could not have known what it would eventually cost him.

That promise has taken different forms over the course of a life intertwined with the water: the boy who lost loved ones to the sea, the diver who ventured beneath the waves, the survivor of a near-fatal underwater accident, and the man who refused to give up helping others.

Typhoon Dolphin made landfall the following evening after Dong felt his leg ache. The seasoned rescuer was out before dawn, leaning on his cane as he moved between harbors, checking vessels and directing his crew while strong winds swept the coast.

For most people, a storm is a reason to stay ashore. For Dong, it is a reason to set out. Somewhere beyond the waves, someone may be waiting — for rescue, for hope, or simply for a way home.

XINHUA



Fishing boats set sail from Shenjiamen Port in Zhoushan, East China's Zhejiang province, on Aug 11. XU YU / XINHUA

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AMERICAFOCUS

Eight Immortals cross the ocean

Animated Chinese film *All Wishes Come True!* makes a splash with moviegoers in North American premiere

By **RENA LI** in Los Angeles
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The North American premiere screening of the Chinese animated feature *All Wishes Come True!* is held in Los Angeles last Thursday, showcasing the film's fantasy world inspired by the legend of the Eight Immortals. RENA LI/ CHINA DAILY

Few would imagine that strands of life-saving hair from Sun Wukong, the legendary Monkey King, could become an unexpected weapon for the Eight Immortals as they confront the powerful Erlang Shen, or Yang Jian, in *All Wishes Come True!* — one of the latest Chinese animated films bringing the country's centuries-old mythology to global screens.

Drawing on the folk legend of the Eight Immortals while weaving in characters and imagery from *Journey to the West* and other classical tales, the fantasy comedy brings traditional cultural icons together in a newly imagined universe for contemporary audiences.

At the film's recent North American premiere in Los Angeles, Hollywood filmmakers, actors and moviegoers praised its elaborate 3D animation. But many said what interested them even more was the world behind the images — Chinese mythology, folklore and philosophical ideas that were unfamiliar to them.

Inspired by the traditional tale *The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea*, the film reimagines the immortals not as distant supernatural beings but as eight ordinary mortals whose weaknesses, ambitions and choices eventually lead them toward heroism.

Hollywood actor John Kyle Sutton said he was surprised by how completely the film held his attention despite its lengthy run time.

"Honestly, I think this movie is a masterpiece," Sutton told China Daily.

"I don't like long movies. Usually about 86 minutes is when I top out," he said. "This movie kept my attention the whole time."

Sutton said he was drawn to the themes of "brotherhood, fraternity, betrayal and greed", as well as the pacing and animation.

"I was fully engaged the whole time," he said. "I want to learn Chinese and its culture."

What impressed him in particular, Sutton said, was that the movie did not abandon its Eastern mythology in an effort to appeal to Western viewers.

Set around the celestial world of Penglai, the story begins with Lyu Dongbin and Zhongli Quan plotting to enter a divine vault, before their adventure expands into a battle involving mortals, gods and the fate of the wider world.

Film producer Stephen Nemeth described the movie as a "very, very beautiful spectacle", saying its fantasy world reminded him in some ways of the American classic *The Wizard of Oz*.

"I'm hoping hosting this movie here will bridge our cultures, in America and China, and we'll learn a lot from each other," said Nemeth.

He said he was impressed by how deeply Chinese culture draws upon "mysticism, folklore and backstory", elements that give the film a character distinct from much mainstream Western animation.

Nemeth's son Lincoln, an animation enthusiast, also noticed a visual difference.

"I think that the 3D aspect of it all looks a little more realistic," he said, comparing its attempt to reproduce aspects of real life with the visual style of American animated movies.

He said learning about unfamiliar cultural and religious themes through animation also made the experience educational.

Hollywood actor Chris Kriesa said the film's visual reconstruction of an imagined ancient China was among its most striking features.

"I was really mesmerized by the great creativity and the beauty of old China, the structures, the alleys, the buildings, and the mythology, the gods and the immortals," said Kriesa.



Audience members pose with *All Wishes Come True!* posters during the film's North American premiere in Los Angeles last Thursday. RENA LI/ CHINA DAILY

> "I was really mesmerized by the great creativity and the beauty of old China."
>
> **Chris Kriesa,** Hollywood actor who attended the LA premiere

However, Kriesa said he was unfamiliar with the origins and cultural significance of the Eight Immortals, wondering whether they were characters from children's stories or something much larger in Chinese culture. Characters instantly recognizable to generations of Chinese viewers can still be unfamiliar figures to American audiences.

For Georges Chamchoum, executive director of the Asian World Film Festival, the Chinese legend was a "discovery".

Chamchoum said introducing eight principal mythological characters to audiences unfamiliar with their histories presents an obvious storytelling challenge, but the distinct personalities of the Eight Immortals helped viewers quickly connect with them.

"The characters of the Eight Immortals are so interesting. Each one has its own personality," he said. "And you hardly have enough time to breathe because the action never stops … it is exciting."

An increasingly important task as Chinese animation expands globally, Chamchoum said, is making Chinese stories accessible to overseas audiences while preserving their cultural identity.

Rather than simply retelling *The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea*, the film blends familiar mythological figures and motifs into a newly imagined universe or celestial realm. The approach reflects a broader trend in Chinese animation: drawing inspiration from traditional culture while using contemporary storytelling and digital technology to reach younger and increasingly international audiences, according to Chamchoum.

Huang Hongjiang, Chinese deputy consul general in Los Angeles, said the movie provides another channel through which overseas audiences can learn Chinese stories and visual culture.

"Here in Los Angeles, this is the center of the entertainment and film industry," Huang said. "Over the last several decades, the cooperation between China and the US has produced good results, not only in the film industry but also in economy, trade, education and technology."

The responses come as *All Wishes Come True!* begins its international rollout following a strong performance in China.

The film's Chinese box office surpassed 1.5 billion yuan ($220 million) by Aug 13 after opening on July 18. As of Aug 16, Box Office Mojo listed its China gross at about $235.9 million, while Variety reported a cumulative total of roughly $236 million after a $13.1 million fifth weekend.

Its overseas rollout began Aug 13 in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, followed on Aug 14 by the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland and the Netherlands. Belgium and Luxembourg are scheduled for Sept 4.

The overseas push follows the global success of Chinese animation in recent years. *Ne Zha 2*, another film deeply rooted in Chinese mythology, grossed more than $2.2 billion worldwide, demonstrating the potential for stories drawn from traditional Chinese culture to reach audiences far beyond their home market.

Written and directed by Mu Zhengyang, the 144-minute animated fantasy was produced by Pearl Studio, the Chinese animation company behind *Abominable* and the Academy Award-nominated *Over the Moon*, and a co-producer of *Kung Fu Panda 3*. CMC Pictures is handling international distribution.

Proposed US grant rule sparks fears of scientific decoupling

By **LIA ZHU** in San Francisco
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A proposed US government rule that could drastically restrict federally funded research collaboration with China has sparked confusion and concern among academics, with critics warning it could lead to a near-complete decoupling of the US and Chinese scientific communities.

The Office of Management and Budget, or OMB, part of the executive office of the US president, published the proposed rule in May as part of a significant revision of regulations governing federal financial assistance awards and sponsored research programs, including all federal research grants.

The rule was originally scheduled to take effect on Oct 1. Earlier this month, however, the US Senate passed a bipartisan continuing resolution that blocks the rule from being finalized or enforced until Dec 11.

Under the proposal, political appointees would gain greater authority over grant awards that have traditionally been guided by scientific peer review. The rule cites the Wolf Amendment, which bars scientists from using NASA funding for bilateral collaborations with China, as a model for government-wide restrictions on foreign research collaboration.

Scientific, research, policy and education groups have raised concerns that the proposal could effectively prohibit federal funding for US scientific collaboration with all leading Chinese universities and academic institutions.

For scientists whose work involves close exchanges with Chinese counterparts, the potential impact could be substantial.

"In my area of quantum materials, I will lose a lot if I am not able to collaborate and exchange ideas with my theory colleagues in China," Steven Kivelson, a theoretical physicist at Stanford University, told China Daily.

"Even more drastic, however, is the harm it would do to my science not to be able to communicate directly with my experimental colleagues in China," he said. "In many aspects of making and probing the properties of bulk quantum materials, researchers in China are the world leaders."

Kivelson said that for his own research, it is important to understand the details of experiments being carried out in university laboratories at several leading Chinese institutions.

He has grants from the National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy. So far, he said, his existing collaborations have not been directly affected because the Chinese institutions involved are not among those deemed unacceptable under the proposed guidelines.

"But that may well change, and anyway, I would find it beneficial to be able to collaborate with other wonderful colleagues at various Chinese universities," he said.

The overboard and vague restrictions have also created uncertainty over what kinds of international academic engagement would remain permissible.

"Some of my other involvements with China may be precluded by the new policies," Kivelson said. "I have written to my grant managers and am waiting to hear back, for instance, about whether I am allowed to continue on in my position as one of two editors-in-chief of npj Quantum Materials."

npj Quantum Materials is a peer-reviewed, open-access scientific journal covering quantum materials, their fundamental properties, fabrication and applications. The journal is published in partnership between Nature Publishing Group and China's Nanjing University.

In an article encouraging its members to submit public comments, the American Association for the Advancement of Science said the proposal would give the OMB and selected political appointees expansive authority over how federal research and development funds are awarded, allowing political considerations to override scientific opportunity.

The organization also raised concerns that the rule would determine the eligibility of institutions and individuals to receive federal awards on the basis of vague and undefined terms.

The proposed changes have drawn widespread opposition. Nearly 500,000 public comments were submitted to the federal government before the July 13 deadline. The Washington Post analyzed 50,000 of the comments and found that at least 88 percent opposed the proposed rule. Roughly 6 percent expressed support, according to the Post, but the overwhelming majority of those supportive comments came from a single form letter that was submitted more than 2,300 times.

The Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, in a comment letter submitted to the OMB, warned that the proposed regulations "will force a near-complete decoupling between the US and Chinese scientific communities".

The institute said the proposal cited a generalized concern about US national security interests but does not provide a detailed justification for why a broad ban on US-China scientific cooperation would serve those interests.

"As China is now becoming a global research and innovation leader across a wide range of areas, this would undermine US scientific advances in these areas," the institute said in its letter. Less understanding of Chinese scientific and technological capabilities "would have a harmful impact on national security in the long run".

Kivelson said legitimate security risks should be addressed to protect the relevant portions of the US scientific and technological establishment against possible theft or cyber-attack.

"But concerning scientific research being carried out at most US universities, it is a non-issue," Kivelson said. "At Stanford, for example, all classified research and most forms of proprietary research are forbidden on campus. The goal of the research endeavor at Stanford is knowledge generation. We publish our results in the open literature."

"Bottom line: There is no danger of the theft of secret information by Chinese nationals on Stanford campus, for the good and simple reason that there are no secrets to steal," he said.

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Power of partnering
Business forum focuses on collaborations with Russia
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AI boosts future of gaming
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Golden threads
Greek jewelry reveals sharing of ancient artistic traditions
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CHINA DAILY

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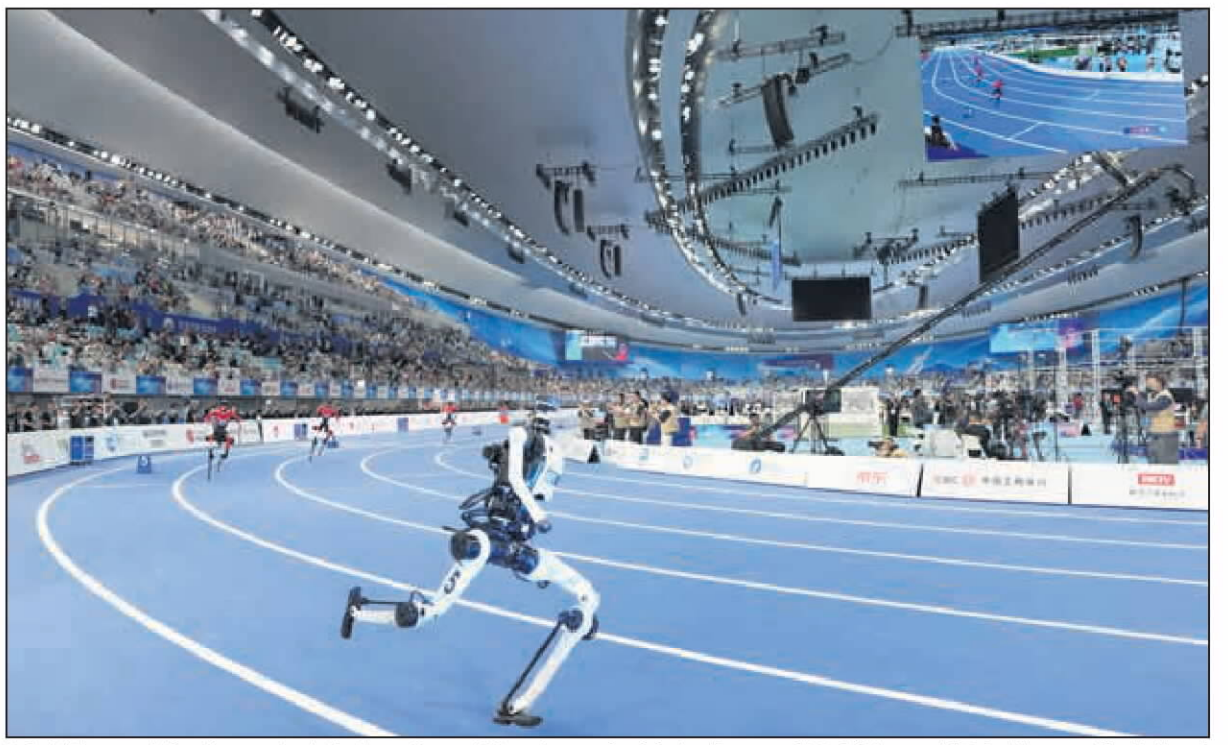

Robot "Tiangong" (front) competes in the Large Group 400-meter race final during the second World Humanoid Robot Games at the National Speed Skating Oval in Beijing on Sunday. "Tiangong" won the race, clocking 38.15 seconds. JU HUANZONG / XINHUA

Swift progress of robots hailed

Bipeds push tech boundaries to beat human records at humanoid games being held in Beijing

By **MA SI** in Haikou
and **YANG CHENG** in Beijing

As biped robots shatter human world records at the second World Humanoid Robot Games, the event showcases not only China's rapid strides in embodied intelligence over the past year, but also the industry's swift progress toward real-world applications, Chinese and international executives and experts said.

Their comments came after the games opened in Beijing on Saturday, with 2,056 robots from 666 teams, representing 16 countries, set to compete in 51 events through Wednesday.

On the track, the action delivered jaw-dropping moments. A Chinese humanoid robot ran 100 meters in 9.39 seconds in a preliminary heat, beating the record of 9.58 seconds set by Jamaican Usain Bolt in 2009. The result was a sharp improvement from last year, when the 100-meter race was won in 21.50 seconds.

In a standing high jump, a robot cleared 2.88 meters, surpassing the human high jump record of 2.45 meters set by Cuba's Javier Sotomayor in 1993 as well as the 0.95-meter jump that was the best result by a humanoid in last year's games.

A Chinese humanoid robot also won the 400-meter final for large robots on Sunday in 38.15 seconds, outpacing the human world record of 43.03 seconds.

The 1,500-meter final added another record-breaking moment to the games, with 35 robots competing in seven heats and the top three all finishing ahead of the human world record of 3 minutes 26 seconds, led by the winner at 2:21.63.

Zhao Mingguo, a researcher at Tsinghua University's Department of Automation, said just as human sports push the limits of the body, the humanoid robot games are designed to extend the technological boundaries of smart machines across various scenarios and conditions.

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Shift to autonomy

According to Zhao, the defining difference this year is the shift to autonomy. Organizers have scrapped remote controls for most events, requiring robots to rely entirely on their own artificial intelligence to perceive surroundings, make autonomous decisions and execute actions.

"From 'strings-attached' puppets to autonomous athletes, that's the transformation we've witnessed in just one year," he said.

The sector's growing vitality is reflected in the numbers. Team entries have jumped 138 percent year-on-year, while the number of participating robots has quadrupled.

This momentum is underpinned by China's manufacturing strengths. In the first half, the country shipped more than 40,000 humanoid robots, accounting for 97 percent of global output, according to the Chinese Institute of Electronics. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology projected full-year production to exceed 100,000 units.

Beyond the competition, the event served as a showcase for human-robot synergy. The opening ceremony featured a "human-robot symphony" blurring the line between machine and performer, with 36 robots playing wind instruments, pianos and drums alongside a human orchestra, while 80 robots formed the games' emblem and another 80 spelled out "Beijing".

These smart machines also traded forehands with renowned Chinese athletes, including tennis star Zheng Jie. "I hope that in the future, robots can provide customized training for professional athletes and serve as a valuable auxiliary tool," Zheng said.

Beyond the games

This year's event introduced 21 scenario-based competitions, accelerating the transition of robots from the lab to real-world applications.

One such event, the dexterous-hand competition, tested micro-precision through tasks such as handling tweezers and twisting caps.

The "combined pentathlon" raised the stakes by merging sprinting with task completion, compelling robots to master physics, adapt to varied surfaces and recover from stumbles.

"The goal is to evaluate how far mass-produced robots can perform in real environments," said Chen Zilong, captain of Afu robot team.

During the hotel scenario practice, his machines struggled on thick carpet — a surface never encountered in training. Yet Chen sees the setback as providing valuable data. "When people see robots operating in hotels, malls and fire-rescue scenarios, they begin to imagine the possibilities," he said.

Zhang Feng, Party secretary of the Council of the Chinese Institute of Electronics, said the games are unfolding against a broader backdrop of technological transformation.

"Humanoid robots are moving beyond stage performances and race-track demonstrations to become genuine assistants in homes and workers in factories. They are poised to be the next game-changing innovation after computers, smartphones and new energy vehicles," Zhang said.

According to the institute, China's humanoid robot market is projected to hit 870 billion yuan ($129.4 billion) by 2030, playing a key role in advancing high-quality development.

China's technological strides also impressed international teams. Flavio Tonidandel, coach of Team Brazil, said, "We are thrilled to program the Chinese robot, the Booster, and interact with the most advanced humanoid robot we have ever seen."

Zati Hakim Azizul Hasan, mentor of Malaysia's Robotedge team, said: "China offers the best components. When you see robots that run faster and jump higher, that's the Chinese secret recipe. Chinese technology is exceptional in the world, and they can also make this software very affordable. This is what makes Chinese technology so intriguing."

Samantha Zhu, chairperson of Accenture China, said: "China is emerging as a critical testing ground for embodied intelligence such as humanoid robots. AI is no longer just a tool; it's becoming a versatile, cross-scenario capability permeating every facet of enterprise operations."

Local governments are also moving swiftly. The Beijing municipal government, for instance, has established a 10 billion yuan investment fund for robotics, which is expected to attract over 53 billion yuan in additional private capital. The city now hosts nearly 1,000 robotics companies, including seven valued at over $1 billion — the highest number in the country.

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Online
See more by scanning the code.

Counter-tariffs widen Canada-US trade rift

By **LIU JIANQIAO**
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The latest escalation in trade tensions between Canada and the United States underscores growing strains in the US' relations with its traditional allies under the "America First" policy, experts said.

Ottawa vowed retaliatory tariffs on US goods after the US announced a steep 50-percent tariff on imports from Canada.

Experts said the developments cast fresh doubts over the future of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, the cornerstone of North American free trade, as US protectionist measures and trade disputes increasingly challenge the region's deeply integrated economic ties.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney announced retaliatory tariffs on US goods on Saturday after walking away from what he called a "bad deal", as trade tensions between the longtime allies deepened following the collapse of last-ditch negotiations.

Talks between the neighboring countries broke down on Friday in Washington, DC, putting into force new 50-percent US tariffs impacting about $20 billion worth of goods, or 5.5 percent of Canada's exports to the US.

New Canadian tariffs, which will take effect on Sept 8, will notably target the US steel and dairy industries. More details will be revealed next week, Carney said. "You're at war when you get attacked. We got attacked," he added.

US President Donald Trump hit back at Canada on Sunday, saying, "Canada wants the benefits of being a State, without being one!!!" "They have also charged our great farmers, for many years, massive amounts of Tariffs. No more!!!" he wrote in a post on Truth Social.

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Trump had previously said Washington "should be able to have a deal with Canada", citing his "good relationship" with Carney.

But on Saturday, the Canadian prime minister said that Trump set conditions which were ultimately unacceptable even though earlier talks had been positive.

"In recent days, the United States proposed new terms that were uneconomic, unfair and undermined the net benefits for Canada, and called into question the reliability of any deal," Carney said in Ottawa.

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer told The New York Times on Saturday that the US had offered to reduce its tariffs on steel, aluminum and autos, as well as eliminate a recently imposed tariff on Canadian lumber. Greer told Fox News on Saturday that Washington was "moving forward with measures that respond to Canadian retaliation". He said that no new talks were planned with Canadian negotiators.

"We've been under no illusions. We recognized from the start that America has changed," Carney said on Saturday. "We recognize that sometimes, its signature was written in pencil."

The new US tariffs cover around 5 percent of Canada's exports to the US. They could severely damage vulnerable industries such as softwood lumber and wine and lead to job losses and business closures, trade experts have said.

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Paocai, or pickled vegetables, draw visitors at the 15th China International Pickle Food Expo in Meishan, Sichuan province, on April 26. LIU ZHONGJUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

PICKLES A RELIEF FROM FIERY SPICES

Specially preserved vegetables, known as *paocai*, hold Sichuan's bold flavors together as a perfect palate cleanser

By **PENG CHAO** and
ZHAO JUNFENG
in Meishan, Sichuan

In the back corner of a kitchen in Meishan, Sichuan province, beside a stove hissing with chili oil and popping peppercorns, sits a jar that never makes it onto the menu. Its contents — a colorful mix of greens, reds, yellows and whites — rest submerged in an opaque brine.

The world knows Sichuan for kung pao chicken, mapo tofu, its mouth-numbing hotpot and the mellow depth of *doubanjiang* (fermented bean paste), but ask any local what binds those bold flavors together, and the answer is likely *paocai* — pickled vegetables.

It also elevates Sichuan breakfast staples such as noodles, steamed buns and congee, imparting a signature tang to classic dishes such as fish-flavored shredded pork, sour vegetable fish and sour-radish duck soup.

"Sichuan *paocai* is crisp and not overly salty," said 56-year-old chef Jiang Ming. "The lactic fermentation yields a natural, earthy sourness that vinegar lacks, making it an ideal flavor enhancer."

In Meishan, this tradition has been elevated to an almost architectural scale. At a workshop in the China Paocai City industrial park, nearly 5,000 giant clay jars stand in neat rows, each about 1.6 meters tall.

He Yanping, 49, a provincial-level inheritor of *Dongpo paocai*-making techniques, presses his ear to a lid as a gentle gurgle escapes from within. "That's the sound of lactic acid bacteria fermenting and releasing gas," he said.

China Vibes — FOOD —

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Agriculture can plow a productive furrow

WORLD WATCH
By Dan Glickman

The US-China relationship is very challenging. While the United States and China are the world's two largest economies, they have differences in the areas of trade, market access, national security, protection of intellectual property, technology and privacy. These differences should neither be minimized nor dismissed.

Nevertheless, while the two countries are competitors on the world stage, there are many areas where cooperation can be beneficial to both countries and their peoples, and to the world at large.

These include global health and prevention of diseases and future pandemics, educational exchanges, climate change and related natural disasters, energy, and sports, entertainment and culture.

And certainly, even more significantly, cooperation and collaboration in the area of agriculture and food offer perhaps the greatest opportunity for such cooperation. Food security and agricultural production are critical domestic and global imperatives for both countries.

In 2025 the US trade in goods with China totaled an estimated $414.7 billion. US exports to China dropped nearly 26 percent to $106.3 billion, including major agricultural commodities, and imports fell nearly 30 percent to $308.4 billion.

US farmers and Chinese consumers are certainly impacted by these reductions in trade in soybeans, livestock and many other farm commodities.

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INDEPTH



Visitors explore the booth of Comtech Technology during the first Overseas Investment Fair 2026 in Shanghai on March 25. The fair's goal is to accelerate the construction of an overseas comprehensive service system for companies expanding abroad. LI GANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

A Shanghai slingshot for overseas expansion

Government services help clear obstacles for companies entering foreign markets

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Going global — a pressing goal of many Chinese companies — is not only about grasping the big picture.

Nuanced details, such as what can be demonstrated in a product commercial, for example, may jeopardize a company's future prospects in an unfamiliar new market.

With eight years' experience in overseas markets, Shanghai-based gaming company Boke Technology learned this lesson, said the company's general counsel Wang Sijia.

One product commercial for a Southeast Asian market featured exaggerated creative content. It depicted a hamburger that had accidentally fallen on the ground being stepped on, which may have been construed as disrespectful due to cultural sensitivities. Wang said sometimes it's difficult for companies to make such fine distinctions.

However, this is one of the smaller challenges Chinese companies may be confronted with when they enter a new market. Abiding by local market entry regulations and contract formats are even larger issues, she said.

"The biggest headache about going global is the information gap. Companies do not know who to turn to or what they can do when a problem occurs," she said.

When publishing companies enter a new market, for example, they often have to work with local service providers for the first time. Without access to reliable information or experience in collaboration, it is extremely difficult to find the right partners.

A company's own internal risk management capabilities are usually insufficient, Wang added. "The cost of trial and error can be prohibitively high," she said.

Easier compliance

Shanghai companies have been boldly expanding into new markets.

Apart from mature markets such as Europe and the United States, more of them are reaching into Association of Southeast Asian Nations member states, the Middle East, and Latin America, according to He Dongbin, deputy director of the Shanghai Commission of Commerce.

In the first half of this year, Shanghai registered 383 newly established or acquired outbound projects, marking a 105 percent year-on-year increase in investment value.

Diversification of investment destinations has been a major trend. Economies involved in the Belt and Road Initiative have emerged as new investment targets, he said.

This is in line with a broader trend. About 80 percent of surveyed Chinese companies plan to expand overseas in the next three years, with ASEAN continuing to serve as the first choice, according to a report released by Singapore-headquartered bank UOB in early August.

The good news is that companies are being more proactive regarding compliance management when they enter new markets, according to He.

However, Liu Yanhao, deputy director of the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Justice, said the expansion of legal service providers has not caught up with the expansion of Chinese companies and industries in overseas markets.

Companies can look for professional service providers in foreign markets on their own, Liu said. But the process will be lengthy and painstaking, and the strenuous efforts may not provide a satisfactory result.

A government-backed platform that can link lawyers with experience of overseas markets is an ideal solution, said Chen Jun, a City Development Law Firm partner, who also serves as deputy director of the foreign affairs committee of the Shanghai Bar Association.

In early August, Shanghai launched the international legal services hub, a digital platform where companies can search for institutions that provide legal services in overseas markets as well as experts who specialize in a certain country or industry. So far, 921 institutions with 413 overseas operations have been included on the platform.

Apart from connecting companies to law firms with expertise a company needs, the platform can identify potential country and industry risks.

This is especially important given the current complicated and unpredictable international situation, Chen said. Political changes can lead to policy inconsistencies or even deliberate legislative action targeting Chinese companies, he added.

"However, there is always a window of opportunity before such measures take full effect," Chen said. "Professional service providers can usually notice signs in advance. The government can provide early warnings and intelligence on the platform. The law firms on the platform serve as 'converters', interpreting the needs of Chinese enterprises and connecting them with local professional institutions. The problems can be solved more efficiently or even avoided," he added.

Asset-light initiatives

The shift toward asset-light investment has emerged as another major trend. Sectors such as technical services, the digital economy, and cultural creativity, which are asset-light yet high-value-added, have become key drivers of Shanghai's outbound investment, according to He of the Shanghai Commission of Commerce.



Customs officers inspect synthetic diamonds for export at the Shanghai Diamond Exchange on July 31. The targeted measures and checking service ensure both efficiency and security. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "Professional service providers can usually notice signs in advance. The government can provide early warnings and intelligence on the platform."
>
> **Chen Jun,** partner of City Development Law Firm

The demand for computing power and digital technologies has risen significantly as more Chinese companies expand their overseas businesses, said Zheng Maokuan, deputy secretary-general of Shanghai Digital Globalization Association. As a result, Chinese companies are bringing more digital technologies to emerging markets and developing economies to help intelligent and digital upgrading.

Shanghai Linshu AI is one such pioneer.

Founded in 2024, the company aims to digitize cultural heritage around the world and produce various cultural products, including games, animation, or immersive experiences with the help of augmented reality and virtual reality.

This will help cultural heritage across the globe be more accessible to a larger audience. Digitization can also better preserve cultural heritage, transcending the limits of time and geography, according to company partner and general manager Zhang Xiaoping.

Currently, Linshu is working with the Cambodian government to digitize Angkor Wat. This is by no means an easy job: not only because it requires interdisciplinary cooperation across cultural heritage preservation, archaeology and artificial intelligence, but, more importantly, because it needs to access data owned by Cambodia, according to Zhang.

"But gradually, the Cambodian government came to realize their data governance is still at a relatively low level. The participation of Chinese entities can bring in the most up-to-date technologies and even facilitate their own legislation for the cross-border transfer of cultural data," he said.

The Shanghai government has played an important role in helping Linshu's business move forward.

Lin-gang Special Area, a part of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone, in April 2024 introduced a special service to process cross-border data.

Lujiazui, a part of Pudong New Area financial cluster, introduced supportive policies for one-person companies to form an industrial ecosystem for game and animation production, Zhang said.

These outbound companies are mostly knowledge-intensive. Instead of bringing products to new markets, they are now introducing technologies, skills, operational capabilities and intellectual property rights, according to Adaline Zheng, president and CEO of UOB China.

Data protection key

Against this backdrop, data has become the buzzword when it comes to overseas expansion. However, when a company finds its data has been infringed on or leaked in an overseas market, its competitiveness is significantly impaired and losses are hard to measure.

The confirmation of data ownership is of great importance before a company expands into a new market, said Zuo Weibo, CEO of CRECT Group, which helps companies expand into overseas markets, especially in Southeast Asia.

Shanghai-based Hero Esports has experience in securing its IPR in foreign markets.

Founded in 2016, it has held a number of e-sports games' IPRs in overseas markets including Vietnam, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia.

Prior to the launch of Shanghai's data product IPR registration pilot program in December 2024, it was unclear how data could be registered to secure the company's interests, said Zhou Peipei, director of the company's legal and investment center.

"As e-sports games have become more popular, problems regarding data scraping, licensing boundaries and trade secret protection have all emerged. No company can tackle them single-handedly," she said.

"Companies need an official definition or confirmation as to the scope, development process and ownership of these data-driven outcomes. Otherwise, subsequent research and development, potential commercial collaborations and even internal management will be hampered," she added.

The pilot program helped the industry raise awareness of compliance and self-discipline, said Zhou.

Registered information can serve as key material for companies to assert their data rights in future infringement or trade secret disputes. Prosecutors are also involved, offering businesses quick access to expert advice on data ownership and privacy compliance, she explained.

"With the program connecting compliance, rights confirmation, legal protection and future data use, companies are more confident turning long-accumulated data into real innovation," said Zhou.

Data registration has been applauded by the AI, biomedicine, finance, education, culture and transportation industries, said Zhu Yanting, technology director of VLVE Information Technology, a service provider to technology companies.

The system is also directly linked to data trading institutions in Shanghai, so IPR certificates can be used as collateral to apply for bank loans. Data's value as an intangible asset has become clearer, Zhu said.

Shanghai's data product IPR registration is open to other places in China. By the end of July, the city had received 2,245 applications for data product IP registration.

Thirty percent of applications were from outside Shanghai. Data products registration applications came from 29 provincial-level regions. An application has yet to come from the Xizang autonomous region.

Data registration provides a snapshot of multiple efforts Shanghai has made to facilitate companies' steps to enter overseas markets.

In the first half of this year, the city launched a one-stop platform for companies to seek multiple services such as opening bank accounts, financing, legal consulting and logistics. Positioned as a service provider similar to Taobao or JD, the platform aims to make it easier to access, matching companies and service providers while tracking deals. Like the IPR registration program, the service platform is also available to companies across the country.

According to He of the Shanghai Commission of Commerce, the purposes of this open approach is to make the city "the optimal choice and the gateway" for Chinese companies seeking to reach international markets.







Left: A man uses self-service facilities at the 24-hour smart service zone of the Hongqiao Talent Service Center in Shanghai on Sept 10. The center aims to streamline administrative processes for global professionals. **Middle:** A staff member at the service center assists a woman with immigration procedures on Sept 10. **Right:** A center employee demonstrates an AI tool designed to enhance enterprises' overseas services on Sept 10. PHOTOS BY CHEN HAOMING / XINHUA

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TOP NEWS

‘Dream come true’ reunion for green hero

Teacher from the United States returns to witness transformation of deserts

By **WANG SONGSONG** in Ordos, Inner Mongolia and **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot

When Ronald Sakolsky from the United States stepped off the plane at an airport in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region at around 6 pm on Sunday, it marked the beginning of a long-awaited homecoming to the region, where trees he helped plant more than two decades ago now stand as a living testament to a green bond of international friendship.

Waiting for him at the arrival gate was Yin Yuzhen, China’s afforestation hero whose battle against desertification in the Maowusu sandy area has inspired many people. Yin and her family hugged Sakolsky warmly at what was their first in-person meeting in years.

For Sakolsky, the reunion was a miracle.

“It is a dream come true,” he said, describing Yin as the “hero of the story”.

“She made a promise 27 years ago, and she kept her promise. I never thought I would see her again. It is a miracle. She is an amazing lady. She has done many things for China.”

Sakolsky, who taught English in Luoyang, Henan province, in the late 1990s, first learned of Yin’s story through media reports. In 1999, he donated $5,000 to support her reforestation efforts, a sum that allowed Yin to purchase much-needed saplings.

At the time, Yin was already renowned for her campaign to green the barren desert landscape, but she lacked the funds to expand her planting drive. Sakolsky’s donation changed that.

Combined with Yin’s effort, the once-barren wasteland has been transformed. Those seedlings have since flourished into a sprawling forest that now carpets the dunes in emerald green.

“I am very grateful that Mr. Sakolsky could come here to meet with us,” Yin said. “In preparation for his visit, we have been growing various fruits over this period for him to sample, including the ginseng fruit.”

She described herself as deeply moved and filled with excitement, adding that she strongly desires to take him into the desert and through the forests she has nurtured for nearly three decades.

> “She (Yin Yuzhen) made a promise 27 years ago, and she kept her promise. I never thought I would see her again. It is a miracle.”
>
> **Ronald Sakolsky**

Sakolsky’s return was made possible by an official invitation from the China Education Association for International Exchange, the goal of which is to further promote educational exchanges between China and the US.

What truly made the story go viral is the bond Sakolsky and Yin forged through afforestation efforts. That bond has now blossomed into a moment of shared celebration.

“Finally, that long-awaited moment has arrived, capturing the attention of netizens across the country. From sharing the same forest to forging a friendship between two nations,” one online user wrote. “The light of humanity knows no borders.”

According to the schedule, Sakolsky will visit Yin’s home in Uxin Banner, Ordos, on Monday and Tuesday. The two will tour the fruit-planting bases and shelterbelt forests that have reshaped the local ecosystem, revisiting the plots where Sakolsky’s saplings were first planted. They will also inspect fruit trees planted in recent years, highlighting the ongoing evolution of the region’s green transformation.

Following his stay in the region, Sakolsky and Yin will travel to Henan province to reunite with his old acquaintances in Luoyang. His itinerary there includes meetings with former colleagues and students from his teaching days.

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Online See more by scanning the code.



Chinese desert afforestation hero Yin Yuzhen (left) hugs retired teacher Ronald Sakolsky (right) from the US at an airport in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region on Sunday. LIAN ZHEN / XINHUA

Winning smile



Wang Hao (second from right), captain of the Chinese team BaiSha Gaming, receives the Most Valuable Player award after the *Crossfire* final during the Esports World Cup 2026 on Saturday in Paris, France. BaiSha Gaming defeated Team Liquid 3-0 in the grand final of the first-person shooter game to claim the championship. WU HUIWO / XINHUA

Archaeological links with Peru enter new phase

By **WANG RU**
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Deepening cooperation between China and Peru in the field of cultural heritage has opened a new chapter in archaeological collaboration between the two ancient civilizations.

On Saturday, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences’ Institute of Archaeology signed cooperation agreements in Peru with the Caral Archaeological Zone of the Peruvian Ministry of Culture, and the Professional School of Archaeology at the National University of San Marcos, Lima, with the aim of jointly conducting archaeological research on Peru’s ancient Caral civilization.

This marks the first official cooperation on archaeological fieldwork between China and Peru, and the first time Chinese archaeological institutions are working in South America.

The Caral civilization, which flourished along the northern coast of Peru from approximately 3,000 BC to 1,800 BC, is the earliest-known civilization in the Americas to date.

According to the agreements, both sides will conduct comprehensive archaeological research at sites associated with the Caral civilization. Their cooperation will include field survey and excavation, scientific and technological research, as well as cultural heritage conservation and joint talent training.

Subsequent cooperation will also extend to the sites of the Inca civilization in the Andean highlands, facilitating comparative research between the ancient civilizations of China and Peru.

With the agreements signed, the China-Peru joint archaeological team will launch the first phase of a field survey, exploring the Chancay-Huaral and Supe river valleys, and conducting on-site inspections at key sites, to further refine subsequent excavation plans.

Jia Xiaobing, chair of the Department of World Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, who served as a Chinese representative at the signing ceremony, said this cooperation fills the gap for Chinese archaeological institutions in South American fieldwork.

The Chinese side will obtain first-hand archaeological materials on early American civilizations, facilitating comparative research on ancient civilizations around the Pacific Rim and contributing a Chinese academic perspective to the global study of the origins of early complex societies, Jia said.

The Peruvian side, in turn, will benefit from China’s vast practical experience in scientific and technological archaeology, as well as cultural heritage conservation, achieving mutual academic enrichment, he added.

Academic exchanges between China and Peru in the field of archaeology have spanned more than half a century. As early as 1973, Xia Nai, then director of the Institute of Archaeology, led an archaeological team to Peru to visit important sites such as the iconic Machu Picchu. The following year, a Peruvian archaeological delegation visited China, marking the beginning of academic exchanges between the two countries.

In recent years, cultural and museum exchanges between China and Peru have continued to deepen. Peruvian artifacts have attracted much attention at ongoing exhibitions such as *Maize, Gold, Jaguar: A Grand Exhibition of Ancient Maya and Andean Civilizations* at the Capital Museum in Beijing and *On Top of the World Tree: Ancient Civilizations of the Americas* at the Shanghai Museum.

Meanwhile, the artifacts from China’s ancient Shu civilization, including those from the Sanxingdui site in Guanghan, Sichuan province, and the Jinsha site in Chengdu, Sichuan, also traveled to Peru in 2024, enabling Peruvian audiences to witness a dialogue between ancient civilizations across the oceans.

Trade: Tariff threats could fracture supply chains

From page 1

Chen Hong, director of East China Normal University’s Asia Pacific Studies Center, said the tariff war initiated by the US has not only taken a toll on the Canadian economy but also severely strained a decades-old alliance, exposing the growing fragility of Washington’s ties with its traditional allies.

Although the latest tariffs cover only about 5 percent of Canada’s exports to the US and affect a relatively limited number of industries, Ottawa’s decision to respond firmly reflects its determination to safeguard its autonomy in industrial and trade policy, he said.

According to a recent survey by Abacus Data, a Canadian polling firm, 36 percent of respondents want Canada to respond with new counter-tariffs, “even if that raises prices and risks escalation”.

“Over the past several decades, the US and Canada have forged a close political alliance and deeply integrated their economies under relatively stable and preferential trade arrangements. But the current US administration’s ‘America First’ strategy has turned Canada’s heavy dependence on the US market into an increasingly significant economic and strategic vulnerability,” Chen said.

The current breakdown also complicates the future of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, he added.

“Washington’s tariff threats are now pushing companies, particularly automakers, to relocate production and sourcing to the US. This could fracture established supply chains, distort the regional division of labor and ultimately hollow out the North American free-trade system,” Chen said.

Experts also said that Canada would find it difficult to break free from its deep economic dependence on the US in the near term.

“Realistically, Canada would find it difficult to offset the losses from reduced access to the US market in the short term,” said Huang Zhong, associate researcher at the Center for Canadian Studies of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Delicacy: Ancient craft gives *paocai* unique flavor

From page 1

The craft takes its name from Su Dongpo — the celebrated Song Dynasty (960-1279) poet and gourmand who was born in Meishan. The legacy of Su, a passionate maker himself, lent the pickle its enduring cultural identity.

The roots of Chinese pickled vegetables stretch back even further, over 3,000 years in fact, to the pre-Qin period (before 221 BC), when early references to *zu*, or pickled vegetables, appear in classics such as the *Book of Songs* and the *Rites of Zhou*.

This deep historical lineage found its way into local customs. By the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), a jar of *paocai* had become an essential part of a bride’s dowry — a portable legacy of flavor carried into married life.

Traditional *Dongpo paocai* is made in a large earthenware jar. Fresh vegetables are packed inside and fully submerged in the “mother brine”, or *laomu shui* — a living culture passed down through generations. The lid is sealed with a water lock, allowing gases to escape while keeping oxygen out. What follows is daily care and patient waiting.

“The secret lies in the mother brine, teeming with the specific strains of lactic acid bacteria that give *Dongpo paocai* its distinctive flavor,” He said.

To outsiders, pickled vegetables may call to mind kimchi or sauerkraut, but Sichuan *paocai* is different. Radishes, carrots, cabbage, long beans, young ginger, red Sichuan chili peppers and bamboo shoots are packed whole or in chunks into a seasoned brine of water, salt, Sichuan peppercorns and other spices, often with a bit of *baijiu*.

Within hours or a day or two at most, they emerge with a clean, crisp sourness and a subtle fragrance.

“This water-based fermentation method sets *Dongpo paocai* apart from most other pickling methods in China or abroad,” He said. “The credit goes to the Sichuan Basin’s mild climate — free from freezing winters and scorching summers — which keeps the lactic acid bacteria active year-round.”

Another defining feature is the brief fermentation period — sometimes just hours — which yields a lower-salt product with a distinctly crisp texture.

What began as a local craft is evolving into a global curiosity, with a growing number of foreign visitors flocking to the China Paocai City industrial park to master the craft.

Among them is Hajar Wassila, a Moroccan student who joined a DIY session at the workshop of Sichuan Laotanzi Food Co. Guided by instructors, she packed her jar with vegetables, garlic, red Sichuan chili peppers and carrots, pressing them firmly beneath the brine.

“When I smell it, I want to taste it immediately,” she said, holding up the jar with a grin. “I love pickles and tried to make them before, but failed. Now I’ve finally got the secret.”

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Food: Agriculture offers a way to enhance and improve Sino-US ties

From page 1

Some of these changes in trade numbers were impacted by changes in US export policies and trade, although President Donald Trump’s visit to China offered some hope that the trade relationships between the two countries can improve.

The US has one of the largest and most historically productive agricultural sectors in the world. China also has a very significant agriculture sector. The next breakthrough in US-China relations could begin on the farm. Food is not ideological. And while trade disputes have periodically disrupted flows of agricultural commodities, both countries and their consumers and farmers benefit when these markets are transparent, predictable and certain.

In the promising area of agriculture research, collaboration in scientific research can foster solutions to the impact of climate change and the effects of droughts, floods, animal and plant disease, soil health, water resource conservation, food safety and nutrition. Both countries have suffered from the impacts of these challenges, and China has developed a major agricultural research infrastructure, with government and academic institutions working on problems affecting both countries.

The recent epidemics of zoonotic diseases (those that naturally spread between animals and humans) and related viruses, pathogens and parasites highlight the need for cooperation that US and Chinese scientists and academic institutions can provide in this area. And there are so many other public health challenges in the areas of food safety, food and nutrition, and cooperation on agro-biotechnology through modern agronomic technologies to sustainably feed a hungry world. Take genomics, for example. There is enormous potential to make rapid advances in crop productivity, livestock breeding and health, and resource use efficiency. And by properly and legally utilizing artificial intelligence, US and Chinese researchers can work together to leverage digital data to better control diseases, predict weather patterns and events and identify market trends.

Expanding academic exchanges and students studying food and agriculture is also important in developing a talent pool for the future.

None of this is easy and there are no simple answers to the disputes between the two countries, and in recent years there has been a growing lack of trust on each side of the Pacific Ocean. But cooperation in the areas of food and agriculture can help to build bilateral trust and reduce the heated rhetoric in both countries.

President Trump’s visit to Beijing in May was an important step in this process. I hope the US can resume congressional delegations to China which I participated in and also led while at the Aspen Institute. During the Bill Clinton administration, as secretary of agriculture I led a congressional delegation to China on trade issues. And as the Chairman and CEO of the Motion Picture Association, I also made several visits to China to discuss intellectual property and market access issues. I have long felt that although China and the US are serious competitors on the global stage, they are not enemies. Agriculture offers a way to enhance and improve the bilateral relationship for the benefit of both peoples.

President Xi Jinping has said that China and the US should be partners and friends, stressing that is what history has taught us and what reality needs. Mutually beneficial progress on agriculture can help build trust between the two sides and help to achieve progress in a dangerous and rapidly changing world.

The author is the former US Secretary of Agriculture under President Bill Clinton (1995-2001), and currently a Distinguished Fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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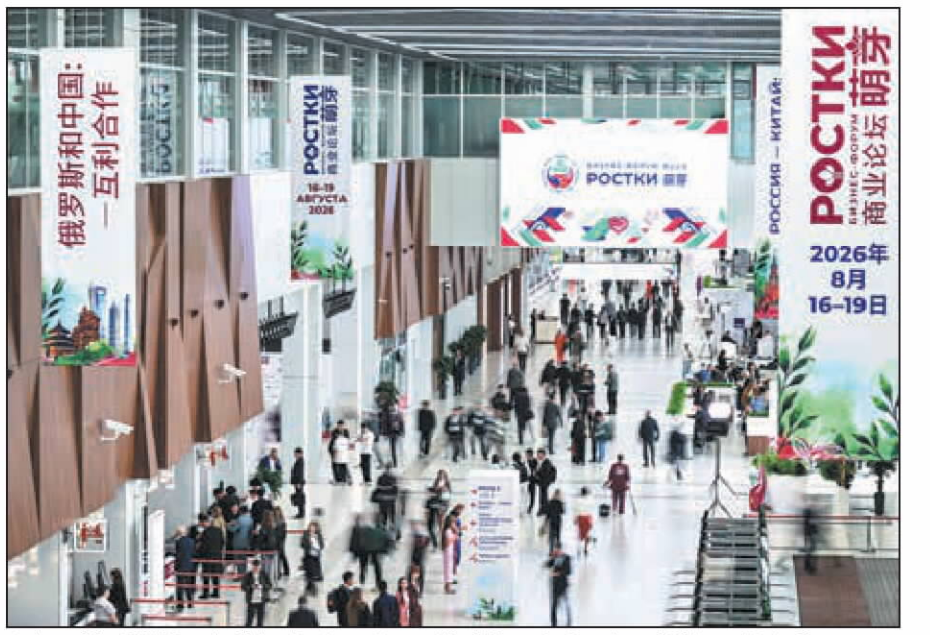
WORLD IN FOCUS



Drummers in traditional clothes at the 2026 Russia-China Business Forum at the Kazan Expo International Exhibition Center in Bolshiye Kabany, Russia, on Aug 18. YEVGENY MESSMAN / TASS



A view of the 2026 Russia-China Business Forum titled "Sprouts: Russia and China — Mutually Beneficial Cooperation" at the Kazan Expo International Exhibition Center on Aug 17. FENG KAIHUA / XINHUA

'Sprouting' partnerships

Forum highlights growing business collaborations between Beijing, Moscow

The 2026 Russia-China Business Forum titled "Sprouts: Russia and China — Mutually Beneficial Cooperation" opened on Aug 16 in Kazan, the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, bringing together over 50 business sessions, eight Chinese provincial delegations, and numerous Russian federal officials.

More than 10,000 square meters of exhibition space showcased cooperation in logistics, finance, healthcare, industry, agriculture, creative economy, and artificial intelligence.



Attendees at the forum at the Kazan Expo International Exhibition Center on Aug 18. ERIK ROMANENKO / TASS

Against this backdrop of expanding ties, Chinese Ambassador to Russia Zhang Hanhui delivered an address at the forum highlighting the latest trade figures.

"Sino-Russian trade and economic cooperation is demonstrating steady growth. From January to July 2026, the volume of bilateral trade reached $159 billion, which represents a 26 percent increase compared to the same period last year. It is quite possible that a new all-time high will be set by the end of the year," Zhang said.

Local currency settlements also took center stage. Zhou Liqun, chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce in Russia, voiced strong support for bilateral settlements in national currencies during an interview of the forum.

"We support and pay close attention to bilateral local currency settlements. Such settlements are conducive to the development of enterprises and economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.

"Regardless of the payment system or form, we will support and encourage enterprises to actively participate," Zhou told Russian media outlet Sputnik.

Taliya Minullina, head of the Tatarstan Investment Development Agency, told Xinhua News Agency that eight Chinese provincial-level delegations and governors from multiple Russian federal subjects are attending this year's event.

Tatarstan has signed intergovernmental agreements with seven Chinese provinces — Shandong, Hunan, Sichuan, Anhui, Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, and Jiangxi — as well as Chongqing municipality.

Minullina said that Tatarstan offers eight federal-level economic zones with tax benefits — the most in Russia — and over 100 industrial parks, where Chinese investors can access land or rent fully equipped facilities at favorable terms.

She also emphasized the republic's rich educational resources to support foreign-invested projects.

Beyond business, the forum featured vibrant cultural programs. Delegates enjoyed a Tatar-language performance, a Chinese Film Day, and several cultural events celebrating shared folk traditions.

CHINA DAILY—XINHUA



Participants view Chinese-brand cars at the forum on Aug 17. FENG KAIHUA / XINHUA



Participants taste Chinese tea at the forum on Aug 17. FENG KAIHUA / XINHUA



A woman makes traditional hats at the forum on Aug 17. YEVGENY MESSMAN / TASS



An artist in a giant panda suit poses with a woman during the 2026 Russia-China Business Forum at the Kazan Expo International Exhibition Center on Aug 17. ALEXANDER MELEKHOV / TASS



Chinese dragon boat races are held on Lake Nizhny Kaban as part of the 2026 Russia-China Business Forum on Aug 16. YEGOR ALEYEV / TASS

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WORLD

Search amid ruins



People look at the debris of a seven-story building under construction in Hyderabad, Telangana State, India, on Saturday. At least two people were killed in the collapse, local disaster response officials said, as rescue teams searched for possible survivors. JWALA KOTESH VIA GETTY IMAGES

Briefly

JAPAN

37 injured following magnitude 5.9 quake

At least 37 people were injured after a magnitude 5.9 earthquake struck Ibaraki Prefecture, northeast of Tokyo, early on Sunday. The earthquake also caused burst water pipes and transportation disruptions in some areas, local media reported. Japan's Fuji News Network, citing the Fire and Disaster Management Agency, reported that as of 10 am, at least 37 people were injured in Tokyo, Ibaraki Prefecture, Kanagawa Prefecture and other areas. The earthquake temporarily disrupted some train services in the Kanto region, though operations were gradually being restored. Multiple water pipes burst in Tokyo and other areas, causing temporary flooding on some roads.

UNITED STATES

$850m UN dues payment planned

The US government has notified Congress of its plans to pay $850 million of the several billion it owes to the United Nations, the largest payment that the administration would make to the world body since Washington demanded sweeping reforms in exchange for continued support as its largest donor. The US State Department laid out its plans to transfer $725 million as part of its dues to the regular UN budget and $125 million toward UN peacekeeping operations in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, according to notifications sent to lawmakers this month and obtained by The Associated Press. The US is about $5 billion behind on dues related to its membership, with more than $2 billion owed toward the regular budget, the UN says.

DR CONGO

Gov't, M23 agree on road map for talks

The government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the March 23 Movement rebel group have agreed on a road map for peace negotiations, setting out sequenced steps and timelines for further talks, according to a joint statement issued on Sunday. The two sides said that, during meetings held from Aug 17 to 21 in Switzerland, they assessed progress and challenges in the Doha peace process while discussing the implementation of existing commitments and the way forward for negotiations under the Doha Framework Agreement. Following the assessment, the two sides developed a road map outlining the sequence and timetable for future negotiations.

AGENCIES — XINHUA

More than 3 decades on, a witness to China-S. Korea ties sees shared future

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong
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Shin Jung-seung

For Shin Jung-seung, former South Korean ambassador to China, the 1992 signing of the joint communique establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries remains a vivid memory.

"Witnessing the normalization of bilateral ties with my own eyes was deeply moving," Shin said, recalling the signing ceremony at Fangfeiyuan Hall in the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on Aug 24, 1992.

At the time, Shin was director of the Northeast Asia Division II in the South Korean Foreign Ministry's Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau. In charge of China affairs, he played an active role in the negotiations that led to the establishment of diplomatic relations, often seen as a milestone that reshaped the geopolitical landscape of Northeast Asia.

Beyond the official exchanges, Shin recalled another touching moment that night at a restaurant near the state guesthouse. The owner, a member of China's Korean ethnic group, was overjoyed by the news and presented the delegation with a bottle of liquor as a gift.

"That gave me a tangible sense that the normalization of relations would greatly benefit the peoples of both nations," Shin said.

With his experience, Shin later served as a minister at South Korea's embassy in Beijing, director-general of the Foreign Ministry's Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau, and ambassador to China from 2008 to 2009.

While many countries doubted in the early 1990s that China could achieve rapid economic growth, Shin said he was confident of its economic prospects when he became ambassador.

He said China's rapid development and the achievements it showcased at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai World Expo reinforced his confidence.

"What was unexpected was the dazzling advancement of China's high-tech technology today," he added.

Shin said he was impressed by the results of active government support, companies' creativity and bold investment, and academic institutions' efforts to cultivate talent.

"This is something I believe South Korea has much to learn from," he said.

After retiring from the foreign service, Shin continued to devote himself to China studies and promoting bilateral friendship.

He was the inaugural director of the Center for Chinese Studies at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy in Seoul and now heads the Center for Chinese Studies at Dongseo University in Busan.

Shin has also served as president of the Korea-China Friendship Association since 2021.

"I've always believed in the importance of viewing things objectively," he said.

Promoting exchanges

To achieve this, Shin said he has striven to promote academic exchanges with China and engage with Chinese experts, while frequently organizing discussions with experts in South Korea.

"In exchange with China, it is important to build trust by respecting each other and engaging with goodwill," he said, adding that he still constantly ponders how to effectively convey South Korea's position to his Chinese friends whenever opportunities arise.

He said active public engagement is needed to enhance mutual understanding in the spirit of "harmony without uniformity", while upholding the principles of mutual respect, reciprocity and equality enshrined in the 1992 Joint Communique.

Vast opportunities will emerge if the two countries continue to deepen cooperation based on mutual respect and identify complementary areas for win-win outcomes, he said.

For his part, Shin said he is committed to supporting bilateral relations through academic work and friendship activities.

He highlighted mutual visa exemption and the Collective Action for Mobility Program of University Students in Asia, a student exchange and academic cooperation program jointly launched by China, South Korea and Japan in 2012, as encouraging ways to deepen youth friendship.

At Dongseo University, Shin said he has seen students from the three countries build friendships under the program while learning one another's languages and cultures.

"Facilitating as much exchange as possible among the younger generations of South Korea and China will allow them to understand each other and deepen friendship, which will bring bright prospects to the future of bilateral relations," Shin said, adding that governments should fully support such efforts.

Looking ahead to the 33rd Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in November, Shin said he expects further momentum in South Korea-China relations following last year's meeting in South Korea and state visits, even though challenges remain.

Noting that China emphasized the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a 2025 national security white paper, Shin said this is a shared goal for South Korea.

He expressed hope that closer cooperation between the two countries can contribute to peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

Iran pledges to weather 'full-scale' war

Tehran threatens retaliation against US sanctions backers as pressure mounts

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

Iran said on Sunday it is fighting a full-scale economic, military and security war as it warned that countries joining United States sanctions against Tehran would be considered an enemy.

The warning comes as US President Donald Trump said he viewed the Strait of Hormuz as an "American territory". In a social media post on Saturday, he reposted a map marking the critical waterway as a "new US territory".

Speaking at a ceremony on Sunday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said the government had faced war, sanctions, various pressures and continuous assassinations, alongside serious imbalances in water, electricity, gas, fuel, the environment and banking, but assured the public that his government is doing its best during the hardships.

"The enemies imagined that with their pressure and actions Iran would collapse. Not only did this not happen, but the power and unity of the Iranian nation amazed the world," he was quoted by the Mehr News Agency as saying.

"Of course, we are ashamed before the people that problems exist. But as long as we have breath in our bodies, we will serve our dear people, work to improve their lives and welfare, and pass through these crises with strength," he added.

In a speech published by state-run IRNA early on Sunday, Pezeshkian defended a recent memorandum of understanding as the best way for the country to move beyond what he described as a situation of "neither war nor peace".

Members of Iran's Supreme National Security Council believed the memorandum represented the best possible agreement based on dignity, wisdom and the national interest, he said.

In a televised interview on Saturday, Iran's security chief Mohsen Rezaei warned that countries joining US sanctions against Iran will be considered an enemy, and Tehran would retaliate by targeting their interests, the Tasnim News Agency reported.

Rezaei said Iran's defense strategy and international behavior have undergone significant changes following the US-Israeli war of aggression. Iran would have to adapt both its defense and diplomatic approaches considering US violation of its commitments and betrayal in negotiations, he added.

He also criticized Trump's policies, saying his "foolishness" has created a huge burden for the US people, its allies and the whole world, and that the US president has increased the logistic risk to global trade.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Sunday dismissed the threat of new US sanctions as a sign of desperation.

Describing what he said were "repetitive scenarios", Araghchi said in a video posted on Telegram, "The fact that they (US leaders) have moved on from military operations ... to bring up the same old plans shows that they are desperate."

Washington must speak to Iran respectfully to find "a solution based on justice and honor", he added.

Meanwhile, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said Tehran had received "multiple messages from neighboring countries" regarding the formation of new security arrangements and economic cooperation across the region.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said Pakistani army chief Asim Munir would visit Tehran on Monday to meet senior Iranian officials, Al Jazeera reported. The talks were said to focus on enhancing bilateral cooperation and regional peace.

Last week, Trump launched an economic campaign against Iran after Washington failed to achieve a breakthrough with Tehran as their memorandum of understanding signed in June expired on Aug 17.

Agencies contributed to this story.

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Israel raises 'serious security concerns' over Hamas disarmament deal

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel has shared "serious security concerns" with the United States regarding the proposed disarmament deal with Hamas, an Israeli official said as Israeli strikes over the weekend killed at least 17 people, including children, in Gaza.

The remarks by Doron Spielman, spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office, were some of the first public comments since US President Donald Trump announced the agreement.

Spielman told The Associated Press that Israel's intelligence assessment is that Hamas remains committed to rebuilding its military rather than genuinely demilitarizing. He said the Israeli military would not withdraw from Gaza — where it controls more than 60 percent of the territory — before Hamas disarms.

"Our assessment is that if we redeploy before Hamas is truly disarmed, it will quickly expand its presence throughout Gaza, rebuild its terrorist infrastructure, once again threaten Israeli communities, and seek to carry out another Oct 7-style attack," he said, referring to the Hamas militant attack on Israel in 2023 that triggered the conflict in the Gaza Strip.

Israel responded with a punishing military offensive that has killed more than 73,000 people, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

Spielman's comments come days after Hamas said it would begin disarming as part of the US-brokered ceasefire signed nine months ago to end the nearly three-year-long conflict. It marks a potential breakthrough in ending the conflict, but many hurdles, conditions and long timelines remain.

The 20-point ceasefire plan calls on Hamas to surrender its weapons and destroy its vast network of tunnels. It also envisions Israeli forces withdrawing from Gaza, the arrival of a new technocratic Palestinian government, deployment of an international security force and the rebuilding of the battered Palestinian enclave.

Hamas disarmament has been a sticking point and has deadlocked negotiations for months. In announcing the deal on social media on Thursday, Trump said it would be carried out in "carefully structured phases".

A copy of the agreement obtained and verified by the AP said that all weapons held by the Hamas-run police will be transferred to the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza upon its arrival in the enclave. It is unclear when that would happen, since it depends on other steps.

A process to decommission and store heavy weapons and to dismantle military production sites and tunnels will begin after the arrival of the Palestinian committee and the deployment of international forces. The process will be linked to a phased Israeli withdrawal, according to the agreement.

On Saturday, a delegation from the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, or Fatah, headed to Cairo, while Hamas affirmed its commitment to participating in the legislative elections scheduled for November as part of the broadest possible national coalition.

AGENCIES — XINHUA

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COMMENT

Editorials

US-Canada talks impasse acute reminder that Washington should review its policies

The break in the United States-Canada trade talks is more than another episode in Washington's ill-advised tariff drama. When US negotiators introduced last-minute demands that would have constrained Canada's ability to reach trade deals with third parties, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney walked away. The striking thing is not simply that the talks failed, but how revealingly they failed.

The US-Canada trade dispute is a miniature of a much larger problem: a US administration treating economic relations as a series of zero-sum contests while overlooking the costs its policies impose on the US' trading partners and the US itself.

Tariffs, technology restrictions, military escalation and an increasingly interventionist approach to currencies form a policy mix that risks aggravating the very inflationary, fiscal and financial pressures Washington claims to be fighting.

US importers pay tariffs at the border. Much of the cost is then passed on to businesses and consumers through higher prices and thinner margins, while retaliation hits US exporters. Modern manufacturing does not respect tariff boundaries. Auto parts can cross the US-Canadian border several times before becoming a finished vehicle. Taxing each crossing does not make the final product more American, just more expensive.

The same logic applies to technology policy. Washington's expanding "entity lists" and restrictions on China may become self-defeating when US companies are forced to redesign supply chains around political considerations rather than productivity. The result is greater technological fragmentation and reduced access to markets in which US companies have long been competitive.

The US administration's "transshipment" report takes this logic to an almost comic extreme. Baselessly blaming China for the disappointing economics of an arbitrary tariff regime does not change the underlying arithmetic. Once Washington creates large tariff differentials, it should hardly be surprised that businesses seek alternative routes. The policy creates the incentive and then foreign countries are absurdly criticized for responding to it.

Military escalation in the Middle East adds another inflationary shock. Washington's pressure on other nations to align themselves with its so-called toughest-ever economic measures against Iran is a telling reflection of its own strategic passivity regarding the trouble of its own making. The longer this conflict drags on, the deeper the hole the US is digging for itself.

Energy-price volatility feeds into transport, manufacturing and household budgets, while making the Federal Reserve's task harder. Monetary policy can restrain demand to help cool inflation; it cannot produce more oil or repair disrupted supply chains.

Then there is the number Washington cannot tariff away: the national debt. Annual deficits approaching $1.8 trillion and a debt burden above $40 trillion leave the US exposed to higher interest rates. Debt-service costs have climbed above $1 trillion a year, consuming resources that might otherwise finance infrastructure, education and social programs. Long-term Treasury yields remain elevated as investors demand compensation for inflation risks and the scale of future borrowing.

The weakening dollar adds another complication. A softer currency helps exporters, but also raises the domestic price of imports. In an economy already confronting tariff-induced inflation, further weakness of the dollar is hardly cost-free.

Against this backdrop, the surge in AI-related corporate borrowing deserves particular scrutiny as a potential trigger of a financial crisis. As of August, nine major US technology companies reportedly had nearly $3 trillion in off-balance-sheet commitments — almost double an estimate made only six weeks earlier. Roughly $1.9 trillion involves purchases of chips and servers and another $1.2 trillion future leases. More troubling is the potentially self-reinforcing financing cycle in which vendors finance customers who then use the funds to purchase their products. If AI revenues disappoint or higher long-term rates puncture valuations, these commitments could surface abruptly, transforming an investment boom into a financial shock potentially far larger than the dot-com bust of 2000. The damage could spread through credit markets and pension portfolios precisely when Washington has less fiscal room to respond.

According to a report, 57 senior US administration officials are worth at least $100 million, over four times the combined number of ultra-wealthy appointees in the George Walker Bush, Barack Obama and Joe Biden administrations.

For this wealthy circle, tariffs, AI contracts, energy prices and market volatility represent speculative opportunities. Policies presented as defending workers are in effect deepening wealth concentration and shifting costs downward.

But the White House tries to explain away these contradictions by blaming the previous administration, China or other trading partners, including Canada and the European Union. The US-Canada trade dispute should be read as a warning about a self-reinforcing policy circle driven by vested interests in the US.

The outward symptoms? Too much international engagement is being viewed through a transactional, zero-sum lens, turning allies into bargaining targets and trading partners into economic suspects.

The US' architecture was originally designed to restrain individual impulses through checks and balances. Those guardrails, however, become meaningless if institutions evolve from constraining personal discretion to protecting it.

Striving to realize human-robot symbiosis

At the second World Humanoid Robot Games in Beijing on Saturday, a humanoid robot from Team Tianzhuo set a milestone, clocking 100 meters in 9.39 seconds. It not only beat the previous robotic record but also eclipsed the legendary Usain Bolt's world record of 9.58 seconds, a feat of human biology deemed near the absolute limit.

This record-setting sprint was the dramatic opening act for the games that are being held from Saturday to Wednesday. The event has exploded in scale. This year's event has attracted the participation of 666 teams and 2,056 robots from 16 countries, marking a 138 percent increase in the number of teams taking part and a fourfold jump in the robot count from the inaugural event last year.

It demonstrates the speed of technological iteration. More significantly, the games reflect a global commitment to moving robots out of labs. The scenario-based events have been extended into simulated real environments such as factories, hotels, homes and logistics with tasks such as packing, unpacking and retail service, pushing humanoid robots from "demonstration tools" toward "practical productivity".

This push for real-world utility was the central theme at the 2026 World Robot Conference, which was held under the theme "Human-Robot Symbiosis, Production-Demand Convergence" from Wednesday to Sunday. Over 370 exhibitors from around the world showcased 3,000 innovative products, with 311 being global debuts. The industry's focus is increasingly on reliability, cost-effectiveness and solving real-world problems.

The market's attitude toward the industry was apparent last week when Unitree Robotics, a global leader in humanoid and quadruped robots, went public on the Shanghai Stock Exchange's sci-tech innovation board.

In a market crowded with options, investors are placing long-term bets on China's ability to translate its industrial strength into commercially viable embodied intelligence. This confidence is well-founded. Embodied intelligence, the integration of artificial intelligence with a physical form, is poised to inject new momentum into the global economy. Its applications span manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, emergency rescue and household services.

China's market is one of the world's largest testing grounds. From traffic control to package sorting, Chinese robots are already at work, demonstrating that the future is not on the horizon — it is already here. However, AI and robots will also affect the job market.

Addressing the contradiction requires a multipronged labor-market strategy: A shift from income support to employment-conditional subsidies, including wage insurance for displaced workers moving into growing sectors, alongside portable benefits to reskilling programs tied directly to employer demand. There should also be tax incentives for companies that invest in human-AI complementarity rather than wholesale automation.

In practice, to harness the opportunities of the new technological revolution, governments, businesses and universities should forge closer partnerships to enhance workforce development. This ecosystem should prioritize "learning by practicing" through internships, apprenticeships and industry-sponsored projects that bridge theory and practice.

Crucially, policymakers should pursue active labor-market policies that enhance mobility, reduce skills mismatches and ensure productivity gains translate into broad-based wage growth rather than elite capture. With proper foresight, there is no reason why the development of advanced technology cannot be a rising tide that lifts all boats.

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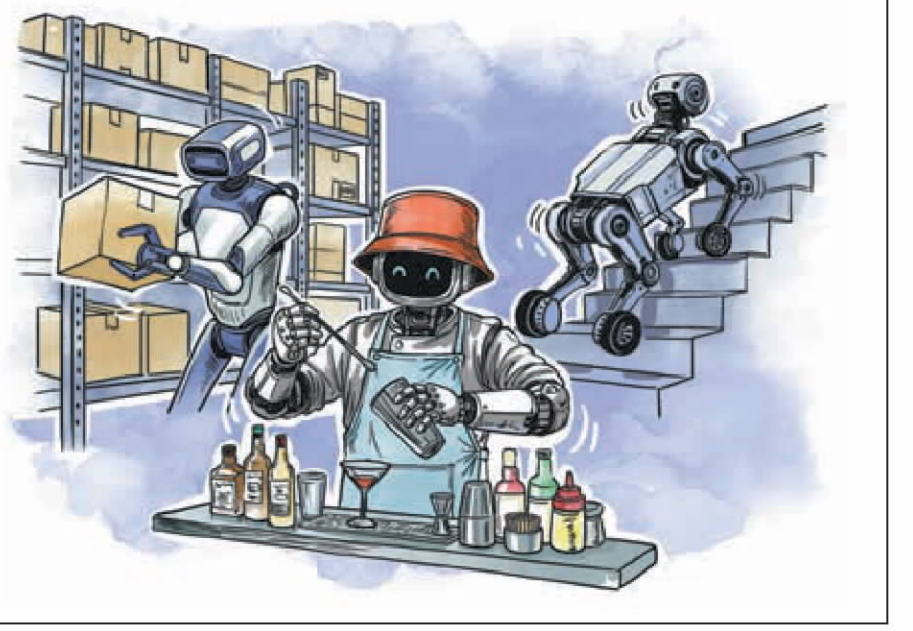

Opinion Line

China's commercial space industry demonstrates innovation energy

Watching the Zhuque-3 Y2 rocket lift off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, courtesy of LandSpace's live footage on Wednesday morning, was a moment of proud fulfillment for me. Minutes later, witnessing its first-stage booster settle vertically onto the landing zone in Minqin, Gansu province, I felt the culmination of a decade of on-the-ground reporting.

That very day, I wrote the news story on this historic mission. My visits to LandSpace's research and development facilities and the Minqin landing site just days before the launch gave me firsthand insight into the formidable technical challenges faced by the company's young engineers, making their achievement even more praiseworthy to me.

Over the past 10 years, I have observed China's commercial space industry evolve from a handful of underfunded start-ups with modest ambitions into a formidable force reshaping the country's space landscape. In the early days, I recall interviewing a veteran rocket designer from a State-owned space giant who flatly asserted that China had "no foundation for commercial space operations" and that launch services should not be entrusted to private players.

At that time, SpaceX was already demonstrating the viability of reusable rockets and lowering launch costs in the United States, yet such a path seemed unimaginable to many in China's space community. What a difference a decade can make.

The farsighted decision by the top leadership to open the space sector to private capital and enterprises — framing them as valuable complements to State-funded entities and a source of dynamism and competitiveness — has been fully vindicated. My years of reporting have tracked how private companies have moved from tentative experiments to world-class accomplishments. Today, they are an indispensable pillar of China's overall space capability, injecting innovation energy into the entire industry chain.

Wednesday's milestone — China's first successful land-based recovery of an orbital-class rocket booster — has far-reaching implications. Developed by LandSpace, the stainless-steel Zhuque-3 is specifically built for large-scale constellation deployment, offering heavy-lift capacity at reduced cost. Its proven reusability will significantly accelerate the construction of China's low-orbit satellite networks and other commercial systems, giving the country more flexible and cost-effective options for its space programs.

Beyond the direct technical gains, the success triggers a powerful "catfish effect" throughout the industry: private-sector breakthroughs press State-owned contractors to accelerate their own innovation cycles. Healthy competition also drives local suppliers to upgrade manufacturing standards, boosting the overall competitiveness of the country's space sector.

That said, maintaining a sober perspective is essential. Compared with the US, which leads the world in reusable rocket and commercial satellite technologies, China still faces notable gaps in many areas of commercial space operations. The journey to full reusability and routine, affordable access to space remains long and arduous.

As I watched the over-40-meter-tall Zhuque-3 first-stage booster stand upright on the landing pad in the middle of the desert — dust settling around its deployed legs — I recalled the skepticism of that designer years ago. What has unfolded since is a testament to the power of vision, policy support and entrepreneurial drive.

China's commercial space story is far from over, and I feel privileged to continue documenting the next chapter of reusable launch and satellite networking.

— ZHAO LEI, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

New healthcare plan has people-centered approach

Editor's note: *China released a five-year plan that aims to enhance the accessibility, affordability and sustainability of its public healthcare system. China Daily spoke to Dong Wenyong, an associate researcher at the Institute of Law at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, on the importance of the plan. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

There is a noticeable gap between the current development of healthcare provision and the growing demand for high-quality healthcare services. Factors such as urbanization, an aging population and the growth of new forms of employment are generating new demands for healthcare delivery. Also, the lack of synchronization among healthcare services, pharmaceutical supplies and medical insurance hinders the effectiveness of healthcare provision.

Addressing these challenges and seizing the opportunities requires a dedicated and comprehensive plan to drive systemic reform and development. Advances in big data and artificial intelligence present new opportunities to improve the management of the healthcare system.

Against this backdrop, the plan proactively addresses the challenges and opportunities facing the public healthcare system. It outlines six goals and guiding principles, six areas of reform, five initiatives to improve people's well-being and three major projects.

The goals are the six qualities that China's healthcare system should feature by 2030: fairness, legal compliance, security, digital and intelligent capabilities, coordination and sound management.

This is the first time that these six qualities have been systematically identified as development goals of the public healthcare system. Their introduction clarifies the sector's objectives and provides specific criteria for evaluating progress. Together, they will serve as benchmarks, offering multidimensional guidance for the development of the public healthcare system over the next five years.

The plan also outlines six major reform tasks: improving the multitiered public healthcare system; implementing long-term care insurance; deepening pharmaceutical and healthcare service reforms; improving the management and regulatory system for public healthcare funds; improving the public service system; and strengthening the foundations for the development and provision of public healthcare.

A key focus of the reforms is addressing institutional gaps, particularly those affecting individuals in flexible employment, such as food delivery couriers and ride-hailing drivers, by facilitating their coverage by medical insurance. This adaptation is crucial to meet the needs of new forms of employment. Additionally, the inclusion of long-term care insurance in the overall public healthcare system directly addresses the demands of an aging population.

The five initiatives to enhance people's well-being include efforts to consolidate and improve universal enrollment in medical insurance, develop an all-in-one service for medicine purchases, strengthen primary-level healthcare with the support of medical insurance, standardize the direct settlement of medical expenses incurred outside the insured person's place of residence, and establish a personal medical insurance cloud platform.

These measures address long-standing concerns among insured people and matters that directly affect their daily lives. They demonstrate that the plan not only addresses national-level issues but also incorporates a people-centered approach that focuses on individual needs.

Through concrete measures such as building platforms for managing insured people's information, developing applications for comparing medicine prices and supporting primary healthcare institutions in residential communities, the plan aims to advance broader institutional reform through targeted initiatives.

The three major projects are a monitoring and early-warning system for fund operations, big-data regulatory models and international cooperation on public healthcare services. These projects address the challenges and opportunities of an era defined by risk, technology and increased openness.

Through targeted development efforts, these projects will help turn the concepts of secure, digital, intelligent, and well-managed public healthcare into concrete outcomes, thereby building a modern system that meets practical needs and prepares for the future, while delivering higher-quality coverage.

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VIEWS

Muhammad Zamir Assadi

CPEC connects the dots to growth

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has transformed Pakistan's physical and strategic landscape. Journeys that once took days can now be completed in hours. Ports that were once idle are now bustling hubs of regional trade. Chronic energy shortages have been addressed by energy projects, enhancing industrial stability in the country.

However, the real evolution of the CPEC is just beginning to unfold. The second stage of the project is not just about concrete and asphalt. It's about production, innovation and shared prosperity.

The CPEC is entering a new phase of development and prosperity. This is not just a continuation of past achievements but a structural transformation.

Connectivity is evolving into industry cooperation, roads into value chains and energy generation into economic diversification. This transition is creating a new narrative on development that is focused on industrialization with people-centered growth as its goal.

At the core of this transformation are special economic zones, envisioned as engines of manufacturing and export growth. Pakistan has long grappled with insufficient industrialization and a lack of diversified export bases. Breaking this cycle requires attracting foreign investment into the CPEC's industrial zones and fostering collaboration between Chinese and Pakistani companies.

Regulatory reforms and skills development will be crucial to the success of these zones as well as infrastructure. Early initiatives are already showcasing this transformation, with emerging technology companies, textile units and engineering workshops starting to cluster in industrial parks along transport corridors.

For the next stage, deeper integration with global supply chains and stronger linkages between local suppliers and large industrial operators are essential. This integration will ensure the benefits of industrialization are felt across all industries.

Agriculture is another domain where CPEC 2.0 is likely to make a significant difference. Though it is the cornerstone of Pakistan's economy, the agricultural sector is plagued by low productivity due to outdated technology and minimal value addition.

Coordinated irrigation systems and advanced cold storage facilities for seeds and seedlings could revolutionize the sector. Technology-driven agriculture can reduce waste, enhance yields and boost export competitiveness.

It's not just an economic issue but a social one as well.

A large portion of Pakistan's population lives in rural areas where farming is the primary livelihood. Modern farming methods can alleviate poverty and reduce urban migration pressures. They can also help generate new opportunities for agro-based industries, linking farms more effectively with markets.

Another key feature of CPEC 2.0 is technology. Artificial intelligence and telecommunications have become integral to economic planning and digital infrastructure. These efforts can help bridge Pakistan's digital divide and improve public service delivery through enhanced cooperation. Smart logistics systems, digital payment platforms and e-commerce networks are already reshaping the country's business landscape.

Technology cooperation also impacts education and human capital development, as more universities and training institutions equip students with skills for emerging industries. This needs a change in curriculum design and stronger academic-industry linkages.

If technological infrastructure is to underpin sustainable growth, people must have the skills to drive it. Job creation is a key objective of the CPEC, and the transition from infrastructure to industrialization offers new opportunities.

But the quality of employment is as important as the quantity. The focus should be on skilled employment that provides stability and career progression, rather than short-term labor-intensive jobs. This can be done through vocational training programs, technical education and entrepreneurship support. Small and medium enterprises will be key enablers of this change.

Most economies rely on SMEs, which employ the majority of the population. Integrating SMEs into CPEC-related supply chains can distribute the economic benefits more widely and promote innovation at the local level, where businesses are more responsive to market changes.

Green development is another important aspect of CPEC 2.0. As the world focuses on climate change, development projects are increasingly held to green standards. The use of renewable energy, energy-efficient industrial systems and environmentally friendly construction measures not only helps achieve environmental objectives but also increases economic resilience. Renewable energy, particularly solar and hydropower, also reduces reliance on imported fuels and enhances energy security.

The central tenet of the next phase is people-centered development. The true success of infrastructure lies in improving everyday lives. Access to education, health care, clean water and economic opportunity determines whether large-scale projects are truly successful.

This transformation requires greater community involvement. Local populations should be active participants in development projects, not passive beneficiaries. This can be achieved through consultation processes, local hiring policies and inclusive planning frameworks. A sense of community ownership significantly enhances the sustainability of development projects.

CPEC also brings regional benefits. Greater connectivity and economic integration between China, Pakistan and neighboring countries can strengthen trade and economic ties across Asia.

The project can also connect remote regions that have been cut off from international markets. In this sense, the CPEC is not just a bilateral project but a catalyst for regional transformation.

Strategic infrastructure cooperation has already proven its worth in the context of the CPEC. The next chapter will determine whether this foundation can turn into sustainable industrial development and widespread prosperity. Infrastructure does not automatically lead to industrialization. It involves planning, investment and partnerships. The significance of this moment lies not only in the magnitude of the opportunity but also in the depth of transformation it offers.

If properly implemented, CPEC 2.0 can transform Pakistan's economy, diversify its industries and open new avenues for inclusive development.

It can also serve as a template for turning connectivity projects into comprehensive development partnerships.

The journey ahead is multifaceted and the direction is clear. Infrastructure laid the foundation; industrialization will define the future.

The author is the director of the China desk at Lord Media Network, Pakistan. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Digby James Wren

Robust H1 performance confirms China's stabilizing role

China's economic performance in the first half of 2026 demonstrated its growing resilience against external headwinds, such as disruptions in the Middle East, tariffs and sanctions.

The country's GDP reached 69.57 trillion yuan ($10.3 trillion), up 4.7 percent year-on-year, keeping it on track to meet its full-year growth target.

While second-quarter growth moderated to 4.3 percent following a stronger 5 percent in the first quarter, industrial output, retail sales and services all continued to expand. Furthermore, urban unemployment eased to 5 percent in June, while per capita disposable income rose 5.2 percent. Notably, the GDP deflator has turned positive after 12 quarters of deflation.

New growth drivers, such as high-end manufacturing, the digital economy and modern services, which capitalize on speed, scale, and technological integration, contributed over 40 percent of first-half growth.

The World Bank projected a steady 4.4 percent growth for China in 2026, noting that high-tech investment rose 4.5 percent year-on-year in January-May. The OECD has forecast 4.5 percent growth, citing strong semiconductor production and exports.

China's foreign trade reached a record high of 25.47 trillion yuan during the first half of 2026, the impressive 16.9 percent year-on-year growth reinforcing China's status as the world's leading goods trading nation. A key feature was a shift in trade dynamics. With the growth in imports outpacing the growth in exports, China has made substantial progress toward a balanced trade structure and increased consumer demand.

The transition to new growth drivers was decisive. Mechanical and electrical equipment exports saw a 20.1 percent increase, accounting for 63.5 percent of all exports. High-tech exports surged by 39 percent while AI and computing components posted double-digit growth due to global data center construction. Exports of electric vehicles grew by 68.7 percent, lithium-ion batteries increased 37.6 percent, while export volumes of wind turbines and associated green power generators shot up 35.6 percent.

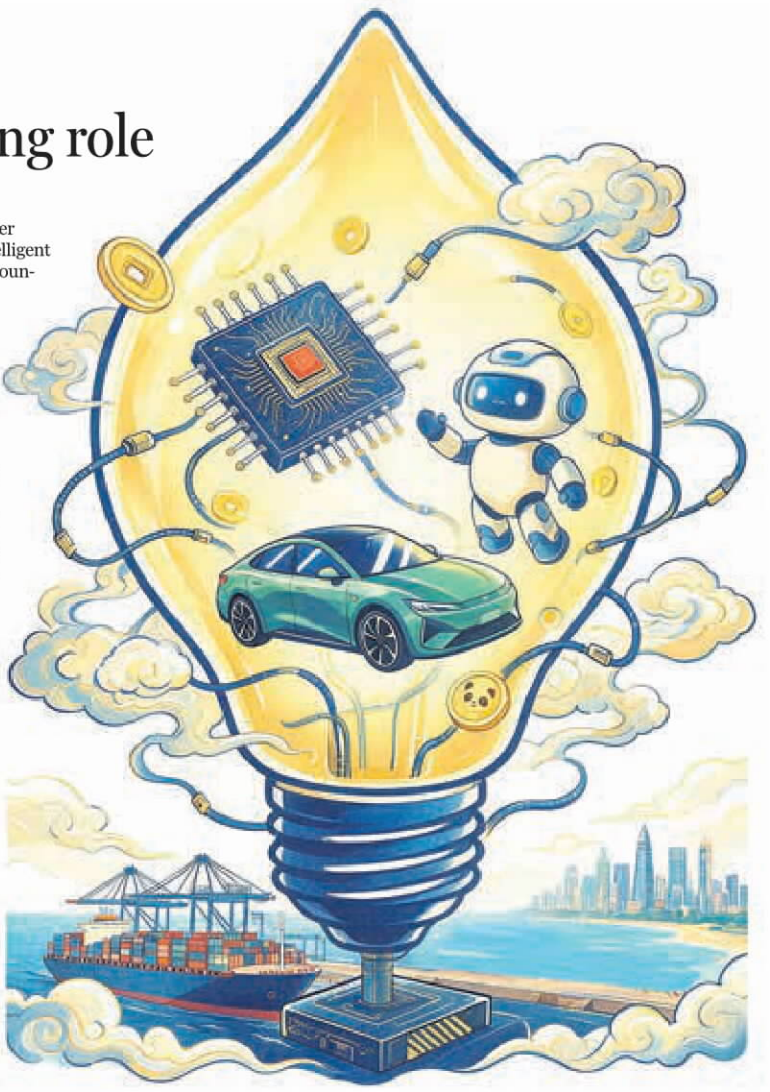
Nextgen green mobility exports of railway locomotives grew 45.1 percent and electric motorcycles and bicycles rose by 31.5 percent. China exported over 10,000 units of AI-powered intelligent bionic robots to more than 90 countries and regions. Exports of medical and surgical robots grew 3.3-fold to 480 million yuan, expanding their markets from 23 countries to 49 in 12 months.

For 17 consecutive years, China has been the world's second-largest import market, accounting for roughly 10 percent of global import demand.

By granting zero-tariff treatment to 63 developing nations, the Chinese market facilitated import growth from more than 150 countries and regions.

Trade with Belt and Road countries rose 14.8 percent to 12.97 trillion yuan, representing 50.9 percent of China's total foreign trade volume. Trade with Africa rose by 19.6 percent, Latin American trade expanded by 16.2 percent, and commerce with regional neighbors jumped 20.6 percent to 9.44 trillion yuan.

Trade with the European Union also registered a solid 10.2 percent increase. Foreign-invested enterprises and multinationals remain highly integrated within this ecosystem, shifting from "manufacturing in China" to "innovating in China".



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

While the European Central Bank notes that stronger Asian emerging economies, including China, lifted global momentum, French Finance Minister Roland Lescure says China is "under-consuming", the US is "over-consuming" and Europe is "under-investing". Banque de France Governor François Villeroy de Galhau has called for Chinese investment in Europe that creates local value and supports technology transfer. Germany's Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil says Germany is "not afraid of competition, but it needs to be fair".

Malaysia and Singapore have pointed to spillover effects from weaker demand, tariffs, and supply-chain disruption. Nevertheless, the global market's deep reliance on China's high-value, tech-driven exports creates mutual interdependence, rendering complete decoupling economically unfeasible.

China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are each other's largest trade partners, which means any domestic slowdown would quickly impact Southeast Asia through trade demand, supply chains and commodity prices.

However, China's strong first-half performance has provided a vital economic buffer. Indonesia's trade with China rose in early 2026, Cambodia's total first-half trade with China exceeded $11 billion, and Thailand's export sector is projected to grow 8 percent to 10 percent driven by electronics and AI-related demand.

China's first-half performance in 2026 confirms the wisdom of transitioning to new growth drivers and strengthening resilience built on innovation. Its robust GDP growth of 4.7 percent reflects nuanced fiscal support and policy responses to external disruptions and domestic challenges in the property sector as consumption remains soft.

The underlying story, however, is one of sustained growth. As the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) begins, the central task for the second half of 2026 is to localize policy inputs, maintain fiscal flexibility and balance domestic property and consumption challenges with export and manufacturing strengths.

The author is the chair of BRCP Geopolitical Risk Advisory, publisher of The Chair Media Group, and visiting professor at ICES, France.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Xue Jinwen

Taking the local history of Lyuliang to the world

In Lyuliang, the past is always present. Visitors to the city in Shanxi province will find history almost everywhere: in former revolutionary sites, in village stories and in the songs that endured the years of war.

During the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), Lyuliang was integral to the Jin-Sui border region. The struggle during that period gave rise to what is now known as the Lyuliang Spirit, a tribute to the sacrifices of soldiers and civilians during wartime, and a source of inspiration to overcome severe poverty and adversity.

That rich history deserves to be known beyond China. But sharing it with a global audience is a challenge. For those unfamiliar with China's revolutionary history, the stories of Lyuliang might seem distant. The key lies in finding effective ways to communicate the revolutionary heritage to an international audience.

Instead of presenting it as a lesson for the world, the focus should be on making the history accessible and engaging.

The first step is ensuring historical accuracy. The Lyuliang University has established the Jin-Sui Research Institute, bringing together researchers in history, literature, art and foreign languages.

They have preserved and digitized vast amounts of historical material, including wartime newspapers and other documents.

Archives may seem less glamorous than documentaries or viral videos, but without reliable sources, international storytelling quickly becomes little more than publicity. Digitized newspapers give researchers abroad access to authentic historical data.

Researching the writings of foreign journalists, such as United States reporter Harrison Forman, can also help contextualize the Jin-Sui experience within a broader international narrative. Readers outside China may approach Chinese history with different assumptions, but this is no reason to rewrite the past to make it more palatable to outsiders.

Instead, providing sufficient context enables readers to understand what they see and then form their own opinions.

Lyuliang's traditional culture — paper-cutting, shadow puppetry and dough sculpture — is not merely local handicrafts.

The greater challenge is fostering a connection with this history. While historical arguments can explain why the Lyuliang Spirit matters, cultural expressions — songs, novels or films — can evoke an emotional understanding of its importance. That is also why cultural forms should play a central role in sharing Lyuliang's history abroad.

The university has produced musical works and other projects drawing on local folk traditions. The revolutionary novel *The Lyuliang Heroes* is being translated into English and a documentary is being produced about artistic life in the Jin-Sui border region.

These projects should avoid the common mistake of over-explaining to foreign audiences. Often, what they need is a better story. Instead of simply stating that people in the revolutionary base areas demonstrated self-sacrifice and solidarity, it may be more compelling to depict the personal choices faced by families, villages or artists during wartime. The first approach tells an audience what to admire. The second gives them something to think about.

This is where digital technology can be useful. Virtual exhibitions, digital archives, short videos, and social-media platforms can bring Lyuliang's history to audiences thousands of miles away.

Lyuliang's traditional culture — paper-cutting, shadow puppetry and dough sculpture — is not merely local handicrafts. Properly presented, it can serve as a natural introduction to the region's history. A piece of folk art can spark curiosity, leading to a story, and ultimately fostering understanding.

Lyuliang University is exploring ways to weave stories of the region into such traditions, through bilingual embroidery, digital paper-cutting and online heritage experiences.

But technology is only the delivery mechanism. It cannot determine what stories are worth telling. A million views do not necessarily mean a million people understood the story. Nor does technological novelty make a historical narrative more convincing.

The true test is whether audiences feel invited into the history or are being lectured about it.

We need to rethink the approach to international cultural communication. Local history does not become universal simply because it has been translated into English or posted on foreign social platforms.

It becomes meaningful when it answers questions that resonate beyond its place of origin: How do ordinary people endure a catastrophe? What unites a community? How do memories of sacrifice endure when the generation that experienced them is gone?

Lyuliang has no shortage of answers to those questions. The challenge is to present them in a way that doesn't assume that the rest of the world already understands their significance.

Rather than asking others to share a memory that is not theirs, give them a way into it through the people who lived it and the choices they made.

That is what could give Lyuliang's revolutionary past a wider meaning. What began as a local history could evolve into a narrative for the rest of the world.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

SHAHOBJON RAKHMONOVICH KUBATOV

New quality partnership

Uzbekistan's 35 years of independence demonstrate that sovereignty and international cooperation are not mutually exclusive



The year 2026 marks the 35th anniversary of Uzbekistan's independence. This date represents the long journey of a state that gained the right to determine its own development, build relations with the world and assume responsibility for its future. The development of relations between Uzbekistan and China is particularly instructive.

Over the past 35 years, China has evolved from one of the first states to recognize Uzbekistan's independence to become the country's largest trade and economic partner, a major investor and a participant in large-scale infrastructure, industrial and technological projects. Yet the central question concerns more than the number of agreements signed or the volume of trade. It is far more important to understand the new quality this partnership is acquiring and how it relates to the national interests of an independent Uzbekistan.

The partnership reflects a high degree of political trust and a shared intention to ensure the resilience of cooperation regardless of shifts in the international environment. At the same time, it does not imply the creation of a closed alliance or any restriction on Uzbekistan's relations with other states.

This is an important political quality of the Uzbekistan-China partnership. It is built on respect for territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs and the right of every nation to choose its own path of modernization. The two countries differ in their systems of government, historical experience and scale, but these differences do not impede cooperation when sovereign equality remains its foundation.

Openness is not the opposite of sovereignty. The experience of independent Uzbekistan allows us to speak of the principle of sovereign openness. Its meaning is straightforward: the state expands its trade, investment, technological and humanitarian ties while retaining the right to determine their direction and align them with the objectives of national development.

China is now Uzbekistan's largest trading partner. According to preliminary national statistics, China accounted for 21.2 percent of the country's foreign trade turnover in 2025 — approximately $17.2 billion. These figures demonstrate the scale of interaction. They also require careful analysis of the structure of trade rather than simple satisfaction with the results achieved.

Uzbekistan imports machinery, equipment, components and technologies from China that are essential to the modernization of its economy. A high volume of such imports is not inherently negative. The decisive question is whether the equipment acquired translates into higher national productivity, the training of engineers, the development of service enterprises, the localization of components and the expansion of Uzbekistan's own exports.

This is why the quality of cooperation matters more than simple arithmetic. When external resources generate new knowledge, skilled employment and modern industries within the country, interdependence strengthens sovereignty. When cooperation primarily entrenches the import of finished goods and the export of raw materials, however, the risk of structural vulnerability increases.

The production of BYD electric vehicles in Uzbekistan may offer an illustrative example. Its strategic impact will be determined not only by the number of vehicles produced, but also by the depth of localization, the participation of domestic suppliers, the training of technical specialists and the ability to enter third-country markets. The same logic applies to solar and wind energy. Long-term results depend not only on generating capacity brought online, but also on local equipment production, the transfer of expertise, environmental responsibility and the ability of Uzbek specialists to maintain new systems independently.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

Transport connectivity is equally important. Uzbekistan is one of only two doubly landlocked countries in the world — countries separated from the sea by the territories of other landlocked states. For such a country, reliable access to external markets is not merely an economic question, but an element of strategic autonomy.

From this perspective, the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway carries significance far beyond the transport sector. An intergovernmental agreement on the project was signed in June 2024, and a ceremony marking the start of construction was held in December of the same year. The new railway is expected to shorten the route between China and Central Asia and open additional connections to the markets of South and West Asia.

There is, however, a fundamental distinction between a transit route and a development corridor. Transit generates freight flows and related revenues, but it does not by itself transform the structure of an economy. A development corridor emerges only when logistics centers, industrial zones, processing facilities, educational institutions, service companies and modern customs systems are established along the railway.

Uzbekistan's national interest lies not merely in increasing the number of trains crossing its territory. More important is the creation of a productive ecosystem around the new railway.

The project also demonstrates Central Asia's growing agency. Its implementation requires the interests of three states to be coordinated. China provides a substantial share of the market, capital and technology; Kyrgyzstan provides the crucial geographic section; and Uzbekistan connects the route to subsequent western and southern corridors. The participants' mutual dependence creates a foundation for equitable consultation and shared responsibility for the outcome.

Uzbekistan-China relations extend beyond the bilateral level. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the China-Central Asia mechanism provide broader platforms for regional cooperation. Their significance will depend in part on whether Central Asian states can develop a coordinated vision on transport, trade, energy, water resources and digital connectivity.

For Chinese partners, it is essential to view Uzbekistan not only as a market, a transit territory or a source of resources, but also as a co-author of a new regional order. Joint projects will be more sustainable if they are assessed not only in terms of financial returns and transport capacity, but also by their contribution to industrialization, employment, environmental security and human-capital development.

A resilient partnership also requires stronger ties between universities, researchers and citizens. Confucius Institutes operate in Tashkent and Samarkand, while joint educational programs and research centers continue to develop. The Uzbek language is taught at Beijing Foreign Studies University. The visa-free regime that entered into force on June 1, 2025, allowing visits of up to 30 days, has created additional opportunities for tourism, entrepreneurship, academic contacts and direct interaction between the peoples of the two countries. The next stage should focus on the joint production of knowledge through research cooperation, academic exchanges and stronger ties between think tanks.

The political meaning of the Uzbekistan-China partnership lies in demonstrating that states of different sizes can build enduring cooperation without compromising sovereign equality.

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LI XUAN

'RAMageddon' fallout

US' technology-denial strategy is driving China's pursuit of endogenous capabilities to ease memory-chip shortage



The severe global memory chip shortage, dubbed "RAMageddon", is more than a supply-chain disruption linked to artificial intelligence demand: it exposes the limits of weaponized interdependence as a coercive strategy.

While many analyses find no quick resolution in sight as the shortage is structural, reflecting a reallocation of the memory fabrication base toward AI infrastructure that spurs consumption of memory chips by data centers, the geopolitical implication of RAMageddon lies in what it reveals about the United States' technology-denial strategy toward China.

Since 2022, the US has pursued escalating semiconductor export controls premised on what US scholars Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman term "weaponized interdependence" — the exploitation of chokepoints in global networks to exercise coercive power.

In October 2022, the US Bureau of Industry and Security issued sweeping export controls targeting advanced chips and chipmaking equipment destined for China. In October 2023, these rules were tightened further, closing loopholes that had allowed third-country rerouting and expanding the Entity List to cover additional Chinese AI companies. The 2024 amendments extended controls to high-bandwidth memory (HBM) specifically, while pressuring the Netherlands and Japan to impose restrictions on equipment exports to China by ASML and Tokyo Electron.

Early this year, the US imposed additional licensing requirements on manufacturing equipment related to dynamic random-access-memory (DRAM), potentially constraining Chinese producers' expansion plans.

The apparent logic of weaponized interdependence is straightforward: because advanced semiconductor manufacturing depends on irreplaceable nodes — ASML's extreme ultraviolet (EUV) lithography system, US-designed electronic-design-automation (EDA) software and the memory oligopoly itself — restricting China's access is intended to constrain its AI development. Interdependence thus becomes an asymmetric lever for geopolitical control.

However, the phenomenon of RAMageddon challenges that logic in two fundamental ways.

First, chokepoint control is a double-edged sword. As major memory giants redirect capacity toward a more lucrative AI-related industry, the resulting scarcity of conventional DRAM can harm the entire global electronics ecosystem, including US companies and allied economies. This is the "boomerang effect" in international relations: sanctions generate unintended costs that erode the sanctioner's own position. In this context, nine US industry associations warned the administration that the imbalance could raise the price of electronic goods for US customers.

Second, and more critically, the crisis creates the very market conditions that enable China's memory industry to achieve viability at scale — precisely the outcome that the US policy sought to prevent. By forcing incumbents to prioritize the high end, export controls and AI demand have jointly left openings in the middle of the market, offering ChangXin Memory Technologies (CXMT) and other manufacturers a strategic opening.

CXMT is not an isolated case. Across the semiconductor value chain, Chinese companies have leveraged exclusion as an accelerant. Huawei's semiconductor arm, HiSilicon, has pivoted to designing AI chips manufactured by SMIC on its most advanced available process node — currently 7nm using multi-patterning deep ultraviolet (DUV) lithography — circumventing the blockade of EUV lithography. SMIC has expanded capacity in Beijing and Shanghai, and its reported record revenue in 2025 makes it the world's third-largest foundry. Yangtze Memory Technologies Corp, despite being placed on the US Entity List in late 2022, now accounts for 13 percent of the global NAND flash market and reportedly supplies domestic smartphone makers.

The pattern is revealing: US restrictions have triggered a burst of new Chinese investment and market adaptation, contributing to the development of indigenous capability.

As US economist Albert Hirschman argued in his foundational work on the political economy of trade, economic coercion works best when the target lacks alternatives. When coercion persists over time, however, it incentivizes the target to develop substitutes, and those substitutes, once built, permanently reduce the coercer's leverage. This is precisely what is occurring in the memory chip sector.

The structural market crisis, especially the HBM-driven supply crunch, has created a demand vacuum that may lower the barrier to entry for new producers including those from China. Industrial policy matters, but market opportunity is the enabling condition.

The growth of CXMT, SMIC and Huawei maps precisely onto Hirschman's argument of how coercion erodes its own foundations. The dominant power's own strategic choices, including export controls and AI preference, interact with market dynamics to produce conditions that inadvertently accelerate the challenger's rise.

This phenomenon can be described as "displacement through a market structural crisis". The more aggressively the US pursues AI supremacy in memory-intensive computing, the more it starves the conventional memory market, and the more space it opens for Chinese producers. The definition of "strategic technology" thus requires dynamic and dialectic thinking.

US controls focus on the leading edge, such as EUV, HBM and advanced logic. But when conventional DRAM becomes scarce because the leading edge has absorbed most, if not all, capacity, the frontier of competition shifts. Controlling the top of the stack matters less if the system cannot supply the middle.

The shift in competition is already visible. The history of semiconductor technology shows that yesterday's leading edge becomes accessible through alternative engineering pathways: SMIC's achievement of functional 7nm chips without EUV lithography is the most striking recent demonstration. The risk for the US is not merely that it loses market share in conventional memory, but that the cumulative learning and capital formation enabled by the mid-market eventually propel Chinese companies toward the high end as well.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

RAMageddon is more than a supply-chain crisis; it is a natural experiment in the limits of technological hegemony, demonstrating that weaponizing chokepoints generates second-order effects that can undermine the original strategic intent.

For China, the path to semiconductor self-sufficiency need not run through the most advanced nodes first; it can run through the vast, underserved middle of the market. For the US, the lesson is revealing: a strategy predicated on permanent technological denial must contend with the possibility that denial itself creates the conditions for displacement. The question is no longer whether China has to be at the top in the global memory industry, but how quickly the displacement will happen. Continued rigidity in US export controls will not necessarily reverse China's progress, but will only ensure that the transition occurs on terms less favorable to US industry and consumers alike.

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BUSINESS

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AI amping up gaming developers

Rapid development of technology fundamentally restructuring process

By **WANG XIN** in Shanghai
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The effective application of artificial intelligence technologies and further global business expansion are seen as the key drivers shaping the future of China's gaming industry, business leaders and developers said at the 23rd China Digital Entertainment Expo and Conference (ChinaJoy), which took place from July 31 to Aug 3 in Shanghai.

The rapid development of AI technologies — such as large language models, multimodal models and AI agents — is fundamentally restructuring the entire game development and operations process. Targeting specifically the gaming industry, the AI gaming cloud has been booming over the past few years.

According to a recent research report by United States-based market consultancy IDC, the AI gaming cloud basically refers to the AI technologies, products and services used by game developers throughout the production process, from game design and prototyping to game development and testing, as well as game publishing and operations.

The report showed that China's AI gaming cloud market reached 1.86 billion yuan ($275 million) last year. The sector is expected to maintain a compound annual growth rate of about 91.6 percent over the next five years, hitting 11 billion yuan by 2029 and contributing more than half of the overall gaming cloud market.

Baidu AI Cloud, one of the earliest Chinese tech giants engaging in the sector, took about 51 percent of the nation's AI gaming cloud market share, said the report. To date, it has established in-depth partnerships with more than half of the nation's leading game companies and over 100 innovative AI gaming firms, providing full-stack AI capabilities to companies such as miHoYo, NetEase Games, 37 Interactive Entertainment and Unity China.

Among Baidu AI Cloud's offerings, its AI Heterogeneous Compute serves as the AI infrastructure that allows game developers to focus on essential content creation without worrying about computing power management.

Baidu Qianfan, an enterprise-grade, all-in-one large model platform, is built around agents, providing the gaming industry with a one-stop platform for model access, agent development and data intelligence services. It can support end-to-end AI collaboration across the entire workflow from text creation and character design to 3D modeling, animation production and code development, helping game developers improve both creative efficiency and quality.

"What AI truly unlocks is not just the content production capacity, but the gaming industry's ability to continuously create new gameplay, new characters and new experiences," said Zhang Wei, vice-president of Baidu Intelligent Cloud.

Baidu's AI solutions have empowered gaming businesses, such as SingularDance and SEELE AI. SingularDance is an innovative tech firm focused on the development of AI emotional companionship and hyper-personified intelligent agents.

Edward Lu Hongyi, founder and CEO of SingularDance, highlighted that they are committed to creating virtual characters that not only know how to chat with users, but also possess distinct, stable, independent and continuously evolving personalities with a "soul".

With a core focus on restructuring traditional game development workflows, SEELE AI is a tech firm focused on AI-native games and interactive worlds powered by foundational models. Collaborating with Baidu, it enables users to automatically generate interactive 3D game worlds via natural language using multimodal inputs, such as text and images, to complete the entire workflow, including character modeling, animation generation, scene construction, game mechanics and narrative presentation.

"We aim to enable every creative individual to collaborate with AI agents via natural language, quickly transforming their ideas into game worlds that are accessible, playable, editable and continuously iterable. So every gamer can actually become a game developer, and generate income from their creation," said Liu Bo, the company's partner of business operations.

Hu Xin, assistant to the chairman of Zhejiang Century Huatong Group, said that currently, AI has been fully integrated into more than 80 percent of the company's entire workflow of game development, which is also the case for most businesses in the gaming industry. The future competition within the industry would be much about "creativity, aesthetics and user insights".

The group, which is the parent company of Shengqu Games and Century Games, is also actively ramping up efforts in globalization and international collaboration for sustained growth. Following a fruitful 17-year partnership with South Korea's NC Corp, Shengqu Games unveiled the two sides' new collaboration on the much anticipated game *AION 2* on July 30 during the ChinaJoy 2026 expo.

As one of China's leading game companies, the group began its overseas expansion early and has achieved remarkable growth over the years. In 2025, the group saw its total revenue surge 67.55 percent year-on-year to nearly 37.9 billion yuan, with overseas' sales accounting for 58.63 percent. In the first quarter, the group raked in 11.01 billion yuan in markets overseas, up 35.19 percent year-on-year, according to the company.

In June, the group's hit game *Whiteout Survival* topped the global mobile game revenue chart, with its another hit *Kingshot* standing in seventh place, according to app data analysis firm Sensor Tower.

"For China's gaming industry, globalization is a goal that will never be fully achieved. The overseas markets are far from saturated and we still have huge potential to grow. Chinese game productions have high quality, and our developers and culture are gaining increasing recognition globally. We're proud to see such changes," said Hu.

The accelerating pace of Chinese game companies' globalization is also bringing vast opportunities for global emerging businesses. Aiming to better help game developers and companies acquire users worldwide in competitive markets, Berlin-based adtech company Almedia — which specializes in rewarded user acquisition — joined this year's ChinaJoy to find more Chinese partners.

Moritz Hollander, 24-year-old founder and CEO of the company established six years ago, said their approach involves a "better form of marketing or advertising" by offering cash rewards to users for engaging with advertisers' games and apps. He believes that in the future, this reward-based approach will be the new way people discover games and engage with brands, similar to loyalty and cashback systems with credit cards.

Hollander said the global gaming industry is very fast and competitive, so developers need to be very agile in various aspects. He said it is very efficient to work with Chinese developers, who are generally very fast, flexible, open-minded to new ideas, advanced and sophisticated.

"We focus more on mobile games and China — with a huge gaming market — is particularly successful and dominant in mobile gaming. It is one of the key growth markets and also the most important market for us right now.

"We hope to work with both big Chinese game companies and smaller game developers to together build an ecosystem of rewards, and help them expand their global presence with our users, platforms and global network across 16 nations," said Hollander.

Aiming to offer users more fun and rewarding gaming experience, Almedia's platforms have garnered over 80 million users worldwide. The company also launched a new Link product targeting the Chinese market during ChinaJoy, further reinforcing its long-term commitment to the nation's game developers for their global growth.

The global games market closed 2025 at $201.6 billion, marking a 9.1 percent year-on-year increase. Revenue for mobile games are expected to grow 6.8 percent year-on-year to reach $121.1 billion in 2026, said gaming industry consultancy Newzoo.



Visitors play a racing game during the ChinaJoy 2026 expo in Shanghai on July 31.



Visitors experience an extended reality game during the ChinaJoy 2026 expo in Shanghai on July 31.
PHOTOS BY XU PEIQIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Evolution of esports into economic force

By **WANG XIN** in Shanghai

An estimated 400 million Gen Z regularly engage with esports, representing an increasingly powerful opportunity for global brands to reach the potentially lucrative youth market through the games, platforms and communities where they already devote their time and attention, said a report.

A white paper titled "The Esports Generation: Who They Are and Why They Spend" was released in collaboration with Shanghai-based Hero Esports, one of Asia's leading esports companies, ESL FACEIT Group, a global leader in esports and gaming entertainment, and market research and consulting firm Niko Partners specializing in video games, esports and livestreaming across Asia and the Middle East and North Africa.

The report draws on survey data from 8,000 Gen Z esports fans aged 13-30 from across eight global markets, and found that esports has become a global entertainment force, attracting digitally-native Gen Z audiences who find the same passion, identity, community and excitement traditionally found in other sports.

According to the report, Gen Z esports fans are not a niche, they are extensively engaged in esports in various ways. They mostly watch gaming content, gaming livestreams and gaming podcasts, while also actively posting in game forums and social media groups, as well as regularly attending gaming conventions and esports events.

While esports audiences are still predominantly male, female representation in the culture is growing globally, especially at live esports events where female attendance is often higher. In China, over half of the attendees at the Peacekeeper Elite League and King Pro League were female.

The report highlighted that Gen Z esports enthusiasts are deeply loyal to the teams, titles, events and partnerships that earn their trust and energize their passions. They connect with esports fandom in the same ways previous generations connected with other sports — with genuine emotional investment, community identity and long-term loyalty.

Critically, they extend that affinity to the brands that show up authentically within this space, said the report. About 85 percent of this highly engaged audience said they take notice of branding in esports and 74 percent of them reported that this has had an effect on their purchasing behavior. Two thirds of esports fans have purchased a product because of a collaboration or co-branding partnership with an esports team, game or player.

Esports partnerships heavily influence consumer behavior, with a significant portion of fans purchasing products promoted within the sector, including food and beverage products, electronics and fashion. Similar engagement also extends beyond traditional categories, driving fans to purchase esports-related collectibles, makeup, beauty or skincare products as well partnered brands in other miscellaneous categories, said the report.

Jascha Braeker, senior partnerships development manager at ESL FACEIT Group, said during this year's ChinaJoy digital entertainment expo in Shanghai that many renowned brands are also actively engaging with the esports community for credibility within the gaming culture and even for talent acquisition.

Lamborghini joined EFG's gaming lifestyle festival DreamHack for the third time in May to connect and grow with the younger audiences. And DHL, one of the festival's longest partners, has built distinct recruitment campaigns tailored for tech savvy *Dota 2* and *Counter-Strike* fans, which brought it millions of career site visits and thousands of job applications from the Gen Z community.



People try out new gaming products during the DreamHack esports contest in Shanghai in May 2025. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"Esports has evolved into one of the most effective channels for companies looking to connect with Gen Z audiences at scale. What makes it unique is not just its reach, but the depth of engagement and trust that exists between fans, players, teams and events," said EFG's CEO Niccolo Maisto.

Danny Tang, co-founder and CEO of Hero Esports, added: "This whitepaper confirms that esports has evolved into a global cultural and economic force. For brands, the message is clear — esports is no longer a niche market, but a premier platform to connect with the next generation of consumers."

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BUSINESS INSIGHT

‘Overcapacity’ claim masks anxiety over China’s green edge

EAGLE EYE
By Zhang Monan



AI PRODUCED BY CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

The West’s renewed warnings about Chinese “overcapacity” reflect a deeper concern: China’s growing strength in clean energy and advanced manufacturing is challenging long-established Western advantages in some of the industries expected to shape the global economy.

In recent months, politicians and media commentators in the United States and other Western economies have increasingly portrayed the expansion of China’s electric vehicle, lithium battery, solar and advanced manufacturing industries as a new “China shock”. What began as a debate over industrial capacity has increasingly become an argument for higher tariffs, tighter investment restrictions and supply chains organized around geopolitical considerations.

China’s Ministry of Commerce recently responded with a position paper, arguing that industrial capacity should be assessed against global supply and demand, growth potential and business performance rather than simply comparing production with domestic consumption in a single country.

This distinction matters. Major manufacturing economies routinely produce more of certain goods than their domestic markets consume. German automakers depend heavily on overseas sales, and Airbus and Boeing manufacture aircraft for customers worldwide. Few would describe their export-oriented production as evidence of overcapacity simply because output exceeds domestic demand.

Applying such a test selectively to China risks turning an economic concept into an instrument of trade policy. Genuine overcapacity can exist in individual sectors, but large exports or rapid production expansion alone do not establish that capacity is excessive.

Much of China’s manufacturing strength has been built through years of intense domestic competition, investment and technological upgrading. This is particularly evident in EVs, lithium batteries and photovoltaic equipment, where companies compete fiercely on price, technology, quality and speed of commercialization.

China’s EV industry, for example, rests on an extensive industrial ecosystem covering critical mineral processing, batteries, motors, electronic control systems, vehicle manufacturing and charging infrastructure. Close links between suppliers and manufacturers have shortened development cycles, lowered costs and enabled companies to respond quickly to changes in demand.

Technological progress has reinforced these advantages. Chinese battery producers have made advances in lithium iron phosphate batteries, battery integration and safety, and solar manufacturers have continuously improved photovoltaic technology and production efficiency. Large-scale manufacturing has further reduced unit costs and made new technologies more affordable.

These are characteristics of industrial competitiveness, and don’t necessarily point to examples of market distortion.

Government policy has undoubtedly played a role in China’s industrial development. But industrial policy is hardly unique to China. The US has committed hundreds of billions of dollars in incentives for clean energy, EVs, batteries and other strategic industries, including measures favoring production in the US or North America. European governments and institutions have similarly provided extensive support for renewable energy, batteries and advanced manufacturing.

It is therefore increasingly difficult to divide the world neatly between Chinese “State intervention” and Western “market competition”. A more credible approach would examine whether specific policies create identifiable distortions and address them through transparent, proportionate and rules-based measures.

There is another weakness in the overcapacity argument: capacity cannot be assessed solely against today’s demand, particularly in industries central to the global energy transition.

The world is still far from completing the shift to low-carbon energy. The International Energy Agency expects renewable energy deployment to expand substantially through the end of the decade. Electrification will require enormous quantities of solar panels, batteries, power equipment, EVs and support infrastructure.

Viewed against those requirements, the challenge may not be too much high-quality green manufacturing capacity, but whether enough affordable capacity can be supplied at the speed and scale required.

Chinese production has helped reduce the cost of solar panels, batteries and other clean-energy technologies. This matters particularly for developing economies, where affordability can determine whether large-scale energy transition projects are commercially viable. Cheaper machinery, components and technologies can also lower barriers to industrialization and help emerging economies develop manufacturing capacity of their own.

The intensity of the Western debate therefore points to a broader source of anxiety: the changing geography of industrial competitiveness.

For decades, advanced Western economies dominated many high-value manufacturing industries, while China’s role in global value chains was largely concentrated in labor-intensive production and assembly for multinational companies. That division of labor has changed rapidly.

Chinese companies are increasingly competing in sectors with higher technological barriers and greater strategic importance. EVs, renewable energy equipment, batteries, industrial machinery and sophisticated electronics are becoming important parts of China’s manufacturing and export base.

This creates genuine pressure on established producers. But competition from increasingly efficient rivals is not in and of itself evidence of unfair trade.

The lesson is not that governments should ignore unfair competition, but that restricting one competitor does not eliminate the economic forces reshaping an industry.

A similar pattern could emerge in clean technology. Barriers against Chinese EVs, lithium batteries and solar products may alter trade flows, and they can also increase costs for consumers and manufacturers, encourage production to move through third countries and make supply chains more complicated without addressing the underlying competitiveness gap.

The greater danger is that ordinary economic competition becomes increasingly treated as a national security issue. Once industrial capacity, exports and investment are routinely framed through the language of security, almost any competitive advantage can become grounds for tariffs, export controls, investment screening or exclusion from supply chains.

The result could be higher energy and production costs, slower technological progress and innovation, and greater risks of retaliation and supply-chain decoupling. Such fragmentation would ultimately undermine the broader interests of the global economy.

Industrial capacity should be assessed comprehensively, taking into account global supply and demand, growth potential and corporate performance, rather than simply comparing exports with domestic demand. China’s manufacturing strengths should not be broadly characterized as “overcapacity” simply because its products are competitive in global markets.

Markets require rules, and governments have a legitimate responsibility to enforce them. But those rules should protect fair competition rather than particular competitors. Issues related to industrial capacity should not be politicized or turned into tools of geopolitical competition.

Allowing markets to play their role, maintaining transparent international rules and keeping trade and investment channels open offer a more sustainable path. The alternative is a cycle in which anxiety produces protectionism, protectionism accelerates fragmentation and fragmentation raises costs for everyone.

The debate over “overcapacity” is therefore about more than how much China produces. It is about how the global economy responds to a shift in industrial competitiveness. Adapting through innovation and competition may be difficult for established producers, but trying to hold back that shift through protectionism risks leaving everyone worse off.

The writer is a research fellow and deputy director of the Institute of American and European Studies at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges.
The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Meeting signals stronger H2 policy push

MAIN STREET
By Yang Zekun

The symposium chaired by Premier Li Qiang with experts and entrepreneurs in July came at a critical juncture in mid-year. Against the backdrop of the current economic situation and with an eye to China’s long-term development, the meeting laid out systematic arrangements for economic work in the second half.

The meeting highlighted three major priorities in policy focus. Macroeconomic policy is moving from implementing existing measures to giving greater emphasis to both existing and incremental policies.

Efforts to expand domestic demand are shifting from investment primarily in physical assets to a coordinated approach that combines investment in physical assets with investment in people.

At the same time, industrial upgrading is moving beyond technological breakthroughs to focus more on the large-scale commercial application of such advances.

The meeting called for making full use of existing policies while conducting advanced studies and preparing additional policy measures.

This message carries particular significance near the midpoint of the year, signaling that macroeconomic policy is moving from a phase of implementing and consolidating existing measures, to one in which existing and incremental policies work in tandem.

At the theoretical level, this reflects the principle that macroeconomic regulation should be targeted and effective.

Marxist political economy requires a proper balance between overall economic equilibrium and structural optimization. China’s economy currently faces structural challenges, including insufficient effective demand and overcapacity in some industries.

As the marginal impact of relying solely on existing policy measures diminishes, additional measures are needed to generate new growth momentum.

The call to “conduct advanced studies and prepare” incremental policies indicates that preliminary work on measures in key areas has largely been completed and that they can be introduced when conditions warrant.

This approach of preparing policy tools in advance — while acting in accordance with changing circumstances — maintains strategic resolve while leaving room for policy flexibility, providing greater space to respond to uncertainties that may emerge in the second half.

The urgency is also evident in the current economic climate. As China begins implementation of its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), profound changes are taking place in both the domestic and international environment, while the economy faces prominent challenges such as relatively strong supply and weak demand. The shift in growth drivers has reached a critical stage.

Against this backdrop, preparing additional policy measures itself serves as a strong signal to the market. It shows that policymakers have reached a basic consensus on the need to strengthen policy support, with macroeconomic policies in the second half moving from providing a floor for growth toward taking more proactive action.

A clear policy signal is particularly important for stabilizing expectations among market entities and boosting confidence in investment. It provides greater certainty at a time when economic agents are seeking greater clarity about policy direction.

The meeting called for a systematic approach and for “coordinated efforts in investment in things and investment in people”, while stressing the need to improve public services such as healthcare, eldercare and childcare in order to expand domestic demand through improving people’s livelihoods. This signals a significant shift in the policy approach to expanding domestic demand.

The concept of “investment in people” has a strong theoretical foundation. Human capital theory, which emerged in the mid-20th century, has shown that economic growth driven mainly by the expansion of physical capital can be distorted and unsustainable. Sustainable growth requires coordinated development of human, physical and natural capital.

“Investment in people” can help expand domestic demand through both the supply and demand sides.

On the supply side, investment in people can improve the quality of the workforce and strengthen technological innovation capabilities, providing key factor support for the development of new quality productive forces.

On the demand side, greater investment in areas such as education, healthcare and eldercare can directly reduce households’ need for precautionary savings, increase their propensity to consume and unlock suppressed consumption demand.

Research shows that investment in people’s livelihoods can generate a stronger multiplier effect on household consumption than any indirect transmission effects from infrastructure investment.

This creates a virtuous cycle in which improvements in people’s livelihoods stimulate consumption while stronger human capital supports supply-side upgrading. It represents a concrete application, particularly the principle of safeguarding and improving people’s livelihoods through development.

The participation of the founder of Pang Donglai, a retail company, at the symposium offered a micro-level reflection of this policy approach.

By improving employee benefits and enhancing the consumer experience, the company has achieved growth, demonstrating that investment in people can serve not only as a government policy priority, but also as a competitive advantage for businesses.

Its approach to improving supply-side quality and stimulating domestic demand through better services provides a potentially replicable model for addressing weak consumer confidence.

The meeting placed particular emphasis on promoting the “large-scale commercial application of new technologies such as artificial intelligence”.

The focus on commercialization signals a shift in industrial policy from encouraging research and innovation to facilitating the application and commercialization of technological achievements.

In terms of technological evolution, AI is moving from breakthroughs at the theoretical level toward a new stage of industrial transformation. This is not simply a matter of adding AI to existing businesses as an external tool. Rather, the development of “AI+” represents a fundamental shift in the way industries operate.

AI is evolving from an auxiliary tool into an underlying infrastructure, from optimizing individual processes to reshaping entire systems, and from isolated applications to broad-based empowerment across industries.

In August 2025, the State Council — the nation’s Cabinet — issued guidelines on implementing the “AI+” initiative in depth, elevating the initiative to the national strategic level and calling for broad and deep integration of AI with different sectors and fields of the economy and society. The latest meeting’s emphasis is in line with this top-level policy design and sends a further signal that implementation should be sped up.

China also has distinctive advantages in promoting the large-scale commercial application of AI.

On the technology side, several Chinese large language models have reached internationally advanced levels in overall capabilities. On the industrial side, China has a complete range of industries and abundant application scenarios, while its strong manufacturing capabilities allow AI technologies to be rapidly turned into physical products and commercial applications.

On the institutional side, China’s socialist system provides strong capabilities for coordinating resources and mobilizing strengths from different sectors.

Overall, the signals from the symposium represent a practical application at a critical stage of China’s economic development.

The effectiveness of policy ultimately depends on implementation.

In the second half, as existing and incremental policies work together, the concept of investment in people is being translated into concrete measures in areas such as fiscal policy, employment and social security. And as the large-scale commercial application of AI accelerates, China’s economy has the conditions and capacity to consolidate its recovery and achieve its economic and social development targets for the year.

This will demonstrate China’s commitment to getting off to a strong start during the 15th Five-Year Plan period, while also providing further confidence in the path toward Chinese modernization.

The writer is a research fellow at the National Academy of Development and Strategy at Renmin University of China.
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CHINA

Tech, AI key to cyberspace action plan

Top internet regulator lays out social and economic high-quality objectives

By **CAO YIN**
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China's top internet regulator unveiled an action plan on Friday to make cyberspace enterprises a significant driver of high-quality social and economic development by 2030.

Released on Friday by the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, the plan outlines strategic goals for 2026 through 2030, aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of cyberspace enterprises through advancements in technological innovation, product quality and service delivery.

The plan envisions a robust industrial ecosystem and a supportive development environment for the cyberspace sector. It emphasizes the necessity of a strong institutional framework to ensure safe, standardized and orderly growth.

"Network information technology is highlighted as a critical area of innovation, attracting substantial global research and development investment," the commission said. "This sector consistently achieves breakthroughs, finds widespread applications and exerts a powerful influence across various industries."

The commission highlights that companies focused on cybersecurity and informatization are crucial to China's cyber strength initiatives. These enterprises are instrumental in building new productive forces and enhancing global competitiveness. The plan aims to invigorate cyberspace enterprises while ensuring their orderly and healthy development.

To achieve these objectives, the plan calls for intensified efforts in breakthrough technologies such as high-end chips, basic and industrial software, network communications, cybersecurity and data security.

Priority will be given to advancing frontier technologies, including quantum computing, blockchain, brain-computer interfaces, digital twins and next-generation displays.

Resources will be allocated to companies engaged in artificial intelligence research, with a strong emphasis on developing high-end AI chips, improving large language model performance and promoting agentic AI technologies. The plan encourages enterprises to actively participate in open-source projects and community building.

Security is a key focus, with promises of robust technological support to enhance risk identification, alert systems, monitoring and emergency response capabilities. Enterprises are urged to strengthen personal data protection systems and optimize algorithm management. According to the plan, preventing the misuse of AI-related technologies is essential to safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of netizens and workers.

It also mandates improvements in the quality of content provided by cyberspace enterprises and effective regulation of monopolistic practices in key areas.

"We will demonstrate greater resolve in upholding security, curbing disorderly competition and reinforcing the rule of law in cyberspace governance," the commission said. It pledges to collaborate closely with other authorities to implement the plan and will regularly seek feedback from cyberspace enterprises to address any challenges in its execution.

Masterpiece comes to Zhejiang



Visitors take photos of a Song Dynasty (960-1279) copy of *The Night Revels of Han Xizai* at the Zhejiang Provincial Museum in Hangzhou on Saturday. The work, part of the collection of the Palace Museum, is being exhibited publicly in Zhejiang for the first time and will remain on display through Sept 20. Traditionally attributed to the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960) painter Gu Hongzhong, the artwork is regarded as a pinnacle of ancient Chinese figure painting. CHEN ZHONGQIU / FOR CHINA DAILY

China postpones Chang'e 7 robotic lunar mission

By **ZHAO LEI** in Wenchang, Hainan
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China's Chang'e 7 robotic lunar mission has been postponed, the China Manned Space Agency announced on Sunday.

In a brief statement, the agency said that after comprehensive assessments, the Chang'e 7 mission headquarters had reached a conclusion that the lunar expedition cannot be carried out within this year's scheduled launch window as it had failed to meet launch criteria.

The decision was made in accordance with the principles of prudence, reliability and absolute safety, the statement explained without providing more details.

A launch window is a specific period of time during which a rocket must lift off in order to reach its intended orbital destination.

According to experts, choosing a launch window for a space mission is not a matter of convenience, but a mixture of multiple factors that require careful calculations.

Because Earth rotates on its axis and the target, such as the moon or another planet, is also moving, the geometry between the launch site and the final destination changes constantly. A rocket can only reach its preset position when all the orbital, communication and other conditions align simultaneously. If the liftoff point misses that window, the mission must wait until the next opportunity, which could be days, weeks or even months later.

While the Earth-moon transfer windows open roughly once a month, Chang'e 7's destination — the lunar south pole — imposes far stricter constraints, restricting usable launch opportunities to just one or two per year.

The Chang'e 7 is set to become China's seventh robotic mission to the moon, tasked mainly with searching for traces of water on the silver celestial body.

A Long March 5 carrier rocket, with the Chang'e 7 probe on top of it, was moved to its launch service tower at the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Hainan province on Wednesday, when the space agency announced that launch would take place "in due course in the coming days".

The Chang'e 7 was transported by air to the coastal spaceport in April, while the Long March 5 rocket arrived in July by ship.

They were assembled and tested at the spaceport.

To date, China has conducted six robotic missions to explore the moon. The most recent, a 53-day Chang'e 6 mission, took place in the summer of 2024, representing the world's first attempt to bring back samples from the far side of the moon.

The historic mission successfully retrieved a total of 1,935.3 grams of samples from the far side.

CSSC-developed podded propulsors rival imports

By **ZHAO LEI**
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Engineers at China State Shipbuilding Corp have developed a series of high-power podded propulsors, helping domestic shipyards break foreign manufacturers' long-standing dominance in this critical marine technology sector.

After 18 years of dedicated research, engineers at the Shanghai Marine Equipment Research Institute, a CSSC subsidiary specializing in ship mechanical and electronic systems, have designed and built three types of podded propulsors under the brand of S-POD to cover diverse operational needs, according to Zheng Jian, an engineer in charge of the S-POD products.

The L-type, with a propulsion power range of 1.3 to 5 megawatts, is a compact and efficient model suited for research vessels and law-enforcement ships that have displacements of more than 1,000 metric tons. When used on research vessels, it can save up to 30 percent of internal space.

The type has been deployed on the *Zhuhai Yun*, an unmanned system mother ship, and the *Tongji*, a research vessel operated by Tongji University.

The T-type, covering 1.3 to 18 MW of propulsion power, is designed for large vessels including cruise ships, passenger ro-ro vessels and offshore platforms.

The Shanghai institute has constructed China's first 10-MW podded propulsor and secured orders for it.

The model features a propulsion power equivalent to the traction power of an eight-carriage *Fuxing* high-speed train, with technical performance matching international advanced levels.

The TI-type, ranging from 2 to 15 MW of propulsion power, is an ice-breaking model specifically designed for polar environments, suitable for polar research vessels, icebreakers and polar operation platforms.

According to Zheng, podded propulsors are among the world's most advanced electric marine propulsion systems, serving as a core component for large cruise ships, research vessels and icebreakers.

"Unlike traditional propulsion systems with complex mechanical transmission, the S-POD propulsors integrate a permanent magnet synchronous motor and propeller inside a single pod mounted beneath the hull, enabling 360-degree full rotation for vector thrust," he said.

Zheng noted that compared with conventional propulsors, the podded systems have several advantages — their energy efficiency is improved by over 20 percent, while vibration and noise are substantially reduced. The 360-degree rotation capability allows vessels to perform complex maneuvers such as turning on the spot, greatly enhancing navigation flexibility and safety.

According to Zheng, the Shanghai institute launched research and development of podded propulsors in 2007. Engineers made the first conceptual prototype in 2015, and built a 5-MW prototype in 2018 for operating tests.

In 2023, the institute completed the construction of a dedicated manufacturing factory. The next year, design work on the 10-MW model was completed.

Prior to the development of the S-POD series, China's podded propulsion market had been monopolized by foreign suppliers for many years, with domestic shipyards relying entirely on imports.

300 strangers attend Uygur wedding after viral post

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

Earlier this month, a Uygur wedding in Yarkant county of Kashgar prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, became an unexpected nationwide celebration. More than 300 strangers traveled from across the country to share in the joy and blessings of the occasion. The scene that followed, brimming with music and dance, cheer and laughter, was later captured in online posts and videos that spread the festive vibes even farther and wider.

The story began when the groom's mother Zoram Seyit posted a digital invitation on the short-video sharing platform Douyin on Aug 3, expecting only family and friends to respond. But when a curious user from Central China's Henan province asked if they could attend and the host family replied with a simple "yes", the post went viral overnight.

On Aug 8, the wedding day, the banquet hall was filled with guests from diverse regions and ethnic backgrounds, all gathered for the same celebration. Men and women, many in their finest attire, sang and danced throughout the day.

Groom Akramjan Omar said his online guests joined in every part of the celebration, from the midday procession to escort the bride to the wedding hall and the main ceremony in the afternoon, to the after-party that stretched past 9 pm.

He had been unaware of his mother's post until the next morning, when he woke up to find it had already racked up over 10,000 likes. For a family that has run a Xinjiang cuisine restaurant in Henan for nearly three decades, more guests meant more joy.

However, as the numbers kept climbing — likes, comments and promises to attend — the initial excitement gave way to a practical concern: how to take good care of these guests, especially when they had no way of knowing how many would actually show up.

The family then trimmed their original guest list from 500 relatives and friends on each of the bride's and groom's sides to 200 per side and reserved the second floor, which offered a full view of the hall, for strangers traveling from afar. Food supplies were doubled, featuring local specialties such as pilaf, baked stuffed buns, seasonal and dried fruits, as well as wedding sweets, while a Mandarin-speaking partner was added alongside the Uygur-language master of ceremonies.

Many guests attempted to hand over their cash gifts, following Chinese wedding customs, but the host family declined most of them. Akramjan Omar said he was touched at one point seeing people who clearly didn't really know how to dance moving anyway, their faces lit up with pure enjoyment. At the end of the night, the newlyweds and their unexpected guests gathered for a group photo.



A newlywed couple share an intimate dance at their wedding on Aug 8 in Yarkant county, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, in front of family, friends and more than 300 strangers coming from across the country. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Warm hospitality

Wei Lixi, 20, from South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, was on a solo road trip in Kashgar city when he saw the invitation on Douyin. He had his vehicle washed for the occasion and joined the groom's procession early that morning. The groom led everyone in a dance, and guests were handed party poppers to set off during the liveliest moments.

At first, Wei worried about intruding — but the hosts welcomed the out-of-town visitors with open arms. "The air was electric. I felt like part of one big family," he said.

Hao Shuhui, 24, from Henan, married into a Xinjiang family earlier this year. She dug through her wardrobe for a bright red dress and made her way to the Uygur family that has long-standing ties with her hometown.

The hosts were warm enough to ease her shyness. A groomsman had set up a WeChat group in advance, sharing a few do's and don'ts and encouraging the guests to speak up about any needs. The netizens, meanwhile, were worried about causing trouble.

A guest in his 30s surnamed Tang from Shandong province said, "It was incredibly infectious, even for those of us Han people who aren't particularly good at singing or dancing."

He added that he had immersed himself in the warmth, hospitality and optimism of the Uygur friends, and felt a genuine bond between people of different ethnic backgrounds. Guests like him, too, began chatting and sharing stories of their travels and lives.

Emerging tourism draw

Grand and lively Uygur weddings have long attracted visitors and sparked fascination across China.

In May 2025, the variety show *HAHAHAHAHA* re-created a ceremony through role-play.

On Aug 12, the Uygur wedding of celebrity couple Madina Memet and Jiang Chao sparked heated online discussions. Some Douyin posts generated several hundred thousand likes, with the most popular exceeding 2 million.

A typical Uygur wedding unfolds with a morning session hosted by the bride's family, followed by the bride-pickup and a transitional segment for the younger crowd that features dancing, the bouquet toss and photo sessions, as well as a banquet by the groom's side with a formal veil-lifting ceremony. Singing and dancing accompany every stage of the wedding. Days before, a "consultation tea party" allows both families to get acquainted and exchange betrothal gifts, while days after, close family members and friends will gather at the bride's home for a visit.

The invitation post for the Yarkant wedding has to date accumulated more than 10 million views and some 77,000 comments. Some netizens posted their own wedding invitations on Douyin, while others simply asked: "Can I come?"

Experiencing a Uygur wedding has gradually become a tourism draw in Xinjiang. Some banquet venues in Urumqi and Kashgar offer viewing areas on the second-floor mezzanines for tourists to watch real ceremonies live. In Kashgar city, 26-year-old visitor Zhang Yao observed a wedding this way. "The women wore an abundance of ornate jewelry. Their dresses had a bold, vivid theme color but were different in design, all absolutely stunning," she said, while also noting the importance of respecting the hosts on their big day.

Yao Jiahui tried her luck on Thursday and happened upon a wedding. A bridesmaid took her along on the dance floor. Aunties asked her in Uygur if she was enjoying the event. "It's all in the dance," she said.

Han Yawei and Hu Dongyue contributed to this story.

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

Tradition and tech team up to preserve 'orchard in the sky'

Ming Dynasty pear trees still thriving in Gansu along the banks of the Yellow River

By **MA JINGNA** and **HU YUMENG** in Lanzhou

High above the terraces of the Yellow River in Northwest China's Gansu province, centuries-old pear branches weave together across elevated wooden scaffolding, casting a dense green roof over the basin below. These structures in Gaolan county are known locally as *gaojia yunpeng* — the "high-frame cloud canopy"— and create the illusion of an orchard floating in the sky.

A closer look at one of these massive, twisted trunks reveals more than ancient bark. Attached to the wood is a weather-resistant QR code.

A quick smartphone scan brings up a complete digital file showing the tree's age — approximately 345 years — health status, variety and the name of the local family responsible for its care. It is part of a sweeping "one tree, one archive" management system introduced by the Shichuan Ancient Pear Orchard Protection Center, bridging Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) farming traditions with modern data tracking.

That blend of deep history and living ecology has earned the site an official designation as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2025. It adds to a list of accolades that includes a Guinness World Record as the "World's First Ancient Pear Orchard".

Yet behind the UN recognition and the spectacular spring blossoms that draw nearly a million tourists each year lies a delicate rescue operation — a race to blend ancient ecological wisdom with modern science before the orchard's aging caretakers retire.



Wei Zhouyu, a local farmer, uses a timber support stand to carry out artificial pollination in the Shichuan Ancient Pear Orchard in Gaolan, Gansu province, on April 14. PHOTOS BY YANG MINGZE / CHINA DAILY





Left: Visitors tour the Shichuan Ancient Pear Orchard in April.
Right: A close-up of pear blossoms in the orchard.

Ming legacy

The story of Shichuan began nearly five centuries ago during the Ming Dynasty, when farmers first recognized the unique microclimate of this Gansu basin.

"Shichuan is located in a basin with deep and fertile soil, large day-night temperature differences and a long frost-free period," said Li Xiaoli, a staff member at the Ancient Pear Orchard Protection Center. "These natural conditions are ideal for growing pears."

Over generations, local farmers developed a cultivation system adapted to the area's unique geography. Rather than reshaping the environment, they learned to work with the Yellow River's water resources and the Loess Plateau's terrain.

They planted deep-rooted pear trees on upper terraces to stabilize slopes, stop soil erosion, and conserve water, while cultivating crops on lower levels.

To maximize space and sunlight in the semi-arid environment, farmers developed the elevated canopy system. Supported by wooden frames, mature branches spread high above the ground, improving airflow, cutting disease risks, and creating space below for livestock, vegetables and medicinal herbs.

Today, the site shelters 9,423 pear trees that are over a century old, including more than 2,600 that have survived for over 300 years.

According to the FAO, the orchard follows a low-density planting model, with roughly 150 trees per hectare, creating favorable conditions for light penetration, airflow and intercropping.

In its assessment, the organization noted that this integrated agroforestry landscape creates a resilient ecological barrier along the Yellow River, improving nutrient cycling, strengthening local food security, and demonstrating how traditional knowledge can adapt to harsh environments.

"The knowledge developed in these orchards has been adapted and applied in newer plantations and surrounding landscapes, creating a coherent and ecologically sound agroforestry system," the FAO said in its description of the site.

Heritage plus science

Keeping 300-year-old trees alive requires constant intervention, but orchard managers are increasingly swapping chemical inputs for ecological solutions.

At a nursery near the orchard, rows of wild pear saplings are carefully cultivated for conservation work. According to orchard caretaker Wei Wanyi, these naturally occurring seedlings possess strong root systems and strong resistance to drought, disease and saline-alkaline conditions.

"They are valuable genetic resources," Wei said. "We use them for bridge grafting, trunk grafting and replanting endangered ancient trees."

Traditional restoration methods continue to play an important role in extending the lifespan of aging trees. Grafting, bridge grafting and cavity repair techniques are used to revive weakened specimens and improve their health.

Meanwhile, conservation efforts increasingly rely on environmentally friendly pest-control strategies.

Instead of depending heavily on chemical pesticides, orchard managers use a combination of physical and biological methods to manage major orchard pests including aphids, pear psyllids and several species of fruit-boring insects.

Yellow adhesive bands wrapped around tree trunks trap crawling insects before they reach the canopy. The practice evolved from a traditional local technique in which farmers piled sand around tree trunks to prevent pests from climbing upward.

"We improved the old method by replacing the sand barriers with adhesive bands," said Li Xiaoli, a staff member at the Ancient Pear Orchard Protection Center. "When insects climb up the trunk, they become trapped on the sticky surface."

Pheromone traps suspended among the branches provide another layer of protection, while beneficial insects are released to help maintain a natural balance between pest and predator populations, Li added.

Wei Zhouyu, a local farmer whose family has planted pear trees for generations, pointed to several triangular traps hanging among the branches, part of the orchard's biological pest-control system.

Such tools have become a common sight in recent years as the orchard expands the use of green management practices.

According to orchard managers, reducing chemical inputs has become a key principle of conservation. The goal is not only to protect fruit quality, but also to preserve the biodiversity that supports the orchard's long-term health.

While traditional knowledge remains central to orchard management, modern technology has become an increasingly important tool.

A major milestone came in 2019 with the implementation of the Regulations on the Protection of Shichuan Ancient Pear Trees, which established a legal framework for conservation and brought orchard management onto a more systematic footing.

Since the establishment of the Ancient Pear Orchard Protection Center in 2014, every tree has its own digital identity. Pointing to a tree estimated to be 345 years old, local farmer Wei Zhouyu showed the identification plate attached to its trunk. "The sign tells you the tree's variety, age and caretaker," he said.

The digital records also document each tree's health condition and maintenance history, allowing conservation teams to monitor changes over time and respond more quickly to emerging risks.

Today, more than 1,760 conservation agreements have been signed with farmers and agritourism operators, ensuring that local communities remain directly involved in protecting the orchard.

Growing together

Another factor that makes Shichuan particularly unusual is that the orchard is not separated from daily life.

Ancient pear trees stand beside and even inside homes, line village roads and spread across family courtyards. Generations of residents have lived among the trees, creating a landscape in which agriculture, ecology and community life are deeply intertwined.

"We don't just grow pear trees. We grow up with them," said Wei Zhouyu, who cares for 16 pear trees and learned orchard management skills from his father and grandfather.

The orchard is protected through a community-based management system that reflects this long-standing relationship between people and trees.

More than 6,000 ancient trees are cared for by farming households, over 2,600 by agritourism operators and around 600 by the orchard's protection center. In total, 1,765 households remain involved in cultivating and protecting the orchard.

Yet many of the caretakers are between 50 and 70 years old, highlighting the challenge of passing traditional knowledge to younger generations.

To encourage continued stewardship, local authorities provide annual subsidies totaling around 2.4 million yuan ($350,000) for irrigation and tree maintenance, while conservation staff take responsibility for trees that no longer have dedicated caretakers.

"We need to preserve these traditional skills, but we also need to attract new generations to join the effort," said Han Lei, deputy director of the protection center.

The close relationship between people and trees has also created economic opportunities for local communities.

In addition to pear production, residents operate farm stays, restaurants and tourism-related businesses linked to the orchard's seasonal landscape and agricultural traditions.

According to local authorities, the annual pear blossom season attracts more than 900,000 visitors and generates tourism revenue exceeding 90 million yuan.

"Visitors come to see the blossoms in spring and pick pears in autumn. We sell pears and run farm stays, and tourism has brought us new sources of income," said local farmer Wei Konglu.

For the FAO, this integration of ecological conservation, traditional agriculture and rural livelihoods is one of the orchard's defining strengths.

During a field assessment conducted before its GIAHS designation, FAO experts examined the orchard's conservation practices, traditional farming knowledge and local agricultural industries, describing it as an example of how agricultural heritage can continue to generate economic value while preserving ecological and cultural resources.

"Resilient to droughts and floods, the system sustains agrobiodiversity, food security and rural livelihoods, reflecting harmony between tradition and ecology," the organization said.

Supported by both inherited knowledge and modern conservation measures, the orchard remains a working agricultural landscape where ecological protection and rural livelihoods continue side by side.

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Traditional ladders keep farmers high up in canopy

By **MA JINGNA** and **HU YUMENG**

Beneath the sprawling canopy of centuries-old pear trees in Shichuan town, Lanzhou, orchard work takes place high above the ground, within trees that can reach more than 10 meters in height.

Farmers here rely on a traditional wooden scaling ladder system known as *tianbashi*, a practice passed down through generations and recognized as a provincial-level intangible cultural heritage in Gansu.

Rather than a single tool, *tianbashi* represents a complete system of high-altitude farming knowledge used to access, manage and care for some of the world's oldest pear trees.

The system is closely tied to an elevated cultivation model known locally as *gaotian*, or "fields in the sky", in which branches are lifted and supported by wooden frames, forming a layered orchard structure above the ground.

"In other places, farmers plant on the ground, but here they plant in the sky," said Li Xiaoli, a staff member of the orchard's protection center.

"Mechanized operations can lead to soil compaction and surface hardening over time. In contrast, the *tianbashi* system places far less pressure on the ground. As farmers work above the soil using wooden ladders, the impact on the orchard floor is minimal, helping preserve soil structure and ecological stability," Li said. "It also offers greater flexibility, allowing workers to move through dense canopies and reach branches more precisely than machinery."

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, this reflects a long-evolved traditional knowledge system in which seasonal ecological practices are embedded in every stage of orchard management.

Using *tianbashi*, farmers carry out key seasonal tasks including pruning, flower management, pollination, fruit thinning, harvesting and ecological pest control, all guided by agricultural calendars shaped by flowering cycles and tree growth patterns.

For local farmers, *tianbashi* is more than a working method — it is inherited memory. Techniques such as high-altitude pruning, bark treatment and seasonal canopy care are learned through generations rather than formal training.

"These old pear trees are like our ancestors," said 63-year-old farmer Wei Zhouyu. "We must care for them using traditional methods."

Among these tasks, flower management is especially important. During blooming season, farmers perform flower thinning by gently shaking branches from elevated positions. The practice reduces excessive blossoms so nutrients concentrate in fewer fruits, improving size and quality, while also dislodging insects and eggs.

Equally important is pollination. Because main varieties such as the Dongguo and Ruan'er pears depend on cross-pollination, farmers plant compatible trees like Sumu and Changba pears throughout the orchard. Climbing the wooden ladders, they manually transfer pollen between varieties to ensure stable yields and high fruit quality.

Wei also practices winter bark scraping, a traditional technique that removes old bark, helps eliminate overwintering pests and improves tree health. "Removing the old bark helps the tree breathe more easily," he said.

Wei manages 16 ancient pear trees, including some over 400 years old.

The work remains demanding. Pruning, pollination and harvesting all require long hours in the canopy, and many young people are reluctant to take over. "It's hard and sometimes dangerous," Wei said.



A villager harvests pears while scaling the *tianbashi* ladder system at the Shichuan orchard in Gaolan, Gansu province, in October.
LI YALONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

To address this, local authorities have incorporated *tianbashi* into heritage protection programs and training systems to encourage knowledge transfer. The orchard's protection center has also established a nursery with more than 2,000 saplings for restoration, while experts train farmers in green pest control and scientific orchard management.

The FAO said that the Shichuan system demonstrates how traditional agricultural knowledge continues to function as a living system rather than a relic of the past.

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CULTURE



A gold octadrachm in the name of Arsinoe II Philadelphos on display at the Xi'an exhibition.

The golden thread of social exchange

Xi'an exhibition uses Hellenistic jewelry to explore how ancient civilizations shared artistic traditions, **Zhao Xu** reports.



Periammata, chains or straps worn diagonally across the torso or fastened over the breast.



Head ornaments on display captivate visitors at the exhibition, *Art in Gold: Jewellery in Hellenistic Times*, at the Shaanxi History Museum in Xi'an, Shaanxi province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

When Alexander the Great's armies swept eastward in the fourth century BC, they carried far more than military power. Across the vast world that emerged — from the Adriatic to Afghanistan — people, languages, beliefs, and artistic traditions circulated on an unprecedented scale.

The kingdoms founded by Alexander's successors forged a shared cultural idiom linking cities such as Alexandria, Antioch and Pergamon, while local traditions remained remarkably resilient. In this first great experiment in globalization, gold jewelry became one of its most eloquent witnesses.

Fashioned from gold seized from Persian treasuries, adorned with gemstones from distant lands and shaped by craftsmen drawing on multiple artistic traditions, these objects embodied both the cosmopolitan ambitions and cultural diversity of the Hellenistic world.

More than ornaments, they accompanied their owners through marriage, worship and death, carrying the traces of commercial, artistic and spiritual exchanges that connected continents.

More than two millennia later, some of the finest examples of this cultural fusion are on display at the Shaanxi History Museum in Xi'an. *Art in Gold: Jewellery in Hellenistic Times*, which runs through the end of the year, offers a glimpse into the interconnected world that emerged in the wake of Alexander's conquests.

"The concept of exchange anchors the exhibition," says Ren Xueli of the Shaanxi History Museum, which has brought together more than 180 artifacts from 24 Greek archaeological museums alongside 70 objects from the Benaki Museum in Athens.

Ren was also referring to the exhibition's Chinese title, *Wenming Yi Zhi*, a phrase from *I Ching (Book of Changes)*. Here, *wenming*, commonly translated as "civilization", encompasses ritual, moral cultivation and the social order that binds communities together. *Zhi*, meaning "restraint", suggests the wisdom to recognize limits and exercise self-discipline. Together, they imply that civilization reaches its highest expression not through the pursuit of power, but through the ability to temper military might with moral restraint and imperial ambition with cultural understanding.

"Alexander's greatest achievement may not have been the lands he conquered, but the world of exchange that emerged from them and outlived him — a reminder that civilizations endure not through expansion alone, but through their capacity to transform power into connection," Ren says.

Prominence of queens

One striking example of this cultural synthesis is a gold coin minted in Alexandria in the name of the deified Queen Arsinoe II Philadelphos.

After Alexander's death in 323 BC, his empire was divided among his generals, one of whom, Ptolemy I Soter, founded the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt. Arsinoe is depicted wearing a draped Greek-style head covering and a royal headband (diadem) associated with Hera while holding a lotus-tipped scepter that evokes Egyptian royal iconography.

By equating her marriage to her brother Ptolemy II — the Ptolemaic dynasty is famous for sibling marriage within the royal family — with the sacred union of Zeus and Hera, the coin transformed dynastic politics into divine mythology, weaving Greek and Egyptian traditions together to legitimize royal authority.

The influence of Ptolemaic queens extended well beyond royal portraiture. Two pairs of gold sphinx earrings demonstrate how female authority reshaped one of Egypt's oldest royal symbols. Traditionally depicted as male and embodying the divine authority of the pharaoh, the sphinx gradually assumed female form during the Ptolemaic period, likely reflecting the growing prominence of queens such as Arsinoe II. One remarkable earring depicts a wingless sphinx wearing the Hathor crown with its solar disc and cow's horns — an unmistakably Egyptian emblem — rendered with the refined craftsmanship of a Hellenistic goldsmith. Rather than replacing Egyptian tradition, the Ptolemies reinterpreted it, creating a new visual language of female power.

The same spirit of cultural synthesis found expression in another defining motif of Hellenistic jewelry: Dionysus. According to Greek curator Irini Papageorgiou, his growing popularity may have reflected the prominence of his cult at the Ptolemaic court, though his appeal reached far beyond royal fashion.

In the Orphic tradition, the infant Dionysus, or Zagreus, was slain by the Titans and reborn, making him a symbol of regeneration and immortality. The Dionysian Mysteries, unusually open to women, likewise promised initiates that death was not an end but a new beginning.

It is therefore no coincidence that ivy leaves, grape clusters and vines — emblems of Dionysus — adorn Hellenistic wreaths, earrings and necklaces. Yet, the exhibition reveals a side of the god less familiar to many Chinese audiences. Along the ancient Silk Roads, Dionysus is best known as the god of wine, appearing on silver vessels and luxury wares that testify to the spread of Mediterranean drinking culture eastward. The jewelry tells a different story. Here, his symbols evoke marriage, fertility, death and renewal, revealing Dionysus not simply as the god of celebration, but as a guardian of life's greatest transformations.

A stolen necklace

Asked to choose the exhibition's most compelling storytelling object, Papageorgiou points instead to a humble lead curse tablet from the small Greek island of Delos. Dating to the late Hellenistic or early Roman period, it preserves the desperate plea of a woman who, seeing that her gold necklace had been stolen, calls upon both local and foreign gods and goddesses to expose and punish everyone involved. Her curse is relentless, condemning the thief's mind, soul, limbs, hands, fingers, and even genitalia, whether the culprit was "woman or man".

"The curse she directs at the thief is terrifying, yet it also highlights the deep emotional bond between a piece of jewelry and its owner — a connection that I believe is timeless," Papageorgiou says. "Reading her words, I feel as if I am hearing the innermost thoughts of any woman, from any era, whose most cherished possession has been stolen."

The impulse to protect what is precious transcends cultures, Ren observes. When archaeologists opened the early seventh-century tomb of the 9-year-old noble girl Li Jingxun in Xi'an in 1957, they found four stark characters carved onto her coffin: "*kai guan ji si*" (Whoever opens the coffin will die).

The Hellenistic gold exhibition was deliberately designed so that visitors leaving *Art in Gold* step directly into another exhibition devoted to China's ritual bronzes, Ren explains. Known as *jijin*, or "auspicious metal", these bronzes date from the Shang and Zhou dynasties (c. 16th century BC-256 BC).

"*Ji* means 'auspicious', while *jin*, though now commonly understood as 'gold', originally referred broadly to metal — in this case, bronze," she says.

Serving as sacred mediators between the living and their ancestors, the vessels bear inscriptions documenting political events, military campaigns, ritual ceremonies and family histories, forming some of the earliest written records of Chinese civilization.

"The juxtaposition of the two exhibitions is intended as a dialogue between ancient civilizations," Ren says.

"At first glance, Hellenistic gold jewelry and China's ritual bronzes belong to entirely different worlds: one intimate and wearable, the other monumental and ceremonial. Yet, both transformed precious metal into a vessel of memory.

"Hellenistic gold accompanied individuals through marriage, worship and death, preserving personal identity, affection and the hope of renewal. China's ritual bronzes, by contrast, embodied collective memory and ritual authority, sustaining the bonds between the living, their ancestors and the state. Together, they reveal a shared human impulse to fashion enduring objects that bridge the living and the dead, the earthly and the sacred, and the fleeting moment with the permanence of history."

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When adornments became symbols of love and loss

By ZHAO XU

Long before she became a wife, she first became a bride. On a fourth-century BC Attic vase displayed at the Shaanxi History Museum, a young woman sits at the center of the Epaulia — the celebration held the day after a wedding. Around her, female companions gather as fairies and doves present gifts: a diadem, a bracelet and a necklace. She wears a myrtle wreath, earrings and bracelets, while delicate buttons adorn her garment. Rendered in gilded applied clay, these ornaments shimmer not merely as embellishments, but as symbols of identity, affection and expectation.

More than two millennia later, they provide a fitting introduction to *Art in Gold: Jewellery in Hellenistic Times*, an exhibition that tells the story of Hellenistic gold through the lives of the women who wore it.

Yet, the vase tells another, quieter story. Excavated from the eastern cemetery of Pella in ancient Macedonia, it had served as a funerary urn. Inside were the cremated remains of a young girl, together with part of a gilded bronze myrtle wreath — the very kind depicted in the painted wedding scene — and a silver bracelet so small it could only have belonged to someone who died before reaching marriageable age.

According to Irini Papageorgiou, curator of the exhibition, the painted Epaulia became a final act of remembrance, allowing in death what life had denied.

"The ancient Greeks regarded the death of an unmarried girl as the greatest possible misfortune, since she was deprived of fulfilling her social and biological destiny — that is, marriage and motherhood," she says.

The belief found one of its most enduring literary expressions in *Antigone*, the tragedy by fifth-century BC playwright Sophocles. Betrothed yet never married, Antigone laments that she is destined not for a bridal chamber but for a tomb, with death rather than a mortal husband claiming her as his bride. As in the painted Epaulia on the Pella vase, marriage and death become two rites of passage that tragically converge.

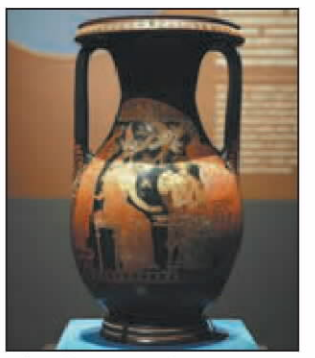
"In Hellenistic times, it was believed that the souls of those who had suffered untimely deaths — before marrying and having children — were unable to complete their passage to the Underworld," Papageorgiou says. "Instead, they wandered restlessly between the worlds of the living and the dead. Specific grave goods, including certain types of jewelry, together with particular burial rituals, were intended to assist their passage into the afterlife and appease their anger."

One such object is the Heracles knot, an ornamental motif of two interlocking loops resembling a reef knot. Originating in Egypt in the second millennium BC and later associated with the lion skin of Heracles, it became especially popular in Macedonia after Alexander the Great's conquests, appearing prominently on necklaces and other adornments worn by women.

Its appeal lay in the convergence of politics, mythology and popular belief. For the Macedonian royal house, which traced its lineage to Heracles, the knot evoked heroic virtue and divine ancestry. Yet it also functioned as a protective amulet. As a Greek hero believed to have attained Mount Olympus, Heracles offered those buried with his knot the hope that death itself might be overcome.

Another revealing category of ornaments is the *periammata*, chains or straps worn diagonally across the torso or fastened over the breast. Depicted on mortal maidens as well as goddesses such as Athena, Artemis and Aphrodite, the term derives from the Greek verb *periapto* — "to bind" or "to fasten". More than decoration, it served as an amulet, a marker of virginity and perhaps a symbolic restraint before marriage. Similar meanings attached to thigh-bands and garters dedicated by adolescent girls in sanctuaries as they approached adulthood. For those who died before crossing that threshold, such bonds acquired an even deeper resonance.





A fourth-century BC Attic vase (above) depicts a wedding scene featuring a young woman adorned with a gold wreath — a similar wreath (center) is on display at the Xi'an exhibition. Another highlight is an elaborate diadem (top) with its central part crafted as a Heracles knot.

Another exhibit, a terracotta figurine of a seated young woman with movable arms, wears a painted diadem and earrings that imitate gold jewelry. Unearthed in Pella and dating to the third or second century BC, it belongs to a type known as *plangona* — jointed dolls or puppets. More than playthings, these figures accompanied girls from childhood to the threshold of marriage and were often dedicated to the gods before a wedding. Buried in tombs, they became poignant reminders of lives interrupted before that final rite of passage.

Also associated with the prenuptial stage of life are the astragals, or knucklebones, which evoke a game of erotic divination once played with the knucklebones of sheep or goats. Papageorgiou explains that astragalus-shaped ornaments imitate the tarsal bone of mammals, believed in antiquity to possess protective and healing powers. Their frequent appearance in the graves of young women and children suggests they served as amulets, safeguarding their owners through life's most vulnerable transitions.

The spinning top, also found in the burials of Hellenistic women, similarly united play with symbolism. Its ceaseless whirl may have metaphorically expressed a bride's transformation while foreshadowing the course of her future life.

Perhaps the most emotionally evocative objects in the exhibition are the gold wreaths, like the one worn by the young woman depicted on the fourth-century BC Attic vase.

Accompanying their owners through life's defining moments — marriage, coming of age, religious initiation, and, ultimately, death — these exquisitely crafted crowns of myrtle, oak, laurel, and ivy adorned aristocrats, priests, victors, and initiates in sacred mysteries, signifying an individual's place within the social and spiritual order of the Hellenistic world. Yet it was in the funerary sphere that they acquired their deepest significance.

"Relatives gave the deceased, among others, a wreath as to those who had competed in life, reflecting a concept that assimilated the deceased to an athlete. Since the athletic ideal in antiquity was closely associated with the concept of virtue, this idea carries profound moral content," says the curator, referring to an ancient commentary on the works of the Athenian comic playwright Aristophanes (c. 446-386 BC).

Plutarch, in his *Moralia*, states that the deceased deserved to be rewarded, having competed like athletes, and to receive the honors due to them. In other words, placing a wreath upon the dead was, perhaps, to proclaim that life itself had been a contest worthy of honor. Like victorious athletes, the departed were believed to have completed their earthly struggle and earned the final reward: vindication, remembrance, and the hope of eternal life among the virtuous.

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LIFE





From left: Chaozhou (in Guangdong province)-style preserved olives with abalone; oyster sauce; wild mushrooms from Yunnan province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinese food is the world's oyster

Documentary follows the pursuit of *xian* among chefs, scientists and families, from mountains to sea, and from East to West, **Li Yingxue** reports.

In Fujian, an oyster has many lives. Layered with cabbage, laver and slices of pork, then coated in rice batter and fried, it becomes a golden, crispy oyster fritter. Dropped into a bowl of *laohua*, a local rice-noodle soup, it adds another layer of briny sweetness.

As China's largest oyster-producing province, Fujian has developed many methods of preparing the humble shellfish, from frying and boiling to steaming and more. But the oyster is only one chapter in China's long pursuit of *xian*, a culinary ideal encompassing umami, freshness and a broader sense of savory deliciousness.

Generations of Chinese chefs have transformed nature's bounty through accumulated knowledge, heat and time.

Now streaming on Tencent Video, *Oyster Sauce: A Drop of Umami* is China's first food and culinary culture documentary devoted to oyster sauce, taking *xian* as the starting point for a journey across mountains and seas.

Produced by Tencent Video and co-produced by DOClabs Beijing, the documentary traces the history of oyster farming, the origins of oyster sauce and the evolution of regional flavors, while exploring how Chinese cuisine has traveled around the world.

Through fishermen, chefs, scientists, and families, the series traces Chinese food culture across generations.

"When we make food documentaries, we often use something delicious as a pretext, hoping that audiences will see richer and various ways of living," says Chen Xiaoqing, the documentary's chief producer.

"What we really hope people will learn is why people eat certain foods, why they love certain flavors, and how much love, craftsmanship and time go into creating them."

The first episode begins deep in the Cangshan Mountains in Dali, Yunnan province, where an 11-year-old girl follows her grandfather into the forest in search of black tiger's paw mushrooms.

Mushrooms have long been regarded in China as a mountain delicacy. Although ancient people did not understand the chemistry behind umami, generations of experience taught them to recognize the distinctive value of fungi. Modern food science has shown that free amino acids and taste-active nucleotides in mushrooms work together during cooking to create rich, complex flavors.

The camera then travels to Zhengzhou, Henan province, where a local restaurant offers another example of Chinese culinary ingenuity.

To make a broth that is both clear and flavorful, the cook finely minces chicken breast or lean pork, mixes it with water, and adds it to the boiling broth. The meat forms flocculent masses that absorb suspended particles, blood foam, excess fat, and other impurities.

Known in Chinese cooking as *saotang*, or "sweeping the broth", the technique appears to be an exercise in subtraction, but ultimately allows the broth's flavor to emerge with greater clarity.

From mushrooms in the mountains to broth in the Central Plains, the documentary repeatedly asks: Where does *xian* come from?

"We wanted to find out," says Zhu Lexian, the documentary's supervising producer. The production team uses the history of China's pursuit of *xian* as its narrative thread, exploring it across time and space.

"We start with fishermen by the sea, then follow the journey through harvesting and simmering, and eventually to people applying new technologies. Then we connect all these stories," Zhu says.

The search links culinary knowledge, cooking practices, production technology, and everyday life.

"Eastern and Western understandings of *xian* are different," Chen says at the documentary's premiere.

In his view, Western discussions of freshness often emphasize the original state and immediate quality of an ingredient. The Chinese idea of *xian*, by contrast, can refer to a more layered form of deliciousness created through cooking, fermentation, concentration, and time.

"Westerners can be very concrete in their approach to food, while Chinese culinary life can sometimes be more abstract," Chen says.






Top: Fishermen in Fuding, Fujian province, haul in oysters. **Left:** The poster of *Oyster Sauce: A Drop of Umami*. **Right:** The documentary's production team (from left) Chen Xiaoqing, Zhu Lexian and Li Jie share insights into the making of the series.

Chinese cooking, he explains, often allows ingredients to transform, extracting and reshaping their flavors before using them in other dishes.

Behind this is a broader philosophy of eating. Chinese cooks have continually explored how one flavor can bring out another, how heat and time can transform ingredients, and how flavors from mountains, fields and oceans can complement one another at the same table.

For the filmmakers, the central challenge was how to turn the intangible quality of *xian* into something viewers could see and imagine tasting.

"People cannot actually taste the food or experience its *xian* through the screen," says producer Li Jie. But visual and auditory stimuli can activate memories associated with taste.

"Rather than simply presenting flavor, we are stimulating people's senses and building connections between them, so their brains can fill in the taste," Li says.

The filmmakers found visual counterparts for flavor: the texture of ingredients, bubbling broth, rising steam, and the colors of finished dishes. Images such as a flower blossoming or honey dripping evoke sweetness and roasted aromas through visual association.

"First, you have to give *xian* something tangible to attach itself to. Second, you have to give it movement," Li says.

The documentary was filmed over about four months in nearly 20 Chinese cities and abroad. From coastal aquaculture farms and remote forests to neighborhood eateries and family kitchens, the camera sought to connect flavors with people.

A modern food factory became another important stop on the journey. The production team was struck by the complexity of its production lines, research systems and laboratories.

"We had never imagined that oyster sauce was made on such a complex production line," Li says. After seeing the raw materials, production process, and research and testing systems, the team realized that this side of food production was "particularly worth documenting".

While food documentaries often focus on flames, traditional utensils and the hands of craftspeople, *Oyster Sauce: A Drop of Umami* also turns automated production lines, laboratories and machinery into subjects.

"We wanted to use images to show the beauty of science, industry and order," Li says.

The documentary also follows Chinese culinary influences overseas.

In Thailand, celebrity chef Pichaya Soontornyanakij, known as Pam, opened her family home to the production team for the first time.

Pam's mother is of Chaozhou heritage, and the family's everyday meals combine Thai and Chinese influences. Her mother takes the production team to the market before the family prepares a meal together.

Chinese food culture is expressed not through overt symbols but through ingredients, seasonings and cooking habits.

"When I saw Chinese seasonings in a Thai family kitchen, and saw Thai and Chinese elements blended into their everyday meals, I felt the subtle influence of Chinese food culture," Li says.

Such cultural transmission is not simply a matter of taking a particular Chinese dish overseas. As people migrate, and trade and cultural exchanges expand, Chinese flavors enter new environments, interact with local ingredients and traditions, and develop new forms.

Flavor thus becomes a form of cultural memory. It can cross linguistic boundaries and be passed from one generation to the next.

As the camera moves from the sea to the dining table, the documentary reveals more than how a flavor is created. It shows how Chinese food culture evolves through inheritance and exchange, continuing to find new life as it travels.

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Time-honored pharmacy brings TCM to the modern age

In the bustling Dashilar area, a renowned tourist destination in downtown Beijing, Melvyn, a young man from Brussels, stepped into the Tong Ren Tang pharmacy, a time-honored brand with over 350 years of history.

This was Melvyn's second visit to China. Besides sightseeing, he intended to learn more about traditional Chinese medicine.

Accompanying him was Mana, a young lady from Pakistan, who was experiencing back pain and decided to seek relief while sightseeing. With the help of the store's staff, Mana quickly obtained the medicine she needed.

"I have a keen interest in TCM. I enjoy TCM massages and also like taking ginseng," said Mana.

Melvyn and Mana are among a growing number of young people from China and abroad who turn to TCM for health problems.

The Tong Ren Tang pharmacy, established in 1669, serves as a window for cultural exchange and knowledge in TCM.

The building itself retains its antiquated charm, with shelves inside the building stocked with an array of products.

Visitors can not only see a doctor, get prescriptions, and purchase medicine, but also buy nutritional supplements, food items, cosmetics, and herbal drinks.




Left: A pharmacist dispenses Chinese herbal medicine at a Tong Ren Tang pharmacy in Beijing on Feb 25, 2025. **Right:** A staff member displays Chinese herbal medicine drinks at a Tong Ren Tang branch on the same day. PHOTOS BY LI XIN / XINHUA

In the cosmetics section, Guo Haiyan, who oversees quality control, has introduced an anti-freckle cream, describing it as highly effective.

"We used to focus mainly on pharmaceuticals, but later we found that tourists to this area have a huge demand for cosmetics," she said.

She also pointed to incense sticks, noting that they have gained popularity abroad in recent years.

Herbal drinks are another distinctive offering. Tong Ren Tang has blended coffee with TCM ingredients to create beverages infused with herbal elements.

"Tourists can choose drinks suited to their body condition for health preservation," Guo said.

Near the beverage counter stands a wheel that visitors spin as part of a puzzle game to guess the names of TCM herbs based on photo prompts.

The store also sells TCM bracelets, sachets and other souvenirs that can be worn to help prevent ailments.

Children can try on *hanfu*, traditional Chinese attire, and experience TCM customs firsthand.

A tourist surnamed Lin from Guangdong province brought his family to Beijing during the summer vacation. They visited the third floor, which houses a TCM culture exhibition center and serves as a venue for educational tours. His son and daughter showed great interest in handling traditional pill-making tools and observing various plant specimens.

An on-site virtual reality display allows visitors to don headsets and watch immersive demonstrations of how these tools were used to make pills in the past.

"Just like making tiny glutinous rice balls, the TCM practitioner adds water and herbal powder and shakes the mixture back and forth. It takes about 40 minutes to complete the process," Guo said. "Factories usually have specialized machines for this, but we have preserved the traditional method here."

At the TCM digital health cabin, visitors can use machines for basic health check-ups. They can also see a doctor for further diagnosis.

On nearby tables, paper and pigments — the latter made from TCM herbs or minerals — are available for children to paint. They can also use TCM herbs and cloth to craft their own sachets.

Guo said that since the summer vacation began, the center has seen an influx of children.

There are many such TCM experiential centers across China. In Cangzhou, Hebei province, just over two hours' drive from Beijing, some schools have herbal gardens to help children learn about medicinal plants. In Chengdu, Sichuan province, Tianfu Medicine City attracts many enthusiasts from both home and abroad.

Back in Beijing, just a few minutes' walk from Dashilar, a smart health experience center at the Beijing Fun complex offers visitors exercise routines similar to *baduanjin* — a traditional form of *qigong*. The complex is a branch of Tong Ren Tang. Visitors can also use AI-powered machines that integrate TCM wisdom with large language models for health consultations.

"We aim to create a showcase for TCM culture. New technologies help us do a better job in promoting TCM culture," said Guo.

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LIFE

Grandma behind the counter

At 86, Qingdao cafe owner has turned a struggling business into a place where coffee, companionship and purpose meet

A young woman arrives at Rona Coffee carrying a camera, having decided to feature its 86-year-old owner Zhao Qiying in a graduation documentary after seeing her online.

"If I can help young people, that is a good thing," Zhao says, before giving a customer entering the shop her customary greeting: "What would you like to drink?"

There is no printed menu inside the ground-floor storefront, located in an apartment building in Qingdao, a coastal city in East China's Shandong province.

Zhao points to a small whiteboard on the wall, where she has written the drinks and prices herself. She opens a notebook and records the order: "Matcha latte, hot, 25 yuan, WeChat Pay." Then she grinds the beans, steams the milk and carries the cup to the table.

The students helping the woman with her project begin filming. Off camera, they help Zhao carry cups and clear tables. Zhao lives only a 10-minute walk away from the cafe, yet the shop brings a much wider world to her door. She has also managed to turn a once-failing business into a success.

Residents from the surrounding neighborhood stop by for coffee. Students settle in with books. People from across China arrive after seeing Zhao online, some opening the door with the question, "Is Grandma here?"

Visitors from abroad have also found their way to the shop. When language becomes a barrier, Zhao points to the cups or asks a younger customer to interpret.

Customers have also suggested new additions to the menu, prompting her to learn how to make avocado, hazelnut and ice-cream coffees.

Zhao accepts mobile payments, but the orders still go into a handwritten ledger.

"I can't figure out those electronic ordering systems," she says. "Writing it down feels more reliable."

Zhao's decision to take over the cafe began not with a passion for coffee, but with a practical goal — the fully equipped shop should not simply be abandoned.

Her son had opened the cafe under a franchise more than a decade ago, spending more than 400,000 yuan ($58,900) on renovations, equipment and furniture. Zhao says the franchise arrangement later fell apart. With few customers and the business running at a loss, her son considered closing the shop in 2014.

Zhao, who had worked as an accountant at a Qingdao factory, looked at the furnished room and saw money already spent. "Wouldn't all that work go to waste?" she recalls asking. "How about I try running the place?"

She was then 74 and had never tasted coffee.



Zhao Qiying (left) chats with a customer at Rona Coffee in Qingdao, East China's Shandong province, on June 15. PHOTOS BY ZHANG LIYUAN / XINHUA



Zhao serves coffee at Rona Coffee in Qingdao.

Her first cup struck her as bitter. To her, different types of coffee seemed to differ only in how bitter they were. Still, she became familiar with the coffee machine button by button, replaying online videos and writing each step in a notebook.

Milk foam and latte art were the hardest skills to master. Unwilling to keep wasting cartons of milk, Zhao mixed laundry detergent with water to imitate milk foam and diluted soy sauce to stand in for espresso. She practiced with the two liquids at home every day. Within six months, she could pour a decent heart shape.

For years, Rona Coffee sold only 20 or 30 cups a day. Online attention changed that. Zhao now makes 50 or 60 cups on an ordinary weekday and as many as 70 or 80 during holidays. The cafe, where she is both the licensed proprietor and the only worker, now turns a profit.

The attention has also changed who comes through the door and how customers interact with Zhao. One wall is covered in notes praising her coffee and wishing her good health. Seeing her busy at work, regulars sometimes offer to collect their own drinks. If a latte-art pattern goes wrong, Zhao tries to keep the cup for herself, but customers usually reassure her that it still looks and tastes good.

"They tell me it looks good even when it doesn't, and I know they are sometimes just trying to make me happy," she says. "The kinder they are to me, the less I can afford to be careless. I have to take every cup seriously."

Younger people have also left their mark on the cafe. Zhao's grandson refreshed its playlist, while customers encouraged her to add new drinks. Zhao, in turn, gives them a place to study, talk or simply spend time. Some confide in her about breakups or failed attempts to lose weight. She offers a few words of comfort and marvels at the sheer variety of troubles young people encounter.

A longtime customer, Wang Xintian, says Zhao feels less like a shopkeeper and more like a familiar elder.

Zhao works about 10 hours a day. She gets tired, but says being idle would not necessarily feel any better. Before taking over the cafe, she imagined retirement as chores, errands and television. Life with the shop, she says, turned out very differently.

"Every morning, I know why I am getting up," she says. "At the cafe, I know what I have to do. When I go home after work, I know I have something to look forward to the next day."

Her son now often comes by for coffee. Zhao likes to joke that the cafe he once wanted to close has made him a regular.

Twelve years later, coffee remains bitter to her. But the 10-minute walk from home has opened onto a larger world of work, companionship and daily purpose.

The coffee, Zhao says, is "still just different degrees of bitterness".

Her days are not.

XINHUA

Fishing heritage finds a new shore

HAIKOU — When the tide retreats at Tanmen, people go after it. During the fishing town's summer beachcombing season, visitors spread across the exposed shore. Locals call the activity *ganhai* — literally, going out to "catch the sea".

This year's festival features a beachcombing treasure hunt, a fishermen's market, a long seafood dinner and intangible cultural heritage performances, turning traditions of an old fishing community into experiences visitors can join.

A tourist surnamed Hu from East China's Jiangsu province had been traveling with her family in Sanya when she heard about the festival and made a detour to Tanmen. "It was my first time watching the fishing fleet set out. It was spectacular," she says, adding that she plans to take her child *ganhai* and then visit the China (Hainan) Museum of the South China Sea.

The fleet she came to see belongs to a much less leisurely world. Tanmen is home to 86 medium and large fishing vessels, most weighing between 400 and 500 metric tons. At noon on Aug 16, when the summer fishing moratorium ended, firecrackers sounded over the harbor and hundreds of boats streamed toward the South China Sea.

For generations, fishing families preserved their knowledge of sea routes in handwritten sailing manuals known as Geng Lu Bu. The books recorded routes, island and reef features, positions and bearings; a *geng* was roughly equivalent to 10 nautical miles. Together, they turned hard-earned experience into practical guides for long voyages.

For three and a half months each summer, however, much of the fishing activity comes to a halt. This year's summer moratorium in designated South China Sea waters ran from noon on May 1 to noon on Aug 16.

Seasonal closures are also part of the region's fisheries-management tool kit. In its Thailand country profile, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations describes area and seasonal closures in the Gulf of Thailand imposed mainly for the recovery of Indo-Pacific mackerel, with restrictions on trawlers and purse seiners during designated periods.

The larger boats' return to sea is only one part of Tanmen's fishing economy. Closer to shore, a recreational-fishing pier serves smaller leisure vessels.

This summer, tourists have flocked to Tanmen Port and nearby fishing villages for *ganhai* and waterside sightseeing. Visitors have also stopped in Paigang village beside the harbor and visited the Geng Lu Bu museum, where sailing knowledge passed down through generations of fishermen is preserved.

The shift is also showing up in local livelihoods. More than 500 traditional fishermen in Tanmen have moved into leisure- and tourism-related work. More than 400 fishermen have formed five recreational-fishing cooperatives, and the town's recreational-fishery output value topped 100 million yuan ($14.87 million) in 2025.



An aerial view of fishing boats heading out to sea from Tanmen Port in Qionghai, South China's Hainan province. PU XIAOXU / XINHUA

Paigang village now has 13 fishermen's homestays, along with businesses offering sea angling, snorkeling and beachcombing. At the harbor, a 310-meter wharf dedicated to recreational fishing can accommodate 19 leisure fishing boats at a time.

Li Zhi, Party chief of Tanmen town, says the harbor upgrade is intended to serve both traditional fishing and the growing recreational sector, with leisure boats used for sightseeing and sea angling.

The result is a waterfront where commercial fishing and recreational activities increasingly sit side by side, widening the ways local residents make a living from the sea.

Fishing life also reaches shore through food and ritual. Tanmen's catches include Spanish mackerel, grouper, squid, sea cucumber and conch. This year's beachcombing season — the town's 12th — brings local traditions together with performances ranging from Hainan's carp-lantern performance to 24 Festive Drums, Indonesian folk songs and Thai finger dancing.

Before long voyages, another tradition comes into view: a ceremony honoring the Xiongdi Gong, also known as the "108 Brothers". Dating back to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the ritual was traditionally performed by Hainan fishermen before long-distance fishing and trading voyages in the South China Sea.

It was included in the fifth batch of China's national list of representative items of intangible cultural heritage in 2021. The official heritage record says its community of practitioners later expanded beyond fishermen to include people from Hainan living in Southeast Asia and elsewhere around the world.

Hainan itself is opening wider. This is the island's first summer since the Hainan Free Trade Port began island-wide special customs operations on Dec 18, 2025. In the first half of 2026, Hainan recorded 1.6 million inbound and outbound passenger trips, including 883,000 by foreign nationals.

Local officials say foreign guests visiting nearby Boao for the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference also make their way to Tanmen, where volunteers provide foreign-language services at major visitor sites during the forum.

Inside Tanmen's Geng Lu Bu museum, handwritten manuals preserve old sailing knowledge. Outside, commercial boats leave for fishing grounds, families head to the shore for *ganhai*, and smaller boats take visitors out with rods. The water is the same; there are simply more ways now to know it — and to make a living from it.

XINHUA

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SPORTS

SOCCER

Mourinho decries alleged bullying of Vinicius

'Special One' goes to bat for his star player, claiming Brazilian was targeted during Madrid's win over Espanyol

Real Madrid manager Jose Mourinho accused opponents and supporters of bullying Vinicius Jr, after the Brazil winger was targeted with rough treatment in the club's opening 2-1 La Liga win at Espanyol on Saturday.

Real, which kicked off Mourinho's return to the club with a late victory, was furious inside the opening five minutes when Alex Calatrava brought down Vinicius from behind and then appeared to catch him again while the forward was on the ground.

Madrid's players appealed for a red card, but the referee took no action against Calatrava, who later scored Espanyol's equalizer after Jude Bellingham had put Real ahead.

Late Real substitute Carlos Espi struck in the 90th minute to give the visitor the victory.

Mourinho said the treatment of Vinicius had become a recurring theme.

"Vinicius is no saint, but what they were doing to him was too much. Right from the first minute. It's a pattern that repeats itself from one opponent to the next," Mourinho said.

"I'll give him one, now you give him one. If I get a yellow card, you give him one. If I'm substituted, another player comes on who hasn't been booked yet, and you give him one."

The Portuguese coach said Vinicius, who has often been the focus of abuse from rival defenders and crowds, needed to stay composed despite the provocation.

"He needs to have a lot of emotional control. I've told him that if he scores a goal, he needs to be careful how he celebrates it," Mourinho said.

> "Vinicius is no saint, but what they were doing to him was too much. Right from the first minute. It's a pattern that repeats itself from one opponent to the next."
>
> **Jose Mourinho,** Real Madrid manager

"We're in an era where society is against bullying, yet, with Vini, we're still seeing bullying from opponents and from the crowd. We have to educate him and prepare him as best we can, and that's it."

The controversy also carried echoes of last season, when Mourinho was Benfica manager and Vinicius was subjected to discriminatory abuse by Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni during a Champions League match against Real Madrid.

Prestianni was later handed a six-match suspension by UEFA for discriminatory conduct that was deemed to be homophobic in nature.

Mourinho was heavily criticized at the time for defending Prestianni, saying Vinicius had incited the crowd with his goal celebrations, and Benfica was anything but racist because the Portuguese club's greatest player, Eusebio, was also Black.

With Vinicius opting to stay at the Bernabeu, signing a contract extension earlier this month, Mourinho insisted in the Spanish media that the Brazilian now knows his coach is on his side.

He told Spanish outlet AS last week: "Prestianni was my player. That's it. Twenty players can come at me, and I'm still (with my player). I think Vini knows now ... he can look at me and count on me to stand alongside him."

Espi grabs the glory

Bellingham opened the scoring, and new signing Espi secured the points at the death, starting Mourinho's second spell at the club with last-minute win.

"I think that we deserved to win, but Espanyol didn't deserve to lose," Mourinho told reporters.

"They didn't have any players at the World Cup and have been working together for a long time, and you could see that."

Back in charge of Madrid 13 years after leaving, the Portuguese veteran must bring the dressing room under control after the chaos of last season, and, much like his last stint at the Bernabeu, he has been tasked with ending Barcelona's domestic dominance.

Mourinho started his superstars Kylian Mbappe, Vinicius and Bellingham, as well as handing debuts to Bernardo Silva, Denzel Dumfries and Ibrahima Konate.

Bellingham had an excellent first season at Madrid after arriving from Borussia Dortmund, but the subsequent two were disappointing, both for him and the club, which failed to win a major trophy in either.

Mourinho installed him in attacking midfield with licence to roam, and England's World Cup star was heavily involved before netting the first goal of Mourinho's second tenure, heading home Arda Guler's dangerously crossed freekick.

Espanyol threatened midway through the first half, as Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois beat away Clemens Riedel's drive and Roberto Fernandez hooked a shot over the bar shortly afterwards.

Madrid did not heed the warning and Espanyol leveled in the 30th minute, Calatrava slotting home a Javi Hernandez cut-back after a fine team move.

Espanyol stopper Marko Dmitrovic made a good save to deny Mbappe after he got in behind on the right of the area.

The French forward, La Liga's top scorer in both of his two seasons at Madrid, was not at his lethal best.

Mourinho sent on two more new arrivals in the form of record signing Yan Diomande and Marc Cucurella, as Madrid sought a winner.

Federico Valverde hit the outside of the post with a low effort from the edge of the box, as Espanyol dug deep to deny Madrid. However, in the 90th minute, Madrid found the goal it needed when former Levante striker Espi, the lowest profile purchase for Los Blancos this summer, capitalized on a loose ball in the box and fired home.

"We carried out our plan well and then let in that goal at the end," said Calatrava.

"That was a gut-punch."

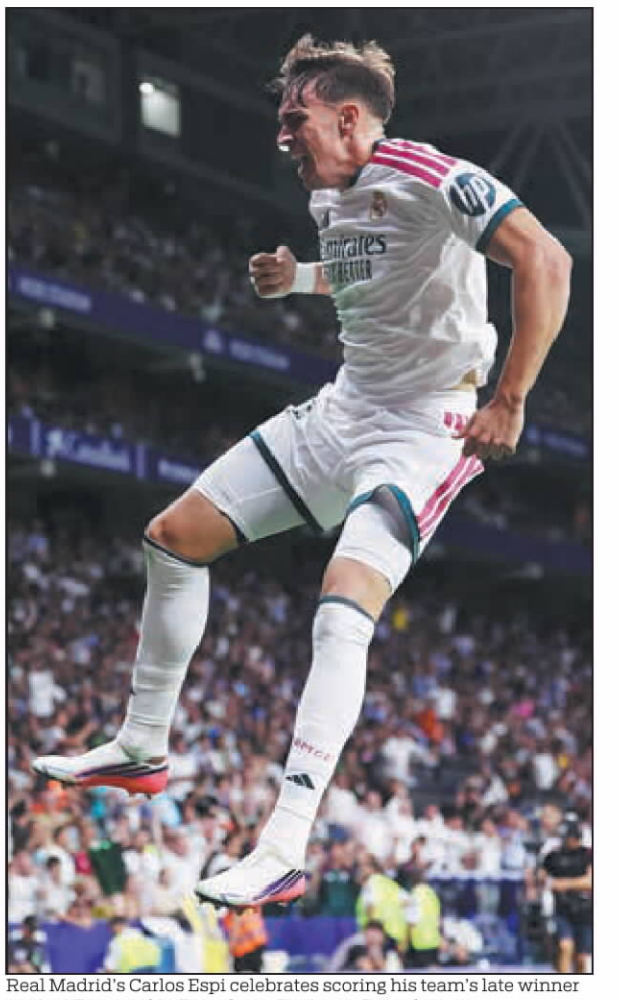
AGENCIES



Jude Bellingham celebrates scoring Madrid's opening goal against Espanyol at RCDE Stadium in Barcelona, Spain, on Saturday. AFP



Real Madrid's head coach Jose Mourinho gestures during his side's 2-1 La Liga win over Espanyol in Barcelona on Saturday. AP



Real Madrid's Carlos Espi celebrates scoring his team's late winner against Espanyol in Barcelona, Spain, on Saturday. AFP

Carrick calm despite United loss, while De Zerbi's big-spending Spurs get thrashed



Manchester United's Matheus Cunha reacts during his side's 2-0 Premier League loss to newly promoted Hull on Saturday. REUTERS



Tottenham Hotspur coach Roberto De Zerbi looks dejected during his side's 3-0 Premier League loss to Brentford on Saturday. REUTERS

Michael Carrick insisted he would not blast his Manchester United flops, despite a dismal 2-0 defeat away to Hull in their opening game of the Premier League season, while big-spending Tottenham slumped to an embarrassing 3-0 away loss to Brentford.

Carrick's side was rocked by first half goals from Semi Ajayi and Nobel Mendy at the MKM Stadium on Saturday.

Hull, which is back in the Premier League for the first time since 2017, was without 10 players due to injury, but still put woeful United to the sword with a vibrant display.

It was a chastening start for United, which many expected to mount a title challenge after finishing third last term.

There was scant evidence that United is capable of going toe to toe with champion Arsenal.

But the stoic Carrick was determined to keep his composure and to avoid the kind of emotional outburst that helped doom his predecessor Ruben Amorim to the sack last season.

"We came here to win, so to not take anything away is hugely disappointing. It is not a nice feeling, but it is not going to change our direction as a team or a club," Carrick said.

"You have to carry on as normal. We just don't all have to shout and scream and create some chaos. Calmness doesn't mean there is not emotion."

United finished the game with 72 percent possession, but it felt like possession without purpose.

Center-back Harry Maguire was among their most threatening attacking outlets.

Bryan Mbeumo forced one of the few meaningful saves from Konstantinos Tzolakis, but Hull's goalkeeper was otherwise little more than a spectator.

Even Marcus Rashford's long-awaited return could not spark a comeback.

Making his first United appearance since December 2024 after his exile under Amorim and loan spells at Aston Villa and Barcelona, Rashford showed flashes of sharpness, but received precious little service.

For Hull, it was a first league victory over United in 52 years.

For Carrick, it was a reminder that momentum is fragile.

Familiar collapse

Tottenham, meanwhile, has splashed out over 200 million pounds ($272 million) in a bid to improve a squad that narrowly avoided relegation to the Championship on the final day of last season.

But Spurs' lavish close-season spending failed to disguise the side's familiar shortcomings.

Roberto De Zerbi gave debuts to four of his new recruits as Sandro Tonali, Andy Robertson, Marcos Senesi and Jan Paul van Hecke all started, while the 85 million-pound Mateus Fernandes came off the bench in the second half.

But Brentford, offered another example of what continuity and smart recruitment can achieve, looking cohesive and confident despite operating on a fraction of Tottenham's budget.

The Bees swarmed west London with a dynamic display that exposed the flaws in the visitor's costly rebuilding plan.

Keane Lewis-Potter and Vitaly Janelt netted for Keith Andrews' side in the first half, before Michael Kayode struck after the interval.

It could have been even worse for Tottenham, as Igor Thiago missed a penalty that would have put Brentford four goals up.

"I am sorry for the defeat. I know we have to improve in our physical condition and the organization. There were many new players, but it was the first game. It's part of our journey," De Zerbi said.

Bolstered by impressive record signing Mamadou Sangare, who set up the second goal for Janelt, Brentford looked capable of surpassing last season's ninth-placed finish.

Spurs, meanwhile, looked bereft of ideas and were comprehensively outplayed and outfought, failing to register a shot on target in the first half.

Italian De Zerbi saved Tottenham from the drop in his seven games in charge last season and has been handsomely backed.

Brazilian winger Savinho is expected to arrive from Manchester City to bolster the attack.

City forward Omar Marmoush is also being pursued.

Yet, however many players Spurs bring in, De Zerbi knows the basics must be addressed to make progress.

"We lost and suffered the difference in the duels. It was the key of this game. We didn't fight in the right way," De Zerbi said.

"Our physical condition was not at the right level for all players, because many came later after the World Cup and there were many new players in the squad and starting lineup.

"But we have to analyze this game better, because we can't play this way in this type of game."

Sage suffers

Pierre Sage, Crystal Palace's new French manager, endured a miserable start in a 2-0 loss at Everton.

Under Sage's predecessor Oliver Glasner, the Eagles won the FA Cup in 2025 and the UEFA Conference League last season.

But Glasner left for Nottingham Forest in the summer, with Sage hired after leading Lens to a second-place finish in Ligue 1 and a French Cup triumph last season.

Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall gave Everton the lead against the run of play in the 42nd minute.

Thierno Barry added to Sage's misery with a bullet header from Iliman Ndiaye's 53rd minute cross.

AGENCIES

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Dishing out a hit
Chinese film on war uses food as symbol of harmony
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Nepal safari ruling sparks job worries
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Smart logistics
AI-powered robots, systems help reshape country's parcel network
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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2026

Xi reiterates China's Mideast peace stance

Importance of two-state solution emphasized at meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan

By **CAO DESHENG**
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President Xi Jinping reiterated on Monday China's position on the political settlement of the Middle East issue with the Palestinian question at its core, urging efforts to push for the resumption of talks between Palestine and Israel based on the two-state solution and the early establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Xi made the remarks during his talks with King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein in Beijing. The Jordanian monarch was on a weeklong state visit to China, which concluded on Monday.

Xi emphasized that China has consistently advocated a comprehensive ceasefire, cessation of hostilities and the resolution of disputes through political and diplomatic means, and it maintains that the sovereignty and security of countries in the region, including Jordan, should be respected.

Noting that the principle of "the Palestinians governing Palestine" must be upheld, Xi said that Palestine is the home of all Palestinians, and this principle should be implemented in advancing the governance of the West Bank and postwar reconstruction of Gaza.

He stressed the need to adhere to humanitarianism, with the international community, especially the United Nations Security Council, taking responsibility for protecting the safety of civilians, ensuring humanitarian aid and preventing humanitarian disasters.

Xi called for upholding fairness and justice, following international law, addressing both symptoms and root causes, and taking pragmatic actions to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question at an early date.

China values Jordan's unique and important role in the region and firmly supports it in safeguarding its national sovereignty, security and development interests, he added.

King Abdullah II expressed Jordan's high appreciation for China's fair stance on the Middle East issue as well as its support for the just cause of the Arab states, saying that China's just position is very important to countries in the region.

Jordan is willing to maintain close communication with China and continue making positive efforts to ease the current situation to enable the people of Middle East countries to enjoy peace and prosperity.

Regarding bilateral ties, Xi said that since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Jordan, both countries have consistently respected each other, treated each other as equals, and engaged in mutually beneficial cooperation, setting a vivid example of win-win cooperation and mutual learning between small and big countries with different social systems.

In the face of international and regional situations of turmoil and transformation, building a more substantial and dynamic China-Jordan relationship meets the common expectations of the two peoples and aligns with the trend of solidarity and self-strengthening among countries of the Global South, he said.

Xi called on both countries to promote their traditional friendship, enhance strategic mutual trust, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, strengthen multilateral coordination, and push for greater development of the China-Jordan strategic partnership to make positive contributions to regional peace, stability and prosperity.

China is willing to engage with Jordan at all levels of government, parties, legislative bodies and local exchanges, and to strengthen the exchange of governance experiences, he said.

Saying that the nature of China-Jordan cooperation is of mutual benefit and win-win, Xi underlined the need for both sides to further deepen the alignment of their development strategies, strengthen cooperation in traditional fields such as economy and trade, infrastructure construction, transportation and minerals, and expand new growth areas of partnership in digital economy, artificial intelligence and green energy.

China is willing to work with Jordan to implement the four global initiatives, strengthen coordination and cooperation in multilateral institutions such as the UN, jointly uphold an international system with the UN at its core and an international order governed by international law, and promote the building of a community with a shared future for humanity, he said.

King Abdullah II said China is a great country that has achieved remarkable and admirable development accomplishments under the leadership of President Xi.

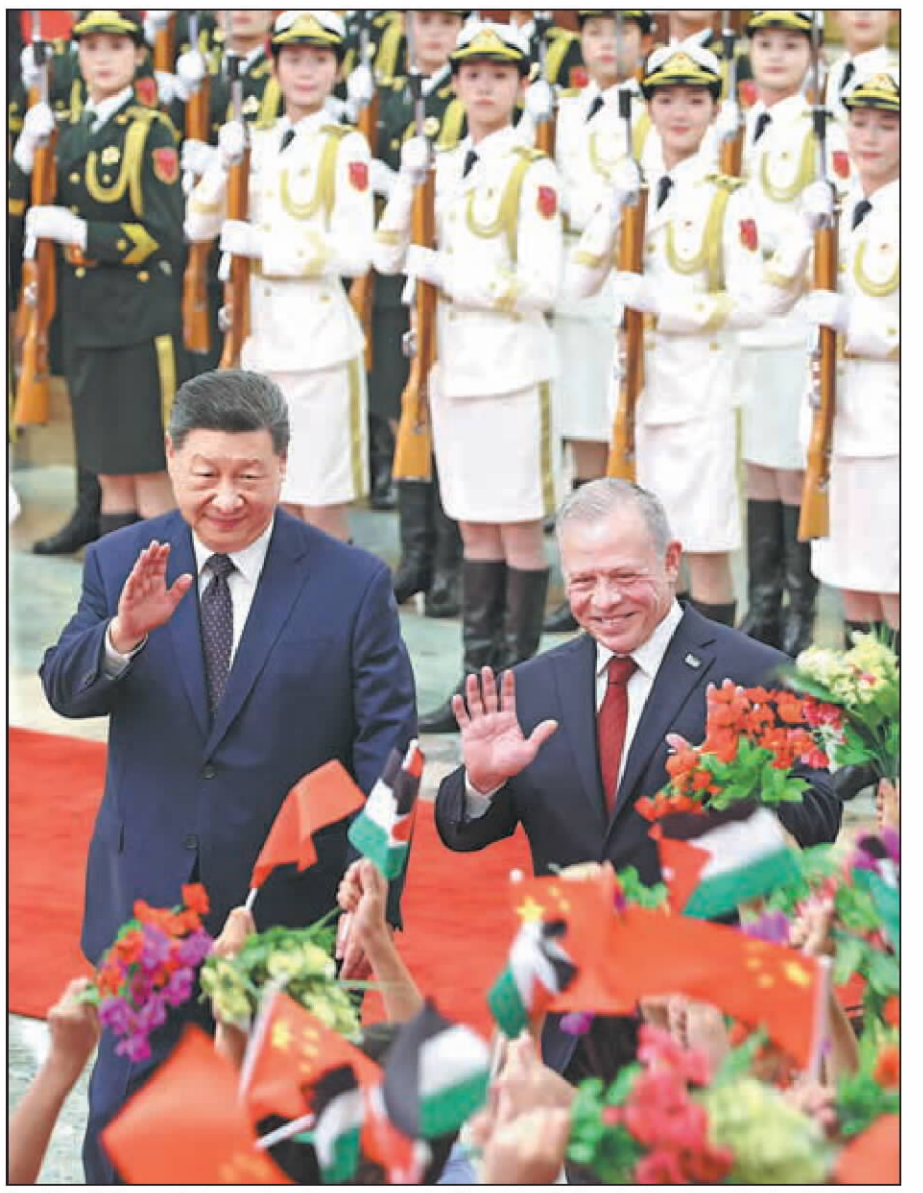
Jordan firmly adheres to the one-China policy, recognizing Taiwan as part of the Chinese territory, he said.

Noting that Jordan highly values its ties with China, he expressed his country's commitment to deepening cooperation and exchanges in areas such as economy and trade, manufacturing, agriculture, science and technology, medicine, culture and education.

He said that Jordan welcomes more investments from Chinese enterprises to achieve common development and prosperity.

Jordan highly appreciates the four global initiatives proposed by President Xi and looks forward to China playing a more significant leadership role on the world stage, he added.

The two leaders jointly witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation documents in fields such as diplomacy, economy and trade, supply chains and the judiciary. The two sides issued a joint statement on deepening the China-Jordan strategic partnership.



President Xi Jinping hosts a welcoming ceremony for King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein before their talks in Beijing on Monday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Warm welcome



China's green hero Yin Yuzhen welcomes Ronald Sakolsky, a retired teacher from the United States who supported her cause 27 years ago, to her home in Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, on Monday. SUN RUIBO / XINHUA **See story, page 3**

Chipmaker's turnaround shows resilience

By **MA SI**
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Nexperia China's remarkable turnaround from a Dutch-imposed supply cutoff to successful local production in less than 11 months highlights the resilience of China's semiconductor industrial chain amid mounting challenges, said corporate executives and experts.

Their remarks came as Nexperia China held a global product launch on Sunday afternoon in Shanghai, marking the first collective public appearance of the company's core management team since it was lobbed into a crisis late last year.

"We are back!" said John Chang, CEO of Nexperia China, adding that the company is now approaching 100 percent local semiconductor production.

In October 2025, the Netherlands government intervened in the operations of Nexperia, a chipmaker owned by Chinese company Wingtech Technology, citing "national security" concerns. The intervention resulted in the sidelining of Wingtech. Weeks later, Nexperia's Dutch headquarters halted wafer supplies to the plant in China.

"Wafer supply was cut off. Systems went offline. Data from the overseas headquarters became inaccessible. We had orders, clients and trust — but no wafers to process," Chang recalled.

To overcome the challenge, Nexperia China made three crucial changes, the company said at Sunday's event.

First, it successfully spun off the China unit from the overseas Dutch headquarters to establish a fully independent operating system. Second, it secured local wafer suppliers and rebuilt a controllable supply chain. And third, by leveraging the 12-inch wafer platform of its strategic Chinese partners, it achieved a huge upgrade from 6-inch and 8-inch wafers to 12-inch process technologies.

The Nexperia plants in Europe are still mainly running on 6-inch and 8-inch wafers, but Nexperia China has achieved mass production on the 12-inch platform, Chang noted.

See ***Chips,*** *page 3*

BEAT THE HEAT WITH A COOL ADDITION TO YOUR WARDROBE

High-tech vests are finding new fans among outdoor enthusiasts and workers in the sweltering summer months

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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Summer is nearly over, but the heat hasn't loosened its grip. As the last of the season's hot days linger on, the battle against high temperatures has moved beyond sunscreen and iced drinks. For campers trekking mountain trails, cyclists logging long rides and anglers spending hours under the sun, a new piece of wearable technology is drawing attention: the cooling vest.

"It's like wearing a small electric fan inside your clothes," said an outdoor enthusiast surnamed Luo, who shared his experience on Chinese lifestyle platform Xiaohongshu, also known as RedNote, after wearing one while cycling. "As long as it's below 35 C, it works well. It's not an air-conditioner, but when you're moving around in this furnace-like weather, even a constant breeze makes a huge difference."

His experience reflects a growing market for wearable cooling technologies. The trend is emerging alongside the country's booming outdoor economy. Since 2019, participation in hiking, camping, cycling, trail running and fishing has surged.

Chris Sheng, founder of outdoor gear retailer Nomad Union, said: "In Zhejiang province, where our company is based, outdoor activities are almost suspended for nearly two months every summer because of the heat. These cooling vests borrow technology originally developed for industrial workers and adapt it for outdoor recreation, making summer activities much more comfortable."

See ***Tech,*** *page 3*

WORLD WATCH
By Zhao Bing

Early action can help better tackle climate challenges

In July 2026, forecasts warned of severe flooding in Bangladesh's Bandarban district. Rather than waiting for conditions to worsen, the United Nations World Food Programme activated anticipatory action and shock-responsive social protection, reaching 75,000 people with cash assistance before flood risks intensified.

The support reached families while they still had time to prepare — helping them meet immediate needs, protect livelihoods and avoid falling deeper into crisis. This is the promise of anticipatory action: turning early warning into early response. The forecast could not stop the flooding, but it gave people power over their fear. It gave them time to act instead of just waiting.

The need to act early has never been more urgent. An estimated 645 million people faced hunger worldwide in 2025. Conflict, economic shocks and displacement continue to drive food insecurity in many of the world's most vulnerable countries, while the escalating crisis in the Middle East is adding further pressure through disruptions to trade, energy and food markets.

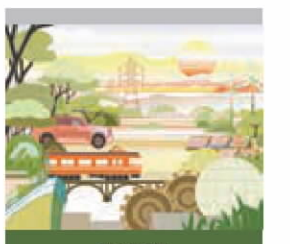
Against this already fragile backdrop, extreme weather is accelerating food insecurity. In 2025 alone, weather extremes were the primary driver of acute food insecurity in 16 countries and territories, affecting 87.5 million people.

The risks keep rising. A strong El Nino is developing, bringing the prospect of above-normal temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns, with greater drought risks in some regions and heavier flooding in others. For millions of smallholder farmers, these are not distant threats. They show up in stressed water supplies, uncertain planting seasons and growing concern over future harvests, which translate into heightened hunger risk. WFP's early analysis projects that this El Nino could push at least 49 million more people into acute food insecurity by the end of 2027.

But climate hazards differ from many other crises in one important respect: Increasingly, we can see them coming.

Advances in forecasting and early-warning systems give us days, weeks or sometimes months to prepare.

See ***Crises,*** *page 3*



INSIDE
Enabling, not squeezing
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INDEPTH







Above left: Tourists watch a courtyard show about the women's rescue association in the 1940s, one of the Red Sisters' story performances in Changshanzhuang village of Yinan county, Shandong province. ZHENG SHUPING / FOR CHINA DAILY **Top right:** Villagers from Beiliangjia in Qingdao, Shandong, take part in a short drama series. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Above right:** Children get immersed in the walk-through experience *Retrace the Frontline Supply Route* in Yinan county, Shandong. ZHENG SHUPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Lights, camera, tractors!

From short-drama videos to immersive performances and field poetry, rural communities are being energized through numerous cultural art forms

By ZHAO RUIXUE
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During the recent summer vacation, visitors followed local villagers along ancient lanes in Yinan county, Shandong province, joining a "supply team" bound for the front line.

The immersive *Retrace the Frontline Supply Route* performance in Changshanzhuang village was not staged in a theater. Instead, it took place in the same locations locals once hauled supplies along to support frontline troops during the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

Since its launch in October 2024, the performance has drawn tens of thousands of visitors.

"This is completely different from anything we've done before," said Sun Fangchao, a tourist from Jiangsu province.

"I think he'll be thrilled about this for a very long time," he said while watching his 11-year-old son who moved along with the performance troupe.

For the show's creators, that emotional response is the point of its unique staging. Yinan county is famous for the Yimeng Spirit forged by ordinary villagers who risked their lives to support the Communist forces through extraordinary sacrifice during the war against Japanese aggression and the War of Liberation (1946-49).

The county has over 20 immersive Yimeng Spirit-themed performances, turning cultural tourism from a sightseeing experience into participatory education, according to the local government. The performers are villagers who know the heroic stories very well.

Ma Junling, 35, became a performer this year. Before then, she had worked as a tour guide in her village, explaining the Yimeng Spirit to visitors.

"Our village often receives groups of students on study tours. They are young and have limited understanding. A simple lecture couldn't hold their attention, but the live performances bring the stories to life and help children better understand the history and culture," Ma said.

Changshanzhuang is far from an isolated case. Across Shandong, grassroots cultural creativity is flourishing through immersive performances, verses composed by farmers, and rural micro-dramas filmed on mobile phones.

Ordinary farmers are picking up pens, smartphones, and scripts, becoming poets, actors and dramatists.

Storytellers

Changshanzhuang is the home of the Red Sisters, a group of local women who took care of the wounded soldiers and in some cases sacrificed their lives to protect them during the wars. They forged a major part of the Yimeng Spirit.

To honor their stories and promote the Yimeng Spirit, a Red Sisters Hometown Tourism Area has been established in the village.

Short folk performances are staged in old courtyards, bringing these stories to life, and the performers are villagers who have lived in the area their entire lives.

Yang Suhua, 63, from a neighboring village, used to spend her days doing housework and tending a small vegetable plot.

Two years ago, she became one of the most popular performers. Now she plays the role of an elderly cotton weaver in a show about the women's rescue association, a grassroots organization that supported the Communist revolution in the 1940s.

"I grew up hearing the heroic stories of the local women. I am so happy to tell their stories to more people through these small-scale plays," Yang said.

Villagers transform oral histories passed down from their ancestors into scripts, using relatable language and gestures that ordinary people can understand.

Li Xipeng, head of the Red Sisters Hometown Tourism Area, said the village's authenticity is key to the performances' appeal. "These houses and these lanes witnessed the actual events. They are the best textbook we could ever have," he said.

More than a dozen small farmyards have been turned into performance spaces. In one courtyard stands a small stone house with two dark narrow rooms. This is where Liu Naixiu, 73, once lived with her family of five.

"We were all squeezed in here. The house has barely changed from what it was back then. Now we've moved to a two-story home just 1 kilometer from this village," she said.

The places that best preserve the original feel of the period have also been used as film sets. Since 2007, over 500 film and television productions have been shot here, including *Six Sisters in the War*, *Red Sorghum* and *This Thriving Land*.

Liu was among the first villagers to join the film productions. "I've lost count of how many shows I've been in. Sometimes a crew member calls me directly and tells me that he needs 20 people for extras. I happily run from house to house, rounding up neighbors," she said.

Over the years, more than 30,000 villagers have performed as extras in film and television productions in the area. For many families, this part-time work has become a supplement to their farming income.

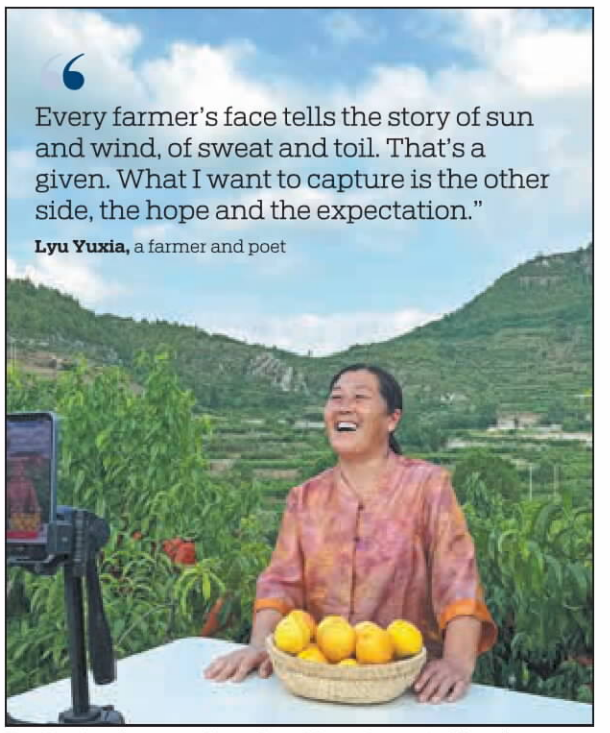
The rural cultural boom has brought economic ripple effects. More than 100 businesses have emerged around the scenic area, offering catering, farm stays, produce sales, and handcrafts.

"We used to worry about how to sell our produce," said a local farmer who grows vegetables and fruits on the hillside. "Now tourists come to us. They watch the shows, walk through the village, and buy local farm produce," he said.

The scenic area has partnered with villages around the area, integrating rural vitalization and tourism development. To date, more than 600 people from surrounding villages have worked in the scenic area.

"This is what it looks like when culture grows from the soil, not as something delivered from above, but as something that sprouts from the land itself," Li said.

> "Every farmer's face tells the story of sun and wind, of sweat and toil. That's a given. What I want to capture is the other side, the hope and the expectation."
>
> **Lyu Yuxia,** a farmer and poet



Lyu Yuxia, a farmer and poet from Mengyin county, Shandong, livestreams from her peach orchard, selling her own peaches and those of her fellow villagers. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Tourists buy local farm produce while they visit Changshanzhuang village. ZHENG SHUPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Leave it to the prose

Not far away, in Mengyin county, another form of rural creativity is taking root in a farmer's notebook.

Lyu Yuxia, 54, is known online as Yimeng Second Sister, a name she uses because she is the second child in her family.

With calloused hands and a sun-weathered face, she has gained unexpected attention online for her poems. "I'm just an ordinary farmer, but words have always been with me," she said.

In the spring of 2023, Lyu walked up a mountain to pick Chinese toon sprouts. She looked out over a sea of blooming peach blossoms across the terraced hillsides.

The sight moved her deeply. She took out her phone, held up a bunch of toon sprouts, and recited a poem she had written in her notebook. That video, posted on Douyin, gained 100,000 followers in one week.

Several of her poems written, recited and recorded in the fields quickly gained widespread popularity online. In one of them, she compared the falling snow to icing sugar and salt sprinkled from the sky.

"I was a 50-something farm woman with wrinkles all over my face, feeling insecure at first," she recalled. "Now I am confident. Poetry gave me the courage to be myself."

Some online commenters have questioned whether her poetic portrayal of rural life is too idyllic and doesn't show the hardship of farming.

"Doesn't the hardship show right here?" she said, pointing at her weathered face.

"Every farmer's face tells the story of sun and wind, of sweat and toil. That's a given. What I want to capture is the other side, the hope and the expectation," she added.

"Every spring, we plow the soil, we plant the seeds. We don't know if the weather will favor us. But the moment we put those seeds in the ground, we are hoping for a good harvest.

"This is the faith in tomorrow. I write to celebrate that achievement," she said.

Her connection to literature began early. When she was very young, her father often told her stories.

At 15, she went to work in a textile factory. To block out the drone of the machinery, she recalled poems she had memorized, including those written by Li Bai, Su Dongpo, and even the elegy from *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

She bought magazines and filled notebooks with excerpts and original verses. "My world was too small. But through sharing online, my world got wider and wider. The beautiful words that netizens leave in my comments are as joyful to me as reading a good book," she said.

Lyu has started livestreaming from her orchard, selling not only her peaches but also helping fellow villagers market their produce. On the busiest days, she livestreams for nine hours straight, sometimes skipping meals.

"When I see the orders pile up and help people sell their goods, there's nothing happier than that," she said.

Playing up sales

In Beiliangjia, a village of just 247 households in the Qingdao West Coast New Area, farmers with no acting experience are using their phones to make short dramas that have racked up over 1 billion views.

Before they changed tack, they struggled to sell their produce.

"The village is not short of good produce. We grow sweet chestnuts, sticky sweet potatoes and big juicy cherries," said Zhang Wei, the village Party secretary. "The problem has always been selling them."

In the summer of 2025, Zhang reached out to Ding Zhaoting, an influencer from a neighboring town. Ding had previously run a building materials business before pivoting to online content creation six years ago. He now manages several accounts with millions of followers.

Zhang said the villagers agreed to use short dramas to sell their produce. Ding became the director and recruited about a dozen villagers.

He taught them the basics of filming, editing, and livestreaming. The villagers threw themselves into the new challenge.

In September 2025, the village's first short drama was released. It told the story of a rural woman who joins a poor family and, through hard work and wisdom, gradually leads them to a happy life. In just over a month, the series had garnered 270 million views.

The momentum built. Subsequent dramas each attracted over 100 million views.

In the dramas, village produce is a feature, with corn hanging on walls, chestnuts piled by stoves, and unpicked cherries glistening with dew. Viewers see these products in attractive settings and want to buy them.

Zhang Zhixing, 75, was among the first to benefit. He had three *mu* (0.2 hectares) of hawthorn trees. But at his age, he could no longer harvest the fruit, and they were rotting on the branches.

A few cast members heard about his situation, went to his orchard, and filmed videos and livestreams. Within days, his hawthorns were sold out.

The online traffic also caught the attention of investors. Local Ding Xinqiang stumbled upon the village's short dramas online. "The people and the stories are so real and trustworthy," he said.

He contacted Zhang Wei and said he wanted to invest in the area. Within a week, a sweet potato starch noodle processing plant was up and running, receiving an initial order of 25 metric tons. More projects followed, including dried sweet potato snacks, pet food, and cultural tourism.

Yu Xiaofeng, an associate professor at Shandong University's journalism and communication school, who has studied the phenomenon, sees it as part of a broader trend.

"In the context of the rise of new mass culture, farmers have become creators. They are telling their own stories," Yu said.

"The entire creative process is intimately connected to their lives, which gives them a tremendous sense of pride. This is the core manifestation of farmer identity, and the best expression of cultural confidence," she said.

Yu visited villages and observed the transformation firsthand.

"When I first saw the villagers, they were nervous and shy in front of the camera. But then, seeing all the likes they received online and the growing number of visitors coming to their village, they became confident and outgoing. They actively participate in village construction, voluntarily shoot short videos to promote their hometown, and take pride in its natural beauty and intangible cultural heritage. Their cultural identity is growing stronger," she said.

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TOP NEWS

Iran threatens to halt exports of oil from gulf

Strait of Hormuz tensions mount as diplomacy stalls and sanctions loom

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

As the United States readied to unveil crippling new sanctions against Iran on Monday, in a bid to sever the country's economic lifelines following months of protracted yet inconclusive warfare, Tehran threatened to halt all oil exports from the Persian Gulf.

For weeks, both sides have refrained from launching military strikes against one another, though negotiations to end the six-month-old conflict remain stalled.

Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, warned in a social media post that "If the economic war continues, not a single drop of oil will be exported, neither through the Strait of Hormuz nor from anywhere in the Gulf."

All eyes are now on US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who is scheduled to elaborate on Washington's intensified pressure campaign during a news conference at 1 pm local time on Monday.

"At dawn begins an economic D-Day — the single greatest financial offensive ever marshaled against an adversary," Bessent wrote in a Sunday opinion piece published in the Financial Times.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei retaliated by stating that Iran will never yield to external coercive conditions. "Washington's insistence on failed tactics proves nothing but its hostility toward the Iranian people," he said.

The conflict has killed thousands of people, mostly in Iran and Lebanon, and inflicted severe economic losses. Despite the killing of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran still retains enough military capability to attack targets in neighboring nations and threaten oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, bringing shipping in the key waterway to a near standstill and placing global fuel prices under pressure.

The exact stage of Iran's nuclear program, which the US and Israel aim to wipe out, remains unknown. Without detailing specific measures, Bessent signaled the US would target "fearful nations" that practice "appeasement" by engaging with Iran's economy and financial system.

"They would do well to consider the consequences of sustaining it," he wrote.

On Monday, Brent crude futures dropped more than 1 percent to $93.45 a barrel, with US oil futures also falling more than 1 percent to $86.14 a barrel, Reuters reported.

Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi on Sunday dismissed the renewed US threats as an "old bullying tactic", saying that Washington has no choice but to speak respectfully to the Iranian nation, state broadcaster Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting reported.

Also on Sunday, the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission approved Article 3 under its Strategic Action Plan to Ensure the Security and Development of the Strait of Hormuz. The provision mandates service fees for all eligible vessels transiting the strategic waterway under Iranian jurisdiction.

Hassan Qashqavi, the commission's spokesman, said the fees would be collected from vessels belonging to countries permitted to pass through the strait and paid in Iranian rials or another currency designated by Tehran, Iran's state-run Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

Iran's newly established Persian Gulf Strait Authority has issued fresh regulatory warnings, saying that 45 vessels found violating transit rules will face penalties including fines, detention and confiscation.

The US and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding on June 18, covering conflicts across the Middle East including Lebanon. The 60-day negotiation window stipulated in the deal expired last week, leaving prospects of a final settlement uncertain.

With formal US-Iran face-to-face talks suspended since the last round held in Switzerland in June, regional mediators including Qatar, Pakistan and Turkiye have continued diplomatic efforts.

Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir arrived in Tehran on Monday. Baghaei confirmed in a Sunday statement that Munir's visit comes as part of Pakistan's sustained efforts to advance regional peace and stability.

Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi will also travel to Tehran on Tuesday for in-depth consultations with Iranian officials over security and maritime rules in the Strait of Hormuz, Iran's Foreign Ministry announced.

In a separate development, Iranian Petroleum Minister Mohsen Paknejad told state television on Sunday that a newly discovered onshore gas field in southern Fars province holds over 200 billion cubic meters of total reserves, and over 160 billion cubic meters could be extracted from the field.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

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Searching for survivors



Residents and rescuers use an excavator to search for victims on Sunday after a landslide occurred at a dumpsite overnight in Conakry, the capital of Guinea. Heavy rains caused a large mound of rubbish to collapse, killing at least 30 people and injuring six others. AFP

Crises: Sharing practical experience holds key

From page 1

The real test is whether that information reaches people who need it and is translated into action before it is too late.

Early warning is most valuable when it leads to action.

Anticipatory action takes the next step by linking forecasts to pre-agreed triggers, financing and practical solutions before disaster strikes. That could mean providing cash assistance before markets become inaccessible, protecting livestock and crops before droughts or floods hit, and strengthening social protection systems so assistance can be scaled up quickly.

For vulnerable families, acting before there is a crisis can mean the difference between protecting their livelihoods and losing assets that may take years to rebuild. Evidence shows that every $1 invested in anticipatory action returns up to $7 in avoided losses and additional benefits.

WFP is increasingly putting this approach into practice at scale. In 2025, more than $35 million was released ahead of disasters, supporting over 1.2 million people with anticipatory assistance, while more than 15 million people received early-warning information.

This is what anticipatory action makes possible: a forecast becomes a decision, a decision unlocks resources, and assistance reaches people before a hazard becomes a disaster.

As countries seek to strengthen these systems, international cooperation and the sharing of practical experience are becoming increasingly important.

China's experience offers a powerful example of what sustained investment in agriculture, technology and disaster readiness can achieve. Its growing strengths in meteorology, satellites and artificial intelligence are creating opportunities to strengthen early warning and preparedness beyond its borders.

One promising example is MAZU, an AI-powered meteorological warning system that combines advanced forecasting technologies with international cooperation to make climate information more accessible and actionable for all. Through South-South and Triangular Cooperation, solutions such as MAZU can help countries across the Global South strengthen their preparedness and build resilience in ways that reflect their own risks, institutions and priorities.

The WFP Centre of Excellence for Rural Transformation in China provides an established platform for this exchange. Since 2016, it has connected China's experience with developing countries through policy dialogue, technical cooperation and practical knowledge sharing on food security, agricultural transformation and climate resilience.

China's domestic experience also offers relevant lessons. In Jilin province, for example, WFP worked with local authorities on an integrated risk-management project for maize farmers. By combining precision agriculture, digital tools and an innovative "Insurance + Futures" solution, the initiative helped farmers better manage both production and market risks while using natural resources more efficiently.

By connecting innovations such as MAZU with practical field experience such as that in Jilin, the WFP center can continue to bridge China's expertise with global demand — adapting solutions to local contexts and turning preparedness into lasting resilience.

Preparedness cannot eliminate climate shocks, but it can change what happens when they arrive. Making it work, however, is a shared responsibility. Governments, international organizations, research institutions, development banks, technology companies and local communities all have a role to play.

It means investing in better forecasting and early-warning systems, but also in the mechanisms that turn warnings into action: pre-arranged financing, responsive social protection, local readiness and the capacity of communities and institutions to act quickly.

Over time, these sustained investments do more than reduce the impact of a single drought or flood. They protect livelihoods, safeguard development gains, reduce repeated losses and setbacks, and build long-term resilience so that communities are able to withstand tomorrow's shocks without losing ground today.

The future of food security will not be determined by climate hazards alone. It will also depend on our collective ability to anticipate risks, act before losses mount and invest in the resilience communities need to thrive, no matter what the weather brings.

The author is representative and director of the United Nations World Food Programme China Office. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Chips: Company improves production capacity, quality

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"This represents a comprehensive leap in both production capacity and quality," Chang said.

According to the company, the 12-inch wafer platform has helped slash product iteration cycles from 36 months to just nine to 12 months. "Nexperia China achieving independent operations is not about confronting anyone; it is about protecting those we serve. To our customers, choosing Nexperia China means no more supply worries," Chang added.

In February this year, China urged the Netherlands to create favorable conditions to help Nexperia settle its internal disputes as soon as possible and to help maintain the stability of global industrial and supply chains. In July, the two sides agreed to facilitate the resolution of business disputes through consultations.

Hurdles notwithstanding, Nexperia China delivered over 40 billion chips to thousands of global customers with zero quality incidents over the past 11 months.

He Hui, semiconductor research director at the United Kingdom-based tech research company Omdia, said on Monday that China's semiconductor industrial chain has made significant progress in recent years, which can serve as a crucial backup for Chinese companies during emergencies and help them stabilize their supply chains. "More efforts are still needed to achieve breakthroughs in some key technologies," she added.

Wang Wen, dean of Renmin University of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, said the Nexperia incident shows once again that the semiconductor industry, by its very nature, is a globalized sector.

"Camp-based or politicized intervention will only fracture supply chains and send costs soaring," Wang said. "Only by reducing non-market intervention can we truly advance global technological progress and ensure that its benefits are universally shared."

Tech: Cooling vests creating niche market

From page 1

For manufacturers, wearable cooling equipment is becoming a fast-growing niche at the intersection of outdoor gear, consumer electronics and climate adaptation.

One of the latest entrants is Esguard, based in Pinghu, Zhejiang, one of China's largest outdoor apparel manufacturing hubs. The company has developed a cooling vest that combines ventilation with semiconductor cooling tech, lowering the perceived temperature by 8 C to 15 C, the company said.

Unlike conventional fan vests that simply circulate ambient air, Esguard's design integrates two semiconductor cooling modules with dual fans mounted on the back of the garment. Air is drawn into the vest, cooled by the modules and then circulated around the body, delivering what the company calls an "air-conditioning effect".

Powered by a 20,000 mAh battery pack, the vest can operate for up to 12 hours on its lowest setting, making it suitable for a full working day or extended trips.

"We wanted to move beyond simply blowing hot air around," said Fang Xiaodong, general manager of Esguard. "The goal was to create a wearable cooling system that people can genuinely rely on outdoors."

The company began developing the product in March after anticipating rising global demand for heat relief technologies. Working with university researchers, it has already begun exporting the vests to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Japan and South Korea.



Sanitation workers show their cooling vests on July 31 in Nanjing, Jiangsu province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The technology is also finding a growing customer base among frontline workers. In Nanjing, Jiangsu province, where summer temperatures frequently exceed 35 C, sanitation workers were among the first to test the vests. Since mid-July, more than 20 cooling vests have been deployed across the city.

"It's much more comfortable," sanitation worker Zhu Wenxian told Workers' Daily. "I'm sweating much less, and I don't feel as irritable after working outside."

Another sanitation worker, Liu Fali, said the airflow has made long shifts noticeably easier. "My back stays dry now," he said.

Delivery companies are also embracing the tech. In Xuchang, Henan province, local franchisees of ZTO Express have equipped more than 100 couriers with cooling vests to help them cope with the summer of prolonged extreme heat.

Greening of desert hailed by US friend

By **WANG SONGSONG** in Ordos, Inner Mongolia and **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot

Ronald Sakolsky, a retired teacher from the United States, returned to the home of China's afforestation hero Yin Yuzhen on Monday in Uxin Banner, Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, 26 years after his first visit, and found the once-barren dunes transformed into a thriving forest — a living testament to perseverance that he says must be passed on to younger generations.

Sakolsky walked through Yin's desert ecological garden, appreciated fresh vegetables and fruits grown in the sandy soil, and visited her new home, which was a far cry from the tiny shelter she once shared with her family.

"From a one-bedroom sand shanty to this? You deserve every centimeter of this house," Sakolsky told Yin, gesturing at her home.

Yin has spent decades battling desertification on this land. What was once a wasteland is now her life's work — a thriving oasis attracting visitors from around the world.

Over the course of 41 years, she and her family have planted 8 million trees, literally one shovel at a time, turning more than 4,660 hectares of desert into an oasis, Inner Mongolia TV reported.

But Sakolsky was not just any visitor. He was an old friend — and, in a small but meaningful way, a part of this story.

Sakolsky made his first visit to this remote desert area in 2000.

Having been in China for two months at that time as a teacher taking part in a China-US teachers exchange program, Sakolsky was moved by a report on Yin's struggle. "I saw her story on TV and started to cry," said Sakolsky.

Together with another of his Chinese friends — Bai Fan, the former vice-principal of Luoyang Foreign Language School in Henan province, where he worked as an English teacher from 1999 to 2000, Sakolsky went to Uxin Banner for the first time.

He also made a quiet gesture of kindness — a $5,000 donation that helped Yin keep planting trees. "One act of kindness, no matter how small, never waste it," Sakolsky said.

Bai, who is now Party secretary and general principal of Luoyang No 2 Foreign Language School Education Group, again accompanied Sakolsky to the site of their shared memories.

Bai recalled how different things were back then. "It was all sand," he said. "Now it looks like a big garden and orchard. It's stunning."

Sakolsky, now in his late 60s, reflected on the deeper meaning of the transformation. "I still believe, 27 years later, that this story was written in heaven and that I am just an actor in the play. And today is just another chapter. But the story is not over — that's for all of you to tell people."

He urged more people to contribute to environmental and people-to-people ties. "More people need to do more for China and America. Even a small amount can become a forest."

Speaking of US-China relations, Sakolsky struck a personal note. "All Americans need to realize that Chinese and Americans can be family. We can get over the differences if we focus on the similarities."

For Yin, the visit was a moment of quiet pride. She showed her guests the fruits of her labor and smiled as Sakolsky repeated his long-held belief: "If you take care of the Earth, it will reward you."

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Zhao Manfeng in Ordos contributed to this story.

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ASIAFOCUS

Editor's note:
In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.

Elephant in the room

Nepal's safaris caught between animal welfare and livelihoods



Mahouts ride elephants during the Elephant Festival in Sauraha, Chitwan, Nepal, on Dec 27. AMBIR TOLANG VIA GETTY IMAGES





From left: Elephants play with a ball during the Elephant Festival in Sauraha, Chitwan, Nepal, on Dec 27. AMBIR TOLANG VIA GETTY IMAGES
An eye of an elephant is pictured as she gets ready for the elephant beauty contest in Sauraha on Dec 27. SUNIL PRADHAN VIA GETTY IMAGES

Sauraha, a major tourist destination in Chitwan, Nepal, has long been synonymous with elephant safaris. For decades, foreign and domestic tourists visiting Sauraha, adjacent to Chitwan National Park, have mounted elephants to traverse the buffer zone's community forests in search of rare wildlife.

However, the local entrepreneurs who have privately owned and domesticated elephants are worried about a recent Supreme Court verdict. They express their concerns, stating that the future of the iconic practice of elephant safaris is in jeopardy. They argue an abrupt halt to elephant safaris could devastate the local economy, tourism and harm the animals themselves.

Private elephant owners in Sauraha express readiness to shift toward ethical alternatives, such as elephant-friendly sanctuaries and bushwalks, but contend that a sudden ban is impractical. They are urging authorities to phase out elephants gradually so that owners have time to adjust their businesses and protect livelihoods.

The delicate issue dominated discussions on Aug 12 during the 15th World Elephant Day celebration in Sauraha, where stakeholders gathered for an "Elephant Picnic" organized in the neighboring Baghmara buffer zone community forest.

"We are prepared to transition to a sanctuary model as envisioned by the court, but it cannot happen overnight," said Dipendra Khatiwada, the president of the United Elephant Management Cooperative Limited.

"We are not in favor of stopping elephant safaris at once. We should instead pursue a dual-track approach: allow fit, working-age elephants to continue safaris for a few more years, while creating dedicated sanctuaries for elderly, sick, or disabled elephants and integrating them into tourism activities that do not disturb nature and local communities."

The high-profile legal dispute stems from a petition filed in 2021. The petitioners demanded an end to animal cruelty, better recordkeeping to curb illegal trading, a prohibition on chaining, and a complete phaseout of elephant rides in favor of observation-only tourism.

On Dec 17 last year, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of animal welfare reforms. The full text verdict was recently uploaded to the Supreme Court's website, laying out comprehensive guidelines for elephant conservation and directing the government to seek alternatives to riding safaris.

"The anatomical structure of an elephant's spine, legs, and body is not evolved to carry human passengers," the court noted in the verdict. "Subjecting these animals to heavy loads and continuous circular tours causes severe physical stress, foot rot, and joint ailments. Using an elephant merely as a tool for human entertainment contradicts our legal duty to respect its intrinsic worth and welfare as a living biological entity."

The justices also instructed the government to establish clear legal policies transitioning Nepal toward ethical ecotourism, drawing upon international precedents such as "elephant bushwalks" and observation platforms that maintain a safe distance between visitors and animals.

In the verdict, the Supreme Court has directed the government and agencies concerned to make the registration and management of privately owned and domesticated elephants more systematic.

Under the regulation on the control of international trade of endangered wildlife and plants, all such elephants must be registered and properly documented. Authorities must identify unregistered elephants and take action under existing laws. Any transfer of ownership, sale, purchase or movement of elephants must also be subject to legal approval and proper recordkeeping.

The court has also called for stronger measures to control the illegal trade and cross-border smuggling of elephants.

Security agencies, forest authorities and conservation bodies should coordinate effectively, particularly along the Nepal-India border, and maintain special surveillance. Individuals or organizations involved in the illegal sale, transportation or smuggling of elephants should be investigated and prosecuted in accordance with the law.

On elephant welfare, the court has ordered authorities to prevent torture, violence and other forms of inhumane treatment. It has called for scientific and animal-friendly methods of elephant management and urged that tourism involving elephants be made more welfare-friendly.

Handlers and caretakers should receive training in elephant-friendly practices, while proper treatment and protection should be ensured for sick and aging elephants. The court has also called for the establishment of elephant retirement and rehabilitation centers.

The court has directed authorities to move toward a more natural system of keeping privately owned elephants.

According to the court, elephants should be provided with open and natural surroundings, while management plans should take into account possible conflicts between people and elephants, as well as between wild and domesticated elephants.

The court has further called for ethical elephant sanctuaries where tourists can observe elephants only from a safe distance rather than ride or directly interact with them. The practice of keeping elephants unnecessarily chained, whether for training or other purposes, should be ended. Authorities have been asked to develop and implement policies and action plans to make elephant conservation centers and management systems more scientific and welfare-oriented.

The verdict also calls for better coordination among all agencies involved in elephant conservation and management. Regular monitoring of conservation activities should be carried out, and clear standards for the management of privately owned elephants should be developed and enforced.

Job displacement

The local operators argue that forcing an immediate shutdown without a transitional safety net would lead to financial ruin and widespread job displacement.

A single adult elephant commands a market price between Rs10 million (about $65,360) and Rs15 million, while monthly maintenance, feed and healthcare costs range from Rs100,000 to Rs120,000. Each animal requires at least two full-time handlers: one to manage feeding and grooming and another to handle movement and general care.

"If owners are forbidden from offering safaris, who will pay to feed and care for these massive animals?" said Dipendra, who previously owned two elephants but now retains only one.

"Following the COVID-19 pandemic, when tourism collapsed, many owners were forced to sell their animals to buyers in India. In Sauraha, private elephant numbers dropped from 90 to around 45 today. A sudden ban without financial support will lead to complete abandonment."

The looming ban has cast a shadow over the lives of local handlers, or mahouts.

Jayalal Das, 48, a mahout from Rautahat who cares for an elephant, relies entirely on his income to support his six-member family. His grandfather was a mahout, and Das has spent 18 years in Sauraha driving tourist safaris.

"I do not know any other skilled work," said Das. "If safaris close down tomorrow, I will have no way to feed my four children."

Nandalal Sah, who also handles an elephant, shared similar worries, adding, "If there are no elephants left to ride, I will have no choice but to do manual labor."

THE KATHMANDU POST, NEPAL

Seoul's Incheon takes lead as busiest intl airport

SEOUL — Incheon Airport overtook London Heathrow and Singapore Changi to become the world's busiest international passenger hub in the first half of the year, reaching the top just 25 years after opening, latest data showed in August.

Incheon handled 38.39 million international passengers over the six months, according to preliminary data covering 1,234 airports compiled by Airports Council International. The airport has risen steadily from 10th place in 2002 to fifth in 2018 and third in 2024.

Heathrow ranked second with 37.79 million international passengers, followed by Changi with 34.53 million. Dubai Airport, which had long vied with Heathrow for the top spot, is expected to fall outside the top five.

According to Incheon International Airport Corporation, or IIAC, Incheon's new title solidifies its standing as a top-tier global hub airport.

The airport also surpassed 1 billion cumulative passengers just over 25 years after opening, faster than any other major international airport.

The reordering owes as much to shifting geopolitics as to Incheon's own momentum.

The conflict between the US and Iran choked off transfer traffic through Middle Eastern hubs, diverting travelers to Incheon instead. Transfer passengers climbed 18.1 percent from a year earlier to 4.24 million, while European transfer traffic soared 63.2 percent.

Inbound visitors have also poured into South Korea, led largely by tourists from China and Japan. Foreigners made up 44.4 percent of Incheon's overall passenger traffic in the second quarter, a record high and up from 39.5 percent a year earlier.

The broader traffic base rests on the airport's four phases of expansion, completed in November 2024.

The buildout gave Incheon capacity for 106 million annual international passengers, the world's third-largest, trailing only China's Hong Kong and the UAE's Dubai. Incheon now connects 183 cities across 53 countries through 101 carriers.

As South Korea's gateway airport, IIAC said it has long supported major national events and government policy, and is now investing in artificial intelligence and urban air mobility infrastructure, in step with the government's goal of 30 million inbound tourists.

THE KOREA HERALD, SOUTH KOREA

Forum calls for measures to help ASEAN tackle climate change

Climate resilience has stopped being an environmental issue and become an economic one, experts said. When 35 percent of a year's rainfall falls within a single week, as it did in parts of Thailand last year, the failure is not simply meteorological. It is a failure of design, of coordination, and of economics.

That was the argument advanced at a CAsean Forum 2026 panel on "Strengthening ASEAN's Physical Resilience", held in Bangkok in August, where experts said Southeast Asia's climate exposure is no longer a side issue for environment ministries but a direct threat to the region's economic competitiveness.

Witaya Wannasuphoprasit, dean of engineering at Chulalongkorn University, framed Thailand's exposure through three converging failures.

First, rainfall patterns have become faster and more erratic than existing forecasting tools can track, overwhelming the drainage systems designed for a gentler climate.

Second, decades of unplanned urban sprawl have eroded the natural floodplains that once absorbed excess water.

Third, as Witaya termed most structurally damaging, roughly 50 Thai government agencies are responsible for water management, each with their own budget and agenda and little shared data.

Although rain poses a threat to regional development, Witaya said water is not merely a hazard to be managed but a productive resource whose value can be measured and grown.

Citing UN data spanning roughly two decades, he noted that water productivity — the economic value generated per cubic meter used — has stagnated across Southeast Asia even as other regions have steadily improved theirs, representing what he called "a big room of opportunity".

Witaya laid emphasis on empowering the local communities, describing efforts to build local "water schools" so that residents — not only central agencies — understand and manage their own flood and drought risks.



A severe storm accompanied by torrential rain and violent wind gusts caused extensive infrastructure damage in Lat Krabang, Bangkok, Thailand, on June 26. THAI NEWS PIX VIA GETTY IMAGE

Wannaporn Phornprapha, founder and managing director of landscape architecture firm P Landscape Company, argued that much of the region's vulnerability stems from a design philosophy still rooted in "gray" concrete infrastructure rather than natural systems.

Asked to name planners' most common mistakes, she pointed first at fragmentation — designing single projects to withstand, say, a hundred-year flood without accounting for what happens beyond their boundaries, since "water has no boundary".

Second, she said regulation and data routinely lag behind the pace of climate change itself, citing the lack of research into which tree species actually filter fine particulate pollution effectively.

Third, resilient design is still widely perceived as an avoidable added expense when its real returns — public health, livability, and long-term value — are simply harder to put a number on.

Satoshi Iemoto, an expert affiliated with a Japan International Cooperation Agency project, said no single country can adapt alone, because climate risk ignores administrative borders — river basins and coastlines connect neighboring states regardless of policy.

He had three recommendations for the region: strengthen knowledge-sharing between countries facing similar disaster risks; empower local governments and communities, since disasters are ultimately experienced locally; and combine modern technology with traditional wisdom — from Thailand's sufficiency economy philosophy to comparable community-based traditions in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Cambodia.

Stripped of its technical detail, the panel's case was straightforward: ASEAN's physical resilience has been undermined less by a lack of engineering knowledge than by fragmentation — of agencies, of data, of individual construction projects, and of national policies that stop at borders that climate risks do not respect.

Fixing that, the panelists agreed, is less about inventing new technology than integrating what already exists: shared data, nature-based design, community knowledge and cross-border cooperation.

As the moderator summarized in closing, resilience cannot be built by any single country, sector or discipline acting alone — it has to be, in Witaya's phrase, "everybody's responsibility".

THE NATION, THAILAND

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WORLD

Xi congratulates Alamgir on assuming presidency

By JI HAISHENG
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President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message on Monday to Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on assuming office as president of Bangladesh, calling for joint efforts to carry forward the traditional friendship between the two countries, strengthen strategic communication and advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

In the message, Xi called China and Bangladesh traditional friendly neighbors. Over the past 51 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the two countries have always upheld mutual respect and treated each other as equals, he said.

China and Bangladesh have supported each other on issues concerning their respective core interests and major concerns, and have moved forward hand-in-hand on their respective paths toward modernization, he said.

Bilateral relations have withstood the tests of a rapidly changing international situation, he added.

Xi said he attaches great importance to the development of China-Bangladesh relations.

He also expressed hope that the two sides will deepen exchanges and cooperation across various fields to make more solid progress in building a China-Bangladesh community with a shared future in the new era and bring greater benefits to the two peoples.

Alamgir, 78, a senior leader of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party, was sworn in as the country's 23rd president on Friday, according to Xinhua News Agency.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, cabinet members and hundreds of distinguished guests attended the oath-taking ceremony at the presidential palace in Dhaka.

Briefly

DPRK

State media slams Japan's militarism

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea on Monday condemned Japanese politicians for visiting the notorious Yasukuni war shrine on the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, warning the country "will perish in the flames of neo-militarism". In a commentary issued by the Korean Central News Agency, the DPRK lambasted Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi for sending a ritual offering and paying a "surprise tribute" to the war shrine, calling her move "a blatant challenge to the desire of humankind for global peace and security". Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi also visited the shrine, a clear demonstration of the dangerous nature of the Yasukuni visit, the commentary said. "Japan is bound to repeat its past as it never draws a lesson but wantonly denies its past as a war criminal country and a defeated nation," it said.

UNITED STATES

Trump threatens 50% auto tariffs on Canada

US tariffs on all cars and trucks, automotive parts and steel will be increased to 50 percent starting Jan 1, President Donald Trump said in a social media post on Monday after trade talks with Canada collapsed over the weekend. "Build in the US and there are zero tariffs," Trump wrote. "On trade, and in other ways, also, they are among the worst nations in the world to deal with. They feel entitled, and yet, we don't need Canada, they need us!" The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment seeking more details on the threatened tariffs. The two countries failed to reach a trade deal on Friday, with each side blaming the other as Canada readied tariffs on some US goods in retaliation for 50 percent levies ordered by Trump on other Canadian products.

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Bound by tradition



Members of the Karen community take part in a traditional wrist-tying ceremony in Bangkok, Thailand, on Sunday. The generational custom — involving white cotton threads tied around participants' wrists — symbolizes strength, well-being and the preservation of Karen cultural identity. WISSARUT WEERASOPON VIA GETTY IMAGES

Global tensions cloud trade

US tariffs make business decisions difficult, affecting manufacturing supply chains

By RENA LI in Los Angeles
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Tariffs and geopolitical tensions are adding uncertainty to global manufacturing supply chains, complicating sourcing decisions and long-term investment planning, industry and port leaders said.

Lance Hastings, president and CEO of the California Manufacturers & Technology Association, said manufacturers remain broadly positive about business prospects but are cautious about an unsettled global trading environment.

"There's still some anxiety as the year wraps up," Hastings said during a recent virtual media briefing with Port of Los Angeles executive director Gene Seroka.

"Manufacturing decisions aren't 30-day or 60-day decisions; they're actually six-year, 10-year horizons," he said, adding that sudden disruptions make it more difficult for companies to plan with confidence.

Manufacturing in California generates about $382 billion annually, accounting for roughly 10 percent of the state's economic output. China remains one of California's most important trading partners and a major part of its manufacturing and supply-chain network, with two-way goods trade totaling about $137 billion in 2024, much of it involving manufactured products and industrial components.

The relationship is increasingly shaped by a layered US tariff regime. Most covered Chinese imports currently face an additional 10 percent reciprocal tariff, while longstanding Section 301 duties remain as high as 100 percent on electric vehicles and 50 percent on semiconductors and solar cells, adding costs and complexity for companies with China-linked supply chains.

Asked by China Daily whether continuing China-US trade tensions were prompting California manufacturers to move production or sourcing away from China, or instead diversify while maintaining Chinese suppliers, Hastings said the latter better reflects what companies are doing.

"I think it's more of the latter," he said. "It's really assessing the global profile that we face right now."

Some manufacturers began reassessing supply chains following the COVID-19 pandemic and considered bringing certain operations closer to home, Hastings said. Tariffs and geopolitical tensions have since added further pressure.

"There is a lot of uncertainty," he said. "Manufacturers always are looking at the long term, and that's the more important view."

Seroka said those changing sourcing patterns are clearly visible at the Port of Los Angeles, but they should not be interpreted simply as a withdrawal from China.

"China accounted for about 60 percent of the port's overall business portfolio in 2018, compared with roughly 40 percent today," he said, adding that while trade with Vietnam has expanded sharply, China and Southeast Asia's manufacturing supply chains have become increasingly integrated.

Importers large and small have increasingly explored alternative sourcing locations, particularly in Asia, while maintaining complex supplier relationships that often span several countries, according to Seroka.

At the same time, Washington is increasing scrutiny of China-linked global supply chains as it seeks to identify suspected tariff evasion through transshipment, raising questions about how authorities will distinguish illegal practices from legitimate cross-border manufacturing.

A White House report released this month outlines an artificial intelligence-supported initiative called "Detective Border", designed to help US Customs and Border Protection analyze shipment origins, trade routes and product information to flag potentially suspicious cargo.

Seroka said greater use of AI has not yet disrupted cargo moving through Los Angeles.

"We'll see the advent of AI and trying to explore a realm of possibilities and maybe even theories, but nothing yet that is inhibiting the trade that comes through this port," he said.

He cautioned policymakers against confusing illegal tariff evasion with the complexity of legitimate international production networks.

Seroka compared Asian manufacturing networks with the tiered supplier systems around US automobile plants. A vehicle assembled in Michigan, for example, may rely on tires, wiring harnesses and other components from multiple suppliers. Asian manufacturing works in much the same way, he said, except that parts often cross national borders before final assembly.

A garment, for example, may include buttons or other components made in China before being assembled elsewhere in Asia and exported to the United States.

"There are some policymakers that think they're trying to evade these new tariff policies and the prices that are associated with them," Seroka said. "And while there are some bad actors out there, I'm sure, in general, it's a sourcing complexity of parts and components that go into a finished good."

US customs rules similarly recognize that determining a product's origin can depend on where it undergoes a "substantial transformation", rather than simply the country from which the final shipment departed.

Seroka said more sophisticated enforcement should therefore be accompanied by a practical understanding of how deeply integrated global manufacturing has become.

"I'd like to see more awareness," he said. "I'd like to see folks really get some practical understanding of how supply chains work on the international stage."

For California manufacturers, Hastings said the underlying challenge remains making long-term decisions in an environment where trade rules can change far more quickly than factories, supplier relationships or investment plans.

UK missile help for Ukraine 'adds fuel to fire': Kremlin

MOSCOW — The Kremlin said on Monday that the United Kingdom's decision to hand Ukraine information on British-made components used to make SCALP long-range missiles would "add fuel to the fire" and was regarded by Moscow extremely negatively.

UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham arrived in Kyiv on Monday on his first overseas trip since taking office and was due to announce British support to help Kyiv improve its domestic production of long-range missiles.

Asked about the visit and the support, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov accused the UK of doing everything it could to prevent any progress toward an eventual peace deal.

"Britain methodically and regularly adds fuel to the fire and methodically and regularly hatches schemes to prevent even the slightest progress in the peaceful settlement process," Peskov told reporters.

"Our armed forces are carrying out work accordingly, gathering the relevant intelligence to identify the production sites of such missiles and other military equipment, and taking measures to destroy these facilities," he said.

The SCALP missile is a long-range cruise missile capable of hitting targets around 250 kilometers away.

The UK and France have supplied the weapon to Ukraine since its conflict with Russia broke out in 2022, but Kyiv has not yet produced them domestically.

Burnham visited Kyiv on Monday for Ukraine's Independence Day commemorations and vowed to maintain Britain's military backing for the government.

"Despite Russia's outrageous threats to my country, we will continue our support for Ukraine's defense," Burnham said in a speech in Kyiv.

Ukraine was scheduled to host a meeting of its key European backers on Monday to press for critical air defense supplies.

The so-called Coalition of the Willing meeting will be jointly chaired by Burnham and the leaders of France and Germany, who will participate remotely.

The leaders of Luxembourg, Moldova, Estonia and European Council President Antonio Costa are also in Kyiv for the talks hosted on Ukraine's Independence Day.

The European Commission said on Monday that it had released another 6.1 billion euros ($7.1 billion) in new defense procurement for Ukraine, covering air defense systems, missiles, ammunition and radars.

The commission said the latest approval added to 16 billion euros in previously approved procurement plans, of which 8.35 billion euros have been disbursed.

Most of the equipment will be sourced from European Union defense companies, the commission said.

It said Russia's increased use of ballistic missiles and jet-engined drones had heightened the need to accelerate deliveries to Ukraine by reprioritizing orders and ramping up production.

The funding comes from the EU's 90 billion euro Ukraine Support Loan for 2026 and 2027. The European Parliament and the Council of the EU adopted legislation establishing the loan in February.

Under the disbursement procedure, Ukraine can request payments after signing procurement contracts with defense companies. The European Commission will review the contracts before releasing funds to ensure the purchases align with procurement plans agreed upon by EU member states.

On the battlefield, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Monday that air defense systems have intercepted and destroyed 351 fixed-wing Ukrainian drones over its territory overnight.

Russian forces continued overnight strikes with precision air-launched weapons and attack drones against Ukrainian ports and vessels allegedly involved in transporting cargo for the military, the ministry said.



Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha (second from left) greets United Kingdom Prime Minister Andy Burnham upon his arrival by train in Kyiv on Monday. HENRY NICHOLLS VIA REUTERS

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COMMENT

Editorials

Some US politicians' China obsession a confession of their own misdemeanors

In his address at the TechNet Augusta conference last week, US National Security Agency Deputy Director Tim Kosiba tried to falsely portray China as a global "spoiler" and "disruptor" actively seeking to undermine the interests of the United States and its allies in almost every sphere across domains and environments — from the South China Sea to Greenland, from the Middle East to Latin America. "We must push back collectively by using all the levers of power smartly and strategically," he said.

His remarks, a manifestation of a Cold War mentality, reveal the deterioration in US strategic thinking. To claim China's presence is "adversarial" to the US and its allies in "nearly every engagement" and wherever the US seeks to defend itself and its allies is not an analytical assessment of reality. Rather, it is a reflection of the US' increasing unease about its capabilities to exercise hegemony in a multipolar world.

Baselessly labeling China as a "spoiler" confuses diplomatic engagement with hostility. China's extensive economic partnerships across the world are normal and beneficial to the international community. The country's footprint is characterized by trade, infrastructure development and dialogue, rather than the US style of military expansion or regime-change operations. Yet Kosiba interprets these as "adversarial", treating the entire world as the US' own exclusive domain.

Kosiba attempted to cast China's presence in Greenland and Antarctica as a "military threat". This groundless claim inadvertently exposes Washington's own intent to militarize these regions, where China's activities are transparent, scientific and cooperative. It is the US government that has defied international norms by repeatedly trying to assert control over Greenland, which is a sovereign territory of Denmark.

China has been a consistent defender of the international order and contributor to global peace and development. In its bilateral cooperation with other countries, China does not target third parties.

Kosiba's claim that Chinese companies are "passing intelligence to Iran" and "undermining" US operations is unfounded and intended to create a pretext for the US to use long-arm jurisdiction and impose unilateral and unlawful sanctions on Chinese entities.

The historical record shows that the US has frequently played the role of spoiler and disruptor in various regions — invading sovereign nations, meddling in domestic politics, and cultivating proxies to foment bloc confrontation, all while invoking the self-serving justifications of "human rights", "freedom" and "democracy" to lend "moral cover" to strategic overreach.

As a major country pursuing peaceful development, China's rise confounds some in the US. In response, they have repeatedly sought to provoke tensions or project the US' own behaviors onto China, levying unfounded accusations. Yet the more aggressively these US politicians make such absurd claims, the more they reveal their palpable anxiety in the face of a changing world.

Kosiba's call for "collective pushback" is actually a demand for allies to sacrifice their own interests and pick sides to alleviate Washington's anxiety. By falsely framing China as a "foe", these China-bashing politicians in the US are seeking to steer the world toward a new Cold War.

The US should follow the trend of the times, abandon its outdated zero-sum mindset and view China's development with a rational and pragmatic attitude. Resolving differences through equal dialogue serves the interests of both sides. The US is only shooting itself in the foot by continuing to perpetuate confrontation and spreading falsehoods that erode the international order.

Japan's remilitarization a fiscal dead end

The latest public opinion poll in Japan is a caution to the Sanae Takaichi government that it shouldn't allow the military buildup to consume the country's economic vigor. The Takaichi Cabinet's approval rating has fallen to 50.2 percent, its lowest level since she took office, while 71.7 percent of respondents say they are worried about Japan's fiscal health.

The immediate trigger may be a proposed cut in the consumption tax on food. The majority of respondents were worried the tax reduction could make it difficult for the government to sustain its social security system as Takaichi has failed to offer any alternative source of revenue to fill the fiscal gap to be left by the tax cut.

In fact, Takaichi appears to be promising everything at once: lower taxes, higher military spending, massive industrial investment, stronger security ties and faster growth. Japan's balance sheet, however, will not play ball.

She wants to protect households from inflation while maintaining an expansive fiscal and investment agenda. But the most conventional way to fight persistent inflation and support a weak yen is to allow the central bank to tighten monetary policy. The problem is that Japan cannot raise interest rates without confronting its debt mountain. This is the bind at the heart of Takaichi-nomics.

Takaichi's answer has increasingly been to promise investment and military spending as engines of "national renewal". But Japan has an aging population, a shrinking workforce, weak domestic demand and a shortage of resources. The proposed 370 trillion yen ($2.32 trillion) investment program over 14 years may help strategic industries, but no amount of government subsidy can substitute indefinitely for productivity growth, labor reform and a sustainable social security system.

The proposed domestic investment is to be accompanied by the cut in the food consumption tax from 8 percent to 1 percent. A complete elimination would represent roughly 5 trillion yen a year in lost revenue, so even the proposed reduction would leave a substantial hole. Meanwhile, the fiscal year 2027 military budget request stands at a record 8.9 trillion yen, and the final tally is on track to exceed 10 trillion yen as additional appropriations pile on.

This is where the rhetoric of "national strength" collides with the realities of the country's national debt. Japan already carries one of the heaviest public-debt burdens in the developed world. The 10-year Japanese government bond yield recently climbed to 2.95 percent, its highest level in about three decades. The Japanese Finance Ministry is preparing 36.6 trillion yen for government-bond principal and interest payments in fiscal year 2027, a 17 percent increase from the previous year.

The danger is a feedback loop: more spending requires more borrowing; more borrowing can raise investors' concerns; higher yields increase interest costs; higher interest costs consume fiscal space; and shrinking fiscal space makes every subsequent policy choice harder.

The Takaichi government has invested a considerable stake in promoting Japan's military, economic security and national identity. It has pressed ahead with controversial legislation on imperial succession and a backup capital, while its security policy is a de facto neo-militarist to-do list.

Yet unlike the right-wing forces, voters appear less interested in recovering yesterday's military "glory" than paying tomorrow's grocery bills.

In other words, Takaichi's main interest is remilitarization, while issues such as people's livelihoods and alleviating the burden on households take a back seat. The poll numbers on historical issues indicate that Japanese society is not unanimously behind her neo-militarist agenda. That is a big political gap.

The strongest mandate in the world cannot repeal arithmetic. Takaichi's ruling coalition may have won a Lower House majority, but it still faces resistance in the Upper House, and her popularity is already losing some of its protective cushion.

Takaichi vows to make Japan stronger. But strength is not measured by the number of missiles, submarines and warplanes a government can finance, but whether a country can pay its bills, maintain policy credibility and improve its people's well-being.

No country can become stronger in the long run by confusing military expenditure with economic vitality. Takaichi has a choice between political theater and economic discipline.

But even as the Japanese public grapples with the rising cost of living, Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi visited Australia and India last week, advocating Japan's "counterstrike capabilities" and promoting weapons exports. These moves reflect Takaichi is recklessly pursuing the wrong choice of expanding military and related industries while trying to cut taxes.

The more rational choice would be to embrace the trade-offs required for "national renewal": a credible tax base, structural reform, monetary-policy independence and spending that prioritizes the economy's long-term capacity. The neo-militarist drive should be discarded.

Japan's strained fiscal reality should serve as a stark warning to Takaichi: sacrificing public welfare for military expansion is a path to ruin. The problem, however, is that you can never wake someone who is pretending to be asleep.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Middle East crisis cannot be sanctioned away by coercion

When Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Miao Deyu met his Iranian counterpart Kazem Gharibabadi in Beijing on Aug 17, he reaffirmed China's commitment to dialogue and peace in the Middle East, saying that Beijing will continue helping restore peace and tranquility to the region.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a news release about the meeting on Sunday, after US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent publicly urged China, on Thursday, to join Washington's economic pressure campaign against Tehran. China's message was simple: It will not be pressured into being the US' accomplice in a conflict Washington created — along with Israel — and which it cannot resolve.

The conflict is entering its sixth month. The US' "Epic Fury" strikes in February and following campaigns failed to break Tehran's will. A full-scale invasion, according to Pentagon estimates, would cost trillions of dollars and require years of input — a political death sentence.

So Washington has increasingly pivoted to "economic warfare", with US President Donald Trump calling it "economic D-Day", a phrase that evokes the Normandy landings but increasingly sounds like a retreat.

This is a familiar Washington reflex: When military pressure fails, double down on sanctions. But three realities complicate that strategy.

First, Venezuela. Tehran has watched what happened under the US sanctions regime and drawn its own conclusion. Second, the Strait of Hormuz. Iran does not need to defeat the US Navy to control the choke point. Washington can squeeze Iranian oil exports, but it cannot open the strait. Third, the US' own fiscal predicament. Trump's suggestion that military force could be used if the national debt becomes unmanageable exposes an uncomfortable truth: domestic economic anxieties are increasingly bleeding into strategic calculations. A foreign confrontation can become a convenient distraction from problems at home.

So where does China fit in? China is Iran's trading partner. Bessent urged Beijing to sever those ties, but Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Lin Jian was explicit: China opposes unilateral sanctions that lack a UN Security Council mandate.

Washington should discard the wishful thinking that it can compel China to cut economic ties with Iran. If the rest of the world is forced to do the US' bidding, international commerce stops being commerce and becomes permission-based globalization, in which Washington decides who may trade with whom.

There is also a larger geopolitical question. Washington's pressure campaign could produce the opposite effect. There have been reports that Iran has been invited to join the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement. Tehran has denied this, but it highlights that although the US seeks to isolate Iran economically, regional countries may be exploring ways to integrate it into a new security architecture.

Talk about the irony: the US threatens secondary sanctions against countries that trade with Iran at a time when some of its own allies and partners may be contemplating deeper security ties with Tehran.

Unilateral sanctions can concentrate pressure on one country, but they cannot prevent the costs from spreading. War cannot solve the problem; sanctions often create new ones.

Washington has been trying to turn economic interdependence into strategic leverage. But leverage works only when others are willing to accept the rules. Even US allies and partners reject US rules in many fields.

And the golden rule of being in a hole still applies: When you are in one, stop digging. Washington is scrabbling with both hands — military conflict and economic coercion.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

AI can speed up development of Global South

Editor's note: *Artificial intelligence can speed up the growth of developing countries. But these countries should take proactive steps to fully capitalize on the opportunities. People's Daily Overseas Edition spoke to Xu Xiujun, deputy head of the National Academy of Chinese Modernization at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Jiang Tianjiao, associate professor at the Development Institute of Fudan University, about the challenges the Global South faces in leveraging AI and how international cooperation can help overcome these hurdles. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

AI technologies can diffuse through open source frameworks, pretrained models and cloud-based application programming interface calls. This allows developing countries to avoid costly hardware and gain direct access to advanced algorithmic capabilities.

Developing countries don't have to develop state-of-the-art AI models from scratch. Instead, they can adopt existing tools and tailor them to local conditions. AI applications in agriculture, healthcare, education, public governance, disaster response and other fields can enhance public services. This way, AI can ease the shortage of professionals and public services in some developing countries.

The competition over AI involves a comprehensive ecosystem that integrates data, algorithms and computing power. Currently, a few countries and enterprises dominate advanced computing resources, which raises barriers for developing countries. At the same time, many Global South countries face challenges such as insufficient power and network infrastructure, limited access to computing power, lack of localized data and talent, as well as underdeveloped industrial ecosystems for research and development and the application of AI. This threatens to turn the "access divide" of the internet era into an "intelligence divide".

AI has also given rise to a new "representational divide". Large-model training relies heavily on data, yet languages, cultures and knowledge of many developing countries are under-represented in the training datasets of mainstream models. This could lower the suitability of models and lead to algorithmic bias, undermining the performance of such AI models in local contexts.

The AI era requires not only basic digital literacy but also skills in human-machine collaboration, placing greater demands on education, vocational training and talent development. A country's ability to build a talent base compatible with intelligent transformation will determine whether it can fully unlock the dividends of AI.

Without an adequate understanding of AI application and regulation, and without policies and rules for AI development, governments risk long-term dependence on foreign technology suppliers and large platform enterprises. This dependence could hinder the development and growth of domestic industrial ecosystems and innovation capacity.

Future international cooperation should focus on systematically enhancing the capabilities of Global South countries. Priority should be given to developing inclusive digital infrastructure, including the power supply, networks and computing capacity, to support Global South countries in building more local, green and resilient intelligent computing centers. Efforts should also be made to establish an open-source and inclusive technology ecosystem. This includes encouraging the development and application of open-source AI models, frameworks and tools, and supporting Global South countries in cultivating local talent, native language models and AI applications tailored to their local needs.

Furthermore, countries should cooperate to establish a fair and reasonable global AI governance system. Platforms such as the newly established World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization should be leveraged to ensure Global South countries participate on an equal footing in formulating international AI rules, technical standards and ethical norms. Priority should be given to cooperation in areas related to people's well-being, including agriculture, healthcare, education, and disaster early-warning, to ensure that AI dividends can truly benefit broader populations.

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VIEWS

Asit K. Biswas, Qu Yanping, and Yang Xiaojing

Tackling drought from parched to prepared

Throughout history, climatic fluctuations have been a constant companion of human civilization.

Early human civilizations developed along the fertile banks of rivers such as the Nile in Egypt, the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia, the Indus in the Indian subcontinent, and China's Yellow and Yangtze rivers.

There was abundant water for drinking and irrigation, and the rivers were also main arteries for transportation.

However, living close to the rivers also made these civilizations vulnerable to the threat of floods, while regions away from water sources faced the risk of droughts. The Indus civilization declined due to a prolonged drought, while in China, several dynasties lost power because the rulers were unable to protect the population from serious floods and droughts. Flood and drought management therefore became key issues for all dynasties.

As nations grew wealthier and technology advanced, policymakers across the world gained more alternatives to tackle extreme weather events. But floods have received more attention from scientists and policymakers than droughts because their impact is more visible and dramatic.

This is paradoxical, because floods can last for days, while droughts can extend for several months, years and even decades.

Moreover, prolonged droughts often inflict significantly greater human suffering than do heavy floods.

Droughts are now seen as multi-sector crises because they not only affect agriculture and food security but also reduce energy production, disrupt transportation systems, increase wildfire risks, and cause widespread economic losses that persist long after the drought itself has ended.

The severe drought in the Yangtze River Basin in 2022 exemplifies how droughts can evolve into a widespread socio-economic crisis when water shortage affects multiple sectors simultaneously. Prolonged high temperatures and extremely low precipitation led to reduced river inflows, declining reservoir levels and widespread deficits in soil moisture.

The impact extended beyond agriculture, disrupting urban and rural water supplies, hydropower generation, inland navigation and ecosystem health.

Unlike floods, which have clear beginnings and ends, droughts develop through an intricate interplay among precipitation, temperature, soil moisture, and human activities.

Global Lens

Advances in data analytics, artificial intelligence, remote sensing, and numerical modeling are improving drought prediction capabilities, but it is not yet possible to forecast when a drought may start, how severe it may become and how long it may persist.

Recognizing these challenges, institutions such as the China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research are spearheading efforts to improve drought monitoring, forecasting and early-warning systems. Although significant knowledge gaps remain, advances in forecasting science are expected to provide policymakers and water managers more time to prepare for droughts and reduce their impact.

The good news is that China is better equipped to handle droughts than ever before. Substantial investments in water infrastructure, improved water management practices, expanded grain storage capacity, and more effective drought preparedness measures have bolstered the country's resilience.

As a result, although droughts will continue to occur and pose serious multisectoral challenges, their social, economic, and environmental consequences can be mitigated more effectively than in the past.

In addition, China's transport connectivity is now among the best in the world. Grain reserves can be moved quickly from one part of the country to drought-hit regions. This was not so easy just two decades ago.

However, future drought management must shift from reactive crisis response to proactive risk management. Historically, governments across the world have focused on emergency measures only after the impact of drought becomes visible.

A more effective approach involves drought preparedness, continuous monitoring, early-warning systems, risk assessment and institutional coordination to mitigate severe impact before it occurs. Such approaches can reduce vulnerability and increase societal resilience to droughts.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) proposes new strategies for managing natural disasters, including droughts, and emphasizes proactive resilience. This will require a deeper understanding of droughts, extensive monitoring and a thorough analysis of their impact.

As climate change increases the frequency, intensity and duration of extreme weather events, research by institutions such as the IWHR will be crucial. These efforts aim to enhance our understanding of drought processes, strengthen forecasting capabilities, and develop more effective early-warning systems.

While droughts will remain an inevitable aspect of climatic variability, advances in science and risk management should enable societies to anticipate them earlier and respond more effectively. Such progress would benefit not only China but also drought-prone regions across the world.

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

Chen Guiqing

Washington urged to honor one-China principle for stable ties

When the presidents of China and the United States met in May, they agreed to explore building a constructive and strategically stable relationship between the two countries. The Taiwan question, the most sensitive topic in China-US relations, was discussed in depth. The US made several commitments, including US President Donald Trump's remark that "I'm not looking to have somebody go independent", as well as signals that Washington would exercise restraint on arms sales to Taiwan and would not back the calls for "Taiwan independence".

Yet, months later, the reality is mixed. While Washington has shown some signs of restraint, it has simultaneously created new risks in the Taiwan Strait.

Stability in the Taiwan Strait is essential for maintaining steady China-US relations. Whether the US honors its commitments to China will directly affect the prospects for a stable relationship between the two countries.

Since the presidential meeting, Washington seems to understand the risks of conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

Following the meeting, the US temporarily paused major arms sales to Taiwan, stressed the importance of peace across the Strait, and resumed diplomatic communication with China at multiple levels.

Washington also publicly reiterated its adherence to the one-China principle, showing no fundamental shift in its Taiwan policy.

This period of relative restraint enabled the resumption of dialogue in areas such as trade, temporarily easing tensions across the Strait. Strategically, Washington recognizes that a conflict over Taiwan would incur enormous costs the US could ill afford. This reflects a calculation based on US interests, and aligns with the understandings reached by the two presidents.

Yet, high-level verbal commitments do not always translate into action on the ground. Provocative moves reveal a persistent problem in US policy: a divergence between Washington's words and its actions.

Raymond Greene, director of the "American Institute in Taiwan", often oversteps his role and intervenes in the island's political affairs.

In the current political environment, this distorts the status quo across the Strait and promotes the so-called "dialogue without preconditions", which emboldens separatist activities.

At the same time, the US continues to deepen military ties with Taiwan authorities, promoting defense concepts, pressing for increased defense spending, and accelerating efforts to build up "asymmetric capabilities".

It is also deeply involved in tactical defense planning, encouraging preparations for urban combat. Such moves embolden separatist forces seeking "Taiwan independence".

The US policy is marked by contradictions. While senior White House officials pledge to manage risks, anti-China lawmakers in the US push Taiwan-related legislation and military exchanges continue between the US and Taiwan authorities.

This double-faced approach seriously undermines the understandings reached by President Xi Jinping and President Trump, eroding peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

This contradiction stems from the US desire to contain the Chinese mainland, using Taiwan as leverage. Washington seeks to constrain China's development without being dragged into war by "Taiwan independence" forces.

This opportunism has made US policy unstable. Washington seems to believe that it can test China's limits while arming Taiwan and slow down China's reunification process without triggering a conflict.

But this dangerous ambiguity risks uncontrollable escalation. Separatist forces will not be satisfied with limited US "support" and will push Washington toward direct confrontation.

Those who play with fire risk getting burned. Provocations will only shrink the space for peace across the Strait and could lead to a dangerous strategic collision.

The Taiwan question is pivotal for a stable China-US relationship. Such a relationship should be defined by cooperation, healthy competition, manageable differences, and the promise of peace. Yet, Taiwan is a destabilizing factor in this path.

China and the US have differences over trade, technology, global governance and many other issues, but these allow room for negotiation. The Taiwan question is different and concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, leaving no room for compromise.

The one-China principle is the political foundation of China-US diplomatic relations. If Washington continues to play the "Taiwan card", all the high-level understandings and plans for cooperation will rest on shaky ground.

A conflict could wipe out years of progress in China-US dialogue, dismantling the framework for a stable relationship and severely disrupting peace and stability across the Asia-Pacific.

Handling the Taiwan question is therefore a critical test for avoiding the trap of major-power confrontation. For a constructive and strategically stable relationship, Washington must abandon opportunism, honor its commitments and translate the understandings reached by the two presidents into concrete action. The following measures can take the relationship in that direction.

First, Washington should ensure consistency in its Taiwan policy, restrain provocative behavior by officials and stop further escalation of military ties between the US and the Taiwan authorities. Its words and actions on Taiwan should be consistent.

Second, the US should uphold its one-China principle, halt official exchanges and military ties with Taiwan, stop pushing Taiwan to expand its military capabilities, and abandon the idea of using the Taiwan question to contain the Chinese mainland.

Third, Washington should recognize the incompatibility of "Taiwan independence" and peace in the Taiwan Strait. It should stop encouraging separatist activities on the island.

The historical trend toward reunification across the Taiwan Strait cannot be stopped. China's central government consistently pursues peaceful reunification, but it has not renounced the use of force against separatism and interference by external forces.

Only by properly managing the Taiwan question and upholding the one-China principle can China and the US remove the biggest obstacle in their relationship and create broader space for a constructive and strategically stable relationship.

By preserving stability in the Taiwan Strait and abandoning the "Taiwan card", Washington can stabilize China-US relations and contribute to global peace.

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



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Key to realizing life expectancy goals lies in rural areas

Six decades ago, when I was just six years old, for several months it was my uncle who came to fetch me from my boarding kindergarten to spend weekends with my grandparents.

My parents, I was told, were in the hospital, with my father suffering from tuberculosis and my mother from hepatitis. At that time, both diseases were infectious and, sometimes, fatal.

As a six-year-old, I could only cry and pray that they recover and live till the age of 60 — a target I also set for myself. As a child, I had no idea about life expectancy and set the goal just because I had heard people talk about someone having lived till "the ripe old age of 70".

Thanks to China's better living conditions, improved medical care, and probably my prayers, both my parents lived longer than I had prayed for, with my father passing away at the age of 91 and my mother at 86, even though they had to spend their last few years in the hospital.

The National Health Plan for the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), released by the State Council, China's Cabinet, has set the country's life expectancy at 80 years, an increase of three months over last year. If China successfully meets the target, it will surpass many developed countries, and the world average of 73.5 years in 2024.

Checking China's historical records, I have little doubt that the target will be met — over the past few decades, the country has never failed to meet its Five-Year Plan goals. In fact, China has achieved the feat of raising the country's life expectancy from 67.9 years in 1981 to 79.25 years in 2025.

Health literacy indicates a citizen's ability to obtain and understand health information and their capability to make the right healthcare choices.

Every time I go through the details of the health plan, I feel I can sit back and relax. Going by the dozens of indices and practical measures in place, it seems that realizing the life expectancy goal is not going to be a problem. In fact, I feel, they have been extra cautious in setting the target.

The rates of infant mortality, maternal mortality and premature deaths, and of major chronic diseases, are likely to fall in tandem with the rise in life expectancy.

According to the plan, better-equipped hospitals will be established and measures will be taken to ensure citizens can find treatment options within 15 minutes' walking distance from their homes. The number of doctors and nurses will be increased to provide patients with better care.

To deal with the shortage of medical staff in rural areas, medical schools will open their doors wider to students and trainees from these regions on the condition that they return to their hometowns and villages after graduation and training to provide health services there.

More doctor exchange programs will be arranged so that rural doctors have more opportunities for training. Remote medical care will be encouraged to provide timely healthcare to the rural population. Of the approximately one million licensed doctors working in village clinics, many are nearing retirement age, leading to the closing down of many village clinics.

Providing rural societies with better medical care remains a big challenge for health authorities in their quest to raise the country's life expectancy. The challenge becomes tough when we realize that rural areas are fast turning into aging societies, as millions of young people from rural areas migrate to the cities in search of jobs.

While the required tweak (increase or decrease) in the rate of other indexes to meet the plan's goal is less than one percent, the biggest hurdle to cross is in residents' health literacy levels, from 33.69 percent last year to 40 percent five years later.

Health literacy indicates a citizen's ability to obtain and understand health information and their capability to make the right healthcare choices.

Publicity drives should be undertaken to encourage residents to adopt healthy living habits, such as not smoking, controlled drinking, and reduced sugar and salt intake. Awareness should be raised among citizens about chronic diseases such as hypertension and hyperglycemia, and they should undergo routine physical check-ups.

They should also engage in regular physical exercise — at least three times a week and no less than 30 minutes each time.

Surveys find disparities in urban and rural areas regarding sports, with around 38.5 percent of urban residents regularly engaging in sports activities compared with about 31 percent of their counterparts in rural areas.

It seems the rural areas hold the key to realizing, or not realizing, the country's improved life expectancy goal.

Health authorities will find that a lot needs to be done in this regard in the rural areas.

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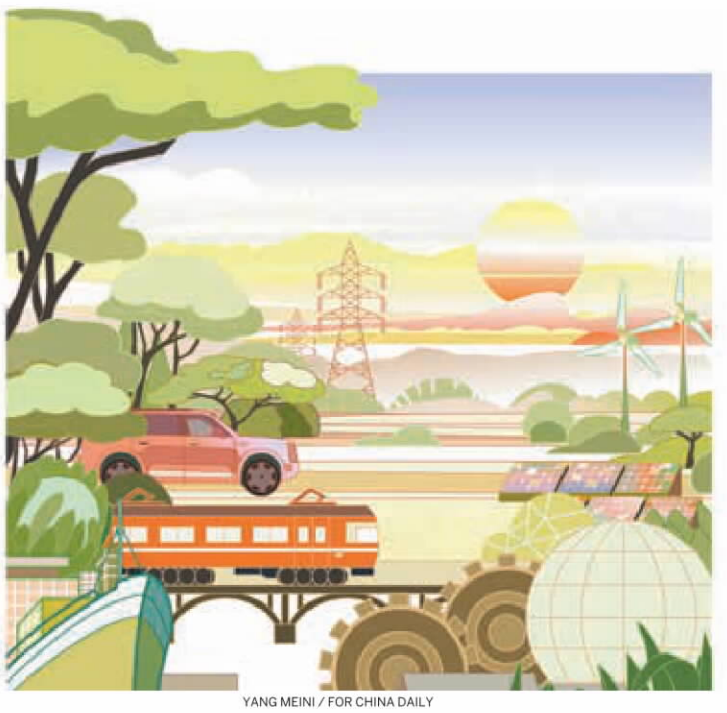

YANG MEINI / FOR CHINA DAILY

BERNARDO MENDIA

Enabling, not squeezing

China's development enlarges the global industrial pie for shared prosperity across the Global South

A persistent narrative has gained traction among certain Western policy circles and think tanks: China's manufacturing capacity is "squeezing" the industrial space of other developing nations. Under this framing, global manufacturing is portrayed as a fixed, zero-sum pie in which one nation's export expansion inherently denies others the chance to industrialize.



This view relies on an outdated model of international trade. It fundamentally misinterprets the dynamic realities of modern global value chains and ignores how industrial upgrading actually occurs. Far from pulling up the development ladder behind it, China is constructing critical structural steps, through intermediate capital exports, greenfield foreign direct investment and joint production ecosystems, that lower the threshold of industrialization across the Global South.

Expanding market access and sharing development dividends are key measures through which China supports the shared prosperity of the Global South. A landmark development is China's zero-tariff policy, effective May 1, covering 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic ties. China is the first major economy to grant unilateral, comprehensive duty-free access to these African nations.

China is taking concrete actions to help African nations better integrate into the global market and unlock their development potential. According to China's General Administration of Customs, in May and June, China's imports from Africa totaled 193.8 billion yuan ($28.8 billion), marking a 23.5 percent year-on-year increase. The import volumes of African specialty agricultural products and semi-processed mineral goods have steadily risen. The structure of China-Africa trade continues to improve: Chinese imports can match Africa's distinctive products and resource endowments; Chinese exports can deliver its high-quality equipment, mature technologies and full industrial chain capabilities. The partnership — characterized by complementary supply and demand, integrated industries and interconnected markets — is growing ever more robust.

The zero-sum argument also overlooks a profound structural shift in global trade statistics. China's export architecture has evolved from final consumer goods toward intermediate components, advanced machinery and green technology. According to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, China's equipment manufacturing sector became a major driver of the country's export growth in the first half of 2026, with exports of mechanical and electrical products increasing by 20.1 percent. Based on data released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, exports of wind turbine generators, lithium batteries and automobiles have registered growth in the first half of this year.

This development provides other developing economies with competitively priced capital inputs. Critics often worry that relying on imported intermediate goods leads to premature deindustrialization or locks some developing nations into low-value assembly. Yet history demonstrates that almost every modern industrial power, including China during its early reform era, began by mastering processing and assembly before moving up the technological ladder. Importing cost-effective components, energy systems and industrial machinery lowers operational baselines for local manufacturers.

Furthermore, this mechanism generates a vital macroeconomic benefit: input-cost disinflation. Instead of forcing emerging markets into capital-intensive, high-risk import substitution from scratch, cost-effective goods act as a structural anti-inflationary buffer. Local industries gain immediate price competitiveness, enabling domestic capital to focus on downstream processing, customized manufacturing and regional market distribution. The emerging pattern is a highly collaborative division of labor where China supplies intermediate goods, partner countries process and assemble and both benefit from joint global exports.

Trade flows alone, however, tell only half of the story. The transition from simple commerce to long-term economic integration is powered by direct capital deployment. Data highlights a pivot in cross-border investment: China's non-financial direct investment in Belt and Road partner nations surpassed $39.67 billion in 2025, accompanied by over $257.98 billion in signed construction contracts.

This capital is no longer limited to basic infrastructure or sovereign loans. It is increasingly directed into physical greenfield production. From manufacturing complexes in Egypt's Suez Canal Economic Zone to multi-billion-dollar green ammonia and renewable energy programs in Ethiopia, capital is being anchored directly inside host countries. Dedicated industrial parks act as ecosystem anchors, generating local employment, transferring operational skills and converting raw materials into processed, value-added exports on-site. Greenfield investment ensures that host nations do not remain passive consumers, but steadily construct durable domestic industrial capacity.

In this sense, China and other Global South countries are complementary and mutually reinforcing partners working hand-in-hand, rather than competitors in homogeneous rivalry. China serves as an important enabler of industrialization and the green transition across the Global South.

The assertion that China's industrial power "squeezes" other Global South countries fails to withstand empirical scrutiny. Industrial growth in the 21st century is not achieved through isolation or protectionist barriers, but through deep integration into global value chains. By supplying cost-effective intermediate goods, mitigating domestic inflationary pressures, and committing direct capital to greenfield industrial ecosystems, China is expanding the global industrial pie. When integrated with various dynamic multilateral platforms, this model demonstrates that South-South cooperation is fundamentally transformational, building the steps for shared, long-term economic prosperity.

China's development is an opportunity, not a challenge, for the world. Committed to an open strategy of mutual benefits and win-win cooperation, China can empower global economic recovery through its own high-quality development.

Today, aligning with China's development opportunities, deepening practical cooperation with China, and participating in the Belt and Road Initiative have become significant choices for many countries around the world. Multilateral platforms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum and the China-CELAC Forum have delivered tangible results.

Strategic cross-regional frameworks, such as the historical ties connecting Portugal and the broader Portuguese-speaking world (representing more than 270 million consumers), offer an additional blueprint for trilateral economic cooperation. As an EU member state with deep corporate networks across Latin America and Africa, Portugal can combine Chinese capital equipment and advanced technologies with local engineering, logistics, and management expertise. Coupled with the institutional clearing mechanisms of Forum Macao, this trilateral model can ensure that South-South trade is supported by balanced, multi-party supply chains to help deepen cooperation in global production capacity, technological innovation, infrastructure connectivity and green development.

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LI XING

Out of double trap

The US faces difficult task of managing both external competition and internal pressures

For more than a decade, strategic debate in the United States has been echoing an influential proposition: the Thucydides Trap. Popularized by Harvard professor Graham Allison and inspired by the Peloponnesian War, the concept warns that the rise of an emerging power can generate dangerous structural tensions with an established one.



Despite scholarly criticism and even dismiss across continents, the proposition has often been cited in the US to interpret the contemporary strategic competition with China.

Recently, Ian Bremmer, founder of the Eurasia Group, drew on lessons from the collapse of the Roman Republic to revive the concept of the Gracchi Trap. Unlike the Thucydides Trap, which attributes the risk of conflict primarily to the structural dynamics of external power competition, the Gracchi Trap directs attention to the internal sources of a great power's decline. It argues that major powers ultimately lose their preeminence because they fail to reform themselves in the face of mounting domestic dysfunction. Political paralysis, institutional decay, widening polarization and growing inequality progressively erode state capacity and national cohesion, leaving a great power increasingly vulnerable to external competition and strategic pressure.

Taken separately, both traps offer peculiar viewpoints for understanding the internality and externality of crises. Taken together, however, they present a far more challenging picture of strategic predicament for the United States, which is simultaneously confronting both external struggles for global leadership and the internal polarization of governance and legitimacy.

The Thucydides Trap is most commonly applied by people from the US to the context of relations with China, although many Asia-Pacific researchers have pinpointed its inherent logical faults, disregard of Chinese philosophical tradition and structural mismatch with current circumstances. As China's economic, technological and military capabilities expand, Washington increasingly views Beijing not merely as a competitor but as the only country capable of fundamentally reshaping the global balance of power. Successive US administrations — Republican and Democratic alike — have increasingly viewed the bilateral relationship through the lens of the Thucydides Trap, making strategic competition with China the organizing principle of US foreign policy.

This contest now extends far beyond the traditional domains of military and security competition. It encompasses advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and semiconductors, global supply chains, investment screening, export controls, critical minerals, maritime security and competing visions of global governance. Relations between the world's two largest economies have had resounding impact on the rest of the world as well as global development.

Such structural competition undoubtedly generates significant risks. History demonstrates that power transitions have frequently been accompanied by miscalculation, arms races and, in some cases, major conflicts. Escalating tensions and even conflict cannot be dismissed by many US personalities. Yet, hopes have been refreshed by the new vision of a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability agreed upon by both sides during the landmark visit to China by US President Donald Trump in May this year.

The Gracchi Trap, however, shifts analytical attention away from China and back to the US itself. The concept derives from the Gracchi brothers of the Roman Republic, whose attempts to reform an increasingly unequal political system ended not in compromise but in political violence. Their failure marked the beginning of decades of instability that ultimately contributed to the decline and eventual collapse of the Roman Republic. The central implication of the Gracchi Trap is straightforward: great powers often weaken from internal dysfunction long before they are overcome by external adversaries.

In the US, the warning signs have become increasingly difficult to ignore. Political polarization has reached levels unseen for generations. Congress increasingly struggles to pass major legislation. Electoral outcomes are routinely contested. Public trust in government institutions continues to decline. Social divisions over race, immigration, inequality, identity politics and economic opportunity have become deeply entrenched. Meanwhile, mounting fiscal pressures, rising public debt and deteriorating infrastructure further complicate the prospects for effective long-term governance.

These domestic contradictions inevitably shape US foreign policy. When governments face difficult internal challenges, they often seek external sources of political cohesion and strategic purpose. Adopting a more hawkish stance toward China can serve to generate domestic political unity and reinforce an "America First" identity. Economic difficulties are increasingly attributed to competition from China, while even long-standing allies are portrayed as having taken advantage of the US. At the same time, perceived external security threats often receive greater political attention than the pursuit of necessary structural reforms at home.

This interaction between domestic politics and international strategies demonstrates why the Thucydides Trap and the Gracchi Trap should not be understood in isolation. Rather, they are mutually reinforcing dynamics. External competition intensifies domestic political pressures, while domestic political dysfunction, in turn, encourages more confrontational foreign-policy choices. The result is a self-reinforcing cycle in which external competition and internal instability become mutually amplifying forces, potentially accelerating both strategic overextension abroad and institutional erosion at home.

This has important implications beyond the US. Much of Europe has historically aligned itself with the US' strategic assessment of China, while US allies across Asia and Latin America have also adjusted their security policies in response to intensifying US-China competition. As a result, the trajectory of US domestic politics is no longer merely a national concern; it increasingly shapes the stability, direction and strategic dynamics of the broader international system.

While some observers may interpret US political dysfunction as evidence of inevitable decline, the realities of economic globalization suggest a more complex and double-edged dynamic. The relative weakening of the US should not be regarded as an unqualified strategic advantage for China, given the extensive economic interdependence, cultural exchanges and people-to-people ties that have developed between the two countries. In other words, a weaker US does not necessarily benefit China. Rather, instability in the world's largest and most influential economy could generate profound uncertainties for the global system, with significant repercussions for China itself.

Historical analogies should be applied with caution. Neither the Thucydides Trap nor the Gracchi Trap should be taken as deterministic predictions. History does not mechanically repeat itself. Rather, these concepts highlight structural pressures that policymakers should seek to resolve rather than allow to unfold.

Avoiding the Thucydides Trap requires strategic trust-building, crisis-management mechanisms and sustained dialogue between the US and China. Avoiding the Gracchi Trap requires something even more difficult for the US: restoring public trust in the political system, strengthening domestic institutions, addressing widening inequalities and rebuilding national consensus.

Throughout history, great powers rarely collapse because they lose a single external confrontation. More often, they decline gradually because internal weaknesses prevent them from adapting to changing circumstances.

The future global order will therefore depend not only on how the US manages competition with China but also on whether it can overcome its own domestic fragmentation.

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BUSINESS

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Alibaba seeks HK$80 billion placement

Raising equity gives firm longer-term funding; sends vote of confidence

By **CHENG YU**
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Alibaba Group is seeking to raise about HK$80 billion ($10.2 billion) through a new share placement in Hong Kong, which, if completed, would become the world's third-largest primary follow-on offering this year, behind only those placed by Alphabet and Intel.

The placement, announced on Sunday, would mark Alibaba's first new share sale since its Hong Kong listing in 2019. More striking is where every dollar raised is headed — the company plans to use 100 percent of its net proceeds to strengthen its artificial intelligence capabilities, including expanding and upgrading AI infrastructure.

Several sources close to the matter told China Daily that the offering was oversubscribed within an hour of its launch. One source close to the company disclosed that sovereign wealth funds and some long-term institutional investors showed keen interest.

Right after the move, Alibaba's Chairman Cai Chongxin and CEO Wu Yongming bought a combined about HK$120 million of Alibaba shares.

Guo Tao, deputy director of China Electronic Commerce Expert Service Center, said: "Alibaba's placement also has benchmark significance for China's AI industry. Alibaba's continued expansion in AI capital spending could accelerate development across China's domestic AI supply chain, from AI chip adaptation and intelligent computing centers to liquid-cooling systems."

As the AI race shifts from a technology contest into a "capital endurance race", raising equity gives Alibaba longer-term funding while sending a vote of confidence through the broader sector, Guo said.

The aggressive spending comes as AI emerges as an increasingly important growth engine for Alibaba.

The company reported revenue of 268.95 billion yuan ($37.5 billion) for its fiscal first quarter ended June 30, with net profit attributable to shareholders of 10.54 billion yuan.

Alibaba CEO Wu Yongming told analysts after the earnings release that annualized recurring revenue from AI-related products was expected to approach $10 billion in the next quarter. AI-related product ARR had already surpassed 49.5 billion yuan in the first quarter, Wu said.



View of Alibaba's booth at the recent World AI Conference held in Shanghai. AP

Jiang Han, a senior researcher at market consultancy Pangoal, said: "Alibaba's organizational restructuring was effectively designed to build a vertically integrated, full-stack AI operation, lowering transaction costs and speeding the deployment of new technologies. The improvement in commercialization returns mentioned by Wu is a direct monetization of that full-stack capability." Jiang added that Alibaba's AI investment was beginning to move from simply "burning cash" toward generating its own financial returns.

Alibaba's fundraising also comes as the AI sector's capital requirements are ballooning globally, pushing companies to seek ever larger pools of financing.

Anthropic confidentially filed for a United States' initial public offering in June and could list as early as October, with a targeted valuation of as much as $2 trillion. OpenAI is also targeting a potential fourth-quarter listing, while its valuation in private markets stands at around $850 billion.

Alibaba's HK$80 billion placement puts China's largest tech firms squarely into that global capital race. But raising more money does not remove the biggest uncertainty hanging over the AI boom — whether commercial returns can keep pace with the extraordinary amount of investment.

Investors are already showing some caution. Alibaba's US-listed shares closed at $119.34 on Monday, down 8.57 percent, while its Hong Kong-listed shares ended at HK$112, down 8.54 percent.

"The biggest risk investors need to watch is not that AI fails, but that the pace of AI commercialization fails to keep up with capital spending. In the end, this competition will not be about who spends the most. It will be about who can make returns on AI investment exceed the cost of capital first," Jiang added.

Smart agriculture


Staffers from State Grid Yangzhou check power facilities at Jiangdu District Modern Agricultural Industrial Park in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, aiming to optimize power supply for electricity-intensive projects such as smart greenhouses, water and fertilizer irrigation infrastructure, and cold chain storage facilities. The power supplier aims to inject strong momentum into developing local smart agriculture. REN FEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Railway cargo transport volume up

The China-Laos Railway has handled over 90 million metric tons of cargo since the railway began operation in 2021, with cross-border cargo surpassing 21 million tons, said China Railway Kunming Group Co Ltd. The number of cross-border freight trains operated daily has risen to a peak of 23, while the maximum hauling capacity per train has increased from 2,000 tons to 2,800 tons.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 24 pips to 6.7841 against the US dollar on Monday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Digital yuan use gathering pace

By **ZHOU LANXU**
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China's digital yuan is gaining traction in cross-border use as a growing number of transactions point to broader and more regular commercial applications, potentially bolstering the renminbi's role in international settlement and payments, experts said.

The development comes as recent volatility in the United States Treasury market has renewed discussion about diversification of the international monetary system. Central bank digital currencies — including e-CNY or the digital yuan — have been viewed as one possible avenue for supporting a more diversified system, given their potential to make cross-border payments faster, less costly and more secure.

Against this backdrop, Ping An Bank recently said that its Hangzhou branch in Zhejiang province had made the first e-CNY transaction in the lender's cross-border business. Using the Multilateral Central Bank Digital Currency Bridge (mBridge), the branch had processed a goods trade settlement for a high-end manufacturer in Jiaxing, Zhejiang.

Ping An Bank said the transaction shortened the intermediate clearing chain and significantly improved transaction security and settlement efficiency compared with conventional cross-border remittances.

The mBridge project is a new type of multicurrency international cross-border infrastructure leveraging blockchain technology, allowing direct transactions in local digital currencies.

The platform's cumulative transaction value had reached almost 500 billion yuan ($74.4 billion) by end-2025, with more than 95 percent of the transactions made using e-CNY as of end-November 2025, according to the People's Bank of China.

This month, the Beijing Municipal Branch of the PBOC said that Postal Savings Bank of China's Beijing branch had completed the city's first mBridge cross-border transaction involving the Macao Special Administrative Region, making a payment to a Macao company related to public transport card settlement.

Last month, Industrial Bank also announced that it had launched in Guangzhou, Guangdong province mBridge payment services to the Macao SAR, while having lately used the platform to process a 500 million yuan cross-border transfer for an equity acquisition involving an industrial park.

"Together, the cases show that cross-border e-CNY payments have moved beyond proof-of-concept testing into real-value transactions, and are accelerating toward regular, large-scale use," said Lou Feipeng, a researcher at Postal Savings Bank of China.

"The next breakthroughs are likely to come from deeper expansion of application scenarios," Lou said, as the digital yuan is extending usage from goods trade into services trade, cross-border investment and financing, commodity transactions, shipping insurance and other financial activities.

Further progress will also require broader infrastructure connectivity and a stronger institutional ecosystem, including cross-border anti-money laundering cooperation, he added.

Policy and institutional support have been strengthened. At its work conference held this month, the PBOC called for improving cross-border digital yuan infrastructure. The central bank subsequently expanded the number of e-CNY operating institutions to 30, broadening the banking network that could develop related applications.

Miao Yanliang, chief economist at China International Capital Corp, said, "The digital yuan has the potential to expand the RMB's role in international settlement and payments, with its programmability enabling fast and secure large-value cross-border transactions."

However, Miao said that the key challenge is interoperability — connecting different payment infrastructures across jurisdictions while bridging differences in technical standards and compliance regimes, thereby broadening the range of markets and users the digital yuan can serve.

China's pet industry evolving at unprecedented rate

By **HE QI** in Shanghai
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China's pet industry is evolving at a pace unmatched worldwide, with consumer and industrial upgrades that take five to seven years in mature markets compressed into just one to two years locally, Ganesh Ramani, general manager of Mars Pet Nutrition China, said in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

"The changes we see across the globe happen at a certain pace, but in China they happen much faster. The timelines are compressed," Ramani said on the sidelines of the 28th Pet Fair Asia held at the Shanghai New International Expo Center from Wednesday to Sunday, which gathered over 2,600 exhibitors from across the full pet industry chain.

Ramani attributed the speed to a comprehensive supply chain, a highly digital retail environment and strong social media influence. Additionally, the influx of first-time pet owners has further energized the market.

China is home to over 100 million pets, and most new pet-owning families have no multi-generational tradition of keeping animals. Consumers actively search for pet care knowledge online and are highly receptive to new information, fueling the growth of more than 3,000 pet food brands in constant innovation, said Ramani.

"Chinese consumers are probably among the most demanding in the world. They pay very close attention to what is on the back of the pack — they research ingredients, formulas, recipes and production processes, and look for validation of what companies are claiming," Ramani said, adding that such rational consumption will push the industry to raise standards and drive out speculative players.

This view echoes observations from Royal Canin, another Mars brand. Xu Juan, general manager of Royal Canin China, said the country's pet market has completed a transition from "quantity" to "quality" over three decades — evolving from functional home guarding to basic sustenance, then premium feeding, and now the pursuit of health and longevity. China has become the world's second-largest market by pet population, Xu said.

Strategic focus on China has translated into tangible investment. Mars Pet Nutrition entered the country in 1989 and started local manufacturing as early as 1995, making it one of the first foreign pet food companies to build production capacity here. Today, 90 percent of Mars' products sold in China are locally made.

"One of the key shifts we have made in recent years is building a portfolio designed around Chinese consumers and local insights," Ramani said, noting that more than 40 localized products have been launched since 2025. While Chinese factories currently prioritize domestic demand, innovations validated here may be exported to other markets in the future.

Royal Canin is also ramping up local manufacturing. With its Tianjin factory's wet pet food line now operational, the company has formed a Tianjin-Shanghai dual-factory footprint with both dry and wet pet food lines. The 88-gram single-serve can and Corgi-specific formula, Xu said, show how local consumer insights drive product innovation.

Pet aging is one of the most definitive niche trends. Xu said that around 20 million pets in China have reached senior age — pets over 7 and large breed dogs over 5 are considered early seniors — and it is estimated that half of the country's pets will be seniors by 2040. However, public awareness lags behind.

Mars Pet Nutrition is approaching the aging trend from a preventive nutrition angle. Ramani said the core logic behind the Nutro brand refresh is proactive health, as the gut serves as the first line of immune defense.

Unlocking growth via county-level markets

By **LI JING**
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China's vast county-level markets are rapidly evolving beyond a cheaper extension of urban markets into an increasingly important source of domestic consumer growth, industry experts and data show.

According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, retail sales of consumer goods in rural areas climbed 2.4 percent year-on-year in the first seven months of this year, more than double the 1.1 percent growth in urban areas. Today, county and township economies generate approximately 40 percent of China's total GDP.

Rural retail growth has outpaced or roughly matched urban growth for 55 consecutive months, a span of more than four years, highlighting the durability of a shift in consumption toward smaller markets, said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

"Covering more than 90 percent of the nation's land area, county-level markets form complete, independent economic units with diverse consumption scenarios," Zhou said. "With rising living standards and incomes, pent-up demand for high-quality lifestyles is surging. This is being met by an influx of major retailers expanding downward, creating an efficient supply-and-demand alignment."

Crucially, experts note that county-level consumers enjoy a distinct structural advantage. "Compared with cities, consumers in county-level areas generally face significantly lower burdens for housing, mortgages and daily transportation," said Chen Liping, a professor specializing in retail at the Capital University of Economics and Business. "This lower cost structure frees up substantial disposable income, fostering stronger willingness to spend and higher resilience against economic headwinds."

However, stronger demand does not automatically translate into stronger brand sales. According to a recent report by market research firm NielsenIQ, also known as NIQ, county-level fast-moving consumer goods sales expanded 2.5 percent year-on-year, five times the 0.5 percent growth recorded in tier-one and tier-two cities. Yet, among the 20 leading FMCG manufacturers tracked by NIQ, only four posted sales gains in county markets, while 16 saw declines.

"County markets are no longer just a 'delayed version' of top-tier cities," said Ding Na, retail insights manager at NielsenIQ China. "Simply relying on downward channel expansion and price wars is no longer enough. Brands need to tailor their strategies to distinct local lifestyles and generational demands."

NIQ data show 53 percent of county consumers remain price-sensitive, while quality, practicality and experience are becoming more important. Consumers under 30 have relatively strong purchasing power and are increasingly interested in technology, design and new experiences, while older consumers tend to place greater weight on practicality and reliability.

"The diversity of county-level markets means businesses have broad room to develop new service models and create new momentum for consumption," said Shen Bing, a researcher at an institute under the National Development and Reform Commission.

Policy tailwinds are set to accelerate this transition. The Ministry of Commerce and eight other government departments released a guideline recently, setting out 18 measures covering upgrades to retail infrastructure, business format innovation, the supply of goods and services, distribution networks and financial support.

"County and township markets now hold the key to further consumption growth," said Yuan Xiaoming, assistant minister of commerce.

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BUSINESS

HK, Macao key gateways to the world

Cities are ideal testing grounds for products on way to overseas markets

By LI JIAYING
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For an autonomous driving company, moving a vehicle from a left-hand-drive market to a right-hand-drive city is not just a matter of shifting the steering wheel.

The work involves developing the system from the ground up, with everything from product definition and the vehicle platform to the autonomous-driving system and human-machine interface redesigned around the traffic rules, road conditions and user habits of right-hand-drive markets, according to Guangzhou, Guangdong province-based autonomous driving technology company WeRide.

That is why WeRide's new right-hand-drive Robotaxi project began in Hong Kong.

"Few cities offer a tougher real-world test for autonomous vehicles than Hong Kong, where dense roads, mixed traffic and a mature public transport system converge in one of the world's busiest right-hand-drive markets," said Tony Han, founder and CEO of WeRide.

The autonomous driving developer recently announced that it is working with vehicle maker Geely Farizon and local transport operator Kwoon Chung Bus Holdings on a mass-produced model designed around Hong Kong regulations, road conditions and operating requirements.

Han added that if the vehicle works in the city's dense traffic, the experience can support its expansion into other key right-hand-drive markets including Singapore, the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia.

WeRide is not alone in assigning Hong Kong a specific role in a wider innovation chain. For a growing group of Chinese mainland technology companies, Hong Kong and Macao are where products encounter new operating conditions, local partners and international capital before entering overseas markets.

China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) calls for faster progress toward high-level technological self-reliance and again supports Hong Kong as an international innovation and technology center. Hong Kong is also preparing its first five-year plan, where technological development is expected to play a pivotal role.

Technological self-reliance, however, does not mean geographic self-sufficiency. An algorithm developed in a Beijing laboratory may need to be engineered, financed, tested against different rules and sold into markets with different languages and business practices, just as the emerging Beijing-Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao network connects those stages.

"Hong Kong and Macao boast diversified international business environments, leading innovation resources and mature global trade and financial systems," said Huang Heping, general manager of international business development at Beijing-based space company GalaxySpace.

"They are important gateways for mainland companies to connect with the global technology frontier, participate in international scientific cooperation and share China's innovation achievements," Huang said.

GalaxySpace develops communications payloads, satellite platforms and related systems and has built capacity for lower-cost, large-scale satellite production. In early 2025, it established a low-Earth orbit broadband demonstration station in Hong Kong, followed by a connected-car trial project, placing a mainland-developed satellite system in a local transport setting with Hong Kong researchers.

"Just as travelers need a power adapter when they go abroad, mainland space products need a 'converter' to enter international markets," Huang said. "Hong Kong is that crucial platform."

For GalaxySpace, the next steps include further tests, research cooperation and applications that can be assessed by local partners. "We believe Hong Kong and Macao will connect the mainland aerospace industry chain with the global market and create considerable value for the global space industry," Huang said.

Beijing Zhongke WengeAI Science and Technology Co is using Hong Kong in a different part of the same process. Founded in 2017 by artificial intelligence scientists from the Institute of Automation of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the company specializing in AI-assisted decision-making went public on the Hong Kong bourse in June under the exchange's specialist technology company regime.

In a bid to provide further support for high-potential specialist technology companies in their pre-commercial or commercial stages, Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited, also known as HKEX, launched a listing framework under Chapter 18C of the Main Board Listing Rules in March 2023 to allow such companies in frontier sectors to list without meeting traditional profit or heavy revenue requirements.





Above: Visitors take a look at a model of the Lingxi-03 stackable flat-panel satellite, developed by GalaxySpace, at the 2026 Beijing International Commercial Space Exhibition on Jan 23.
JU HUANZONG / XINHUA
Left: Reporters check WeRide's autonomous vehicles in Beijing on July 8 during visits to private-sector tech companies in the capital city.
MENG JIA / XINHUA

> "Just as travelers need a power adapter when they go abroad, mainland space products need a 'converter' to enter international markets. Hong Kong is that crucial platform."
>
> **Huang Heping,** general manager of international business development at Beijing-based GalaxySpace

As of June 30, 21 specialist technology companies had been listed under the framework, raising a combined HK$38.74 billion ($4.94 billion) through their initial public offerings, according to data compiled by RyanBen Capital. Thirteen of them listed in the first half, raising HK$29.82 billion.

"What attracts us most to Hong Kong is its international business environment and its unique role as a bridge between the mainland and international financing markets," said Wang Lei, chairman of Wenge AI.

Wang said the company hopes its Hong Kong listing will broaden access to international capital, providing sustained support for core technology development, AI product upgrades and expansion into new application scenarios.

Its Hong Kong operation has also put it in contact with about a dozen overseas customers so far and allowed its products to be demonstrated in local financial settings, which can provide valuable feedback on compliance language, data formats and professional workflows, he said.

Macao offers a multilingual route into another group of markets. Pachira, an AI speech recognition, analysis and synthesis company, has placed core research and talent in Beijing, its Chinese mainland headquarters, and operating functions in Hengqin, an island district of Zhuhai in Guangdong, adjacent to Macao, and its international operations center in Macao.

"With Hengqin serving as the main base for commercialization, technologies refined in Beijing can be adapted to a wider range of applications and replicated at scale," said Ho Kuok Tou, founder and CEO of the company.

21
number of specialist technology companies that had been listed in Hong Kong under a new listing framework as of June 30

"Macao, meanwhile, provides a natural testing ground for our international expansion — its concentration of hotels, tourism and leisure businesses, and cross-border financial services allows AI products to sharpen their multilingual capabilities and readiness for global markets," Ho added.

To navigate Macao's multilingual environment and distinctive customer-service habits, Pachira has carried out localized iterations of its proprietary speech large language model. The resulting AI voice system, developed for local electricity supplier CEM, now handles high-volume billing inquiries, marking Macao's first use of an LLM in a customer-service system.

The company said it plans to use its Macao operation to pursue opportunities in Portuguese-speaking markets, initially targeting smart-energy and cross-border financial applications in Brazil, as well as factory-installed automotive systems and overseas banking operations in Portugal.

Hong Kong banking on AI, robotics acumen

By LI JIAYING

With Hong Kong's abundant internationally connected services sector enterprises, research and development capabilities, and financial advantages, the special administrative region is becoming a testing ground for robotics companies seeking to take embodied artificial intelligence into overseas markets.

"Hong Kong was chosen as our first overseas stop because reference cases tested here travel well to Southeast Asia, Japan and the Middle East, where some service patterns and consumer habits mirror those in Hong Kong," said Xie Yunpeng, chief development officer of Yunji Technology.

Founded in 2014, the Beijing-based service robot manufacturer established its international business headquarters in Hong Kong in October 2024 and was listed on the main board there a year later.

Now used in Hong Kong hotels, senior living facilities, hospitals and factories, the company's Hong Kong presence combines R&D, market development and support for overseas operations, including a joint innovation lab built by the company and Hong Kong Polytechnic University to push forward intelligent practices for hotel services.

"A robot making reliable deliveries along a hotel corridor may draw on a Beijing company's engineering capabilities, Hong Kong academics' strengths in hotel management research, and the city's international services-sector environment," Xie said.

The city's financial sector can also support continued research and wider deployment, Xie said, adding that the company hopes to build ties with regional conglomerates and family-run offices.

Government support is reinforcing that role. The Hong Kong SAR government's 2026-27 Budget published in February includes embodied AI for the first time, and outlines measures to guide market capital into AI, robotics and other strategic cutting-edge technological fields.

At the first Hong Kong Embodied AI Industry Summit in May, Hong Kong SAR Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu said Hong Kong will establish a committee on AI+ and industry development strategy to formulate policies for driving industrial transformation through AI, with an initial focus on life and health technology and embodied intelligence.

Embodied AI companies on the Chinese mainland are backing that interest with concrete plans. Shanghai-based AGIBOT said in May it would establish an international R&D headquarters in Hong Kong and, over five years, work with the HKSAR government to set up several joint industry-research laboratories, nurture dozens of start-ups and develop hundreds of industry partners. Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based Pudu Robotics is establishing R&D, operations and production centers in the city, while Beijing-based Galbot has also pledged to build a local team, co-found an international embodied-AI talent exchange center with Hong Kong universities, and test its robots in commercial, tourism and other service sector environments.

That strategy is beginning to show up in the companies' accounts. Yunji's latest interim results put first-half overseas revenue at 5.4 million yuan ($803,220), surging 638.1 percent year-on-year, although it still accounted for only 2.8 percent of group revenue.

Yunji attributed the increase to deliveries to new customers and wider channel coverage. As projects reached more customers and service environments, its business abroad has moved from early validation toward more consistent product delivery, the company said.

What robots are asked to do also changes from one market to another, Xie said. Dense delivery networks on the Chinese mainland generate a large number of food orders, while higher costs and thinner logistics networks overseas shift hotel robots toward guests' needs during their stays, such as bringing slippers or toiletries, he said.

"For overseas resorts offering children's souvenirs, specialty foods, medicines and translation-device rentals, robots can handle final deliveries 24/7," Xie said, adding that Yunji has linked its robots with retail outlets, allowing them to receive an order, collect the item and deliver it without human staff intervention.



A robot developed by Yunji Technology cooks noodles on July 7 while reporters visit the Beijing-based service robot manufacturer.
MENG JIA / XINHUA

"Imagine if one wants an iced coffee in the middle of the night, the front desk may no longer be staffed, but a robot can get it ready with one click and bring it straight to the room," Xie said. "That's where hotels eye the robots for higher non-room revenue."

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CHINA

Cultural heritage in the clouds



A performance of Huayin Laoqiang opera, a national intangible cultural heritage, attracts many visitors on the towering Huashan Mountain in Huayin, Shaanxi province, on Monday. Utilizing its natural beauty and cultural heritage, the scenic area has hosted a series of events like cultural heritage showcases and martial arts challenges to promote the integration of tourism, traditions and sports, boosting cultural and tourism consumption during the summer. CUI ZHENGBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

More HK, Macao buyers obtain homes in mainland GBA cities

Better transport links and favorable living conditions are driving purchases

By ZHOU MO in Shenzhen
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Hong Kong and Macao residents bought a growing share of homes across mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area during the first half of this year, driven largely by better transport links and favorable living conditions.

According to the Zhongshan housing and urban-rural development bureau, the city recorded 9,308 commercial housing transactions between January and June, of which 23.2 percent were made by buyers from Hong Kong and Macao.

Earlier official figures also showed a growing presence of Hong Kong and Macao buyers in Zhongshan. The group accounted for more than 18 percent of the city's housing purchases in the first two months of 2025. By the first 10 months of that year, its share had exceeded 20 percent.

In Huizhou, Hong Kong and Macao residents bought an average of 4,865 homes a year over the past three years, accounting for 5 to 6 percent of the city's total residential transactions, according to data cited by Huizhou Daily.

The composition of those purchases is changing. Local media reported that second-hand home purchases by Hong Kong and Macao residents overtook new home purchases for the first time in 2024. The pattern continued through 2025 and the first half of 2026, with the gap widening.

Data from Jiangmen's housing authority showed that Hong Kong residents bought 760 homes in the city in the first half of this year, while more than 2,200 Hong Kong residents had purchased homes in the city since 2025.

Li Yujia, chief researcher at the residential policy research center of Guangdong planning institute, attributed the trend to improved transport connectivity, deeper regional integration and a favorable living environment.

"Links between Hong Kong and other mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area have become more convenient, while infrastructure, community facilities and the coordination of social services across the region have also improved," he said.

"Also, mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area offer a familiar linguistic, cultural and climatic environment while providing more living space at a comparatively lower cost for Hong Kong residents, particularly middle-aged and elderly residents."

Li noted that housing preferences among Hong Kong buyers have become more diverse. While some favor homes close to boundary crossings, properties delivered with interior decoration and communities with convenient transport links, others view mature community facilities, property management and easy access to cross-boundary transport as important considerations.

A Zhuhai-based property developer said Hong Kong and Macao residents accounted for more than 30 percent of total buyers in its Zhuhai projects in the first half of this year, up from 18 percent in 2025.

Lin Genghao, sales director of the Zhonghai Huanyu Tianxia residential project in Zhuhai, said more frequent cross-boundary travel and changing consumption patterns have contributed to the increase in Hong Kong and Macao buyers in Zhuhai.

"Most of their demand is for homes used for part-time residence or retirement," he said.

For Hong Kong buyers, who range from people in their 30s to around 65, Lin said three-bedroom homes of around 100 square meters and smaller two-bedroom units of around 60 to 70 sq m are the most common choices.

"Buyers with stronger purchasing power tend to place greater emphasis on views," he added.

Budgets also vary considerably among different groups of buyers. While ordinary Hong Kong buyers looking for retirement homes tend to seek properties priced between 1 million yuan and 1.5 million yuan ($149,000 to $223,000), wealthier ones prefer luxury residential projects priced from around 3 million yuan to 15 million yuan.

A Hong Kong resident who bought a home in Huizhou wrote on Chinese social media platform RedNote, or Xiaohongshu, that a pleasant environment and relatively low living costs were among the reasons for considering the city as a place to spend retirement.

Meanwhile, regional financial data provide another indication of cross-boundary property activity. The Guangdong branch of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said it had handled 3,341 home-purchase transactions on the mainland for Hong Kong and Macao residents as of the end of June 2025, with cross-boundary inflows hitting 3.08 billion yuan.

Yao Xi contributed to this story.

Elephants test peaceful coexistence in Yunnan

By YAN YUJIE and **LIU BOQIAN**

Forty-two wild Asian elephants have gathered in a rural area of southwestern China's Yunnan province, moving between forests and farmland and occasionally venturing near villages.

The elephants, belonging to three herds, have been feeding in maize fields and passing close to villages in Mengxian township in Ning'er Hani and Yi autonomous county, prompting authorities to step up efforts to keep both people and elephants safe.

Their return is a sign of a recovering ecosystem. But for people sharing the landscape with the elephants, it also brings the challenge of living alongside them.

In Mengxian, the elephants have become a familiar sight since April this year, with their numbers reaching an annual peak in August.

For Fu Chun, a 50-year-old resident of Zhushan village, the animals are hardly strangers. He has worked as an elephant monitor for more than a decade.

Since the herds arrived, Fu has spent his days tracking the elephants and warning villagers to keep away from their activity areas, particularly when farmers are working in the fields.

At times, the elephants have come within about 500 meters of him. When one charges, monitors run uphill.

"It doesn't happen often. Most of the time, we can keep a safe distance," Fu said.

The first elephant of the year arrived in Zhushan in April. The number detected in the area has risen sharply, from nine on Aug 14 to 42 on Sunday.

The elephants move between Ning'er and neighboring Jiangcheng Hani and Yi autonomous county.

"They come and go," said Wang Siqi, a worker with the agriculture and rural development service center in Mengxian township. "In some years, they come almost every month."

The elephants typically enter Mengxian from Dashujiao village in Jiangcheng, moving through forests and farmland in search of food. Based on past patterns, Wang said they are unlikely to continue north and will probably remain around Zhushan village and nearby areas.

Greater forest coverage and stronger biodiversity protection have made the area increasingly suitable for Asian elephants, Wang said. But forests, farmland and villages now overlap with the animals' routes, making encounters difficult to avoid.

"Elephants do not only live inside protected areas, they also live outside, where they interact with people," said Ahimsa Campos-Arceiz, a Spanish ecologist and professor at the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

"They need to move from one place to another, instead of staying in the same place forever," he said. "We don't expect human-elephant conflict to finish. What we want is to make the conflict not too intense."

A revised wildlife protection regulation in Yunnan, which took effect on Aug 15, further strengthened measures covering habitat protection, monitoring and early warning, wildlife corridors and compensation for damage caused by wild animals.

In Zhushan village, that means drones in the sky and monitors on the ground.

Six monitors are deployed each day to track the elephants. When the animals are far from villages, drones typically survey the area every 30 minutes. At night, thermal-imaging drones are used to track their movements.

Once the elephants' location is confirmed, the information is shared in villagers' WeChat groups, warning residents to stay away and avoid working in affected fields.

The cost of coexistence is also partly offset through insurance.

Forestry authorities in Pu'er city have purchased insurance covering wildlife-related damage, including compensation for injuries, crop losses and some property damage caused by Asian elephants.

For example, compensation for rubber trees more than five years old is set at 52 yuan ($7.74) per tree. Damage to brick-and-timber structures is compensated at 300 yuan per square meter.

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An aerial view on Aug 19 shows a herd of wild Asian elephants grazing in a cornfield in Zhushan village, Mengxian township, Ning'er Hani and Yi autonomous county, Yunnan province. YANG TINGRONG / XINHUA

Ecological action protects Xizang salmon industry

By YANG ZEKUN in Shigatse, Xizang
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Clear water has resumed running through a section of the Yadong River in Dromo county, Xizang autonomous region, while new grass sprouts on land once covered by construction debris — tangible signs of ecological restoration that prosecutors say helped avert risks to a local salmon industry.

The changes followed a public-interest litigation investigation into pollution upstream from salmon farms in local Xiayadong township.

Penpa Norbu, deputy chief procurator of the Dromo County People's Procuratorate, said prosecutors discovered large amounts of food packaging, construction waste and other rubbish scattered and piled along the riverbank while conducting follow-up supervision in connection with Xizang's second round of ecological and environmental protection inspections.

Waste was stacked nearly 1 meter high in some places without protective measures. Temporary toilets at a construction site lacked septic tanks or wastewater collection facilities, allowing domestic sewage to flow directly into the river.

Downstream, sections of the river had turned yellow and turbid and carried a noticeable sewage odor.

The river is the main water source for nearby salmon farms, leaving operators vulnerable to pollution originating upstream.

"The farms could only passively bear the consequences because the pollution sources were beyond their control," Penpa Norbu said.

Farm operators reported that some salmon had died or shown abnormal behavior. They feared greater economic losses if sewage and waste continued entering the river.

Yadong salmon, recognized as a geographical indication product, is one of the border county's best-known specialties and relies heavily on clean, cold plateau water. Wild Yadong salmon, classified as second-class protected aquatic wildlife in Xizang, are found only in a nearly 20-kilometer stretch of mountain streams running from Shangyadong township to Xiayadong township. The local commercial industry, meanwhile, uses legally bred sterile triploid fish.

The farm involved in the case has 20 breeding pools and produces about 200,000 salmon fry annually.

Since its establishment in 2019 through 2025, the local cooperative generated more than 8 million yuan ($1.2 million) in revenue from salmon sales and distributed more than 5 million yuan in dividends to residents.

Across the county, the salmon industry has helped 857 households and more than 2,300 border residents increase their income through employment and related economic activities.

Given the potential threat to both the environment and local livelihoods, prosecutors moved their consultation meeting from an office to the riverbank.

They conducted field inspections, used drones to collect evidence and visited salmon farms before bringing relevant government departments and the construction company together at the site.

Prosecutors presented evidence, clarified the regulatory responsibilities of different parties and coordinated discussions on an immediate remediation plan.

The construction company, responsible for an infrastructure project in the upper reaches of the river and whose proximity to the river caused pollution, was initially reluctant to make changes, Penpa Norbu said. It regarded the waste and sewage as temporary by-products of construction and underestimated the potential impact on salmon farms downstream.

"The main obstacle was not funding or the construction schedule, but weak environmental awareness on the part of the company," he said.

After prosecutors explained the relevant legal responsibilities and potential damage to the public interest, the company agreed to remove the rubbish, improve sewage disposal facilities and strengthen daily management.

However, the remediation process was not entirely smooth.

Because the construction area lacked a regular waste collection system, rubbish would begin accumulating again whenever removal was delayed by a day or two.

Prosecutors therefore carried out unannounced inspections and follow-up visits, urging the company to install garbage bins, build standardized sewage treatment facilities, establish enclosed temporary waste storage areas and introduce a daily collection system, with designated personnel responsible for implementation.

Grass seed was also planted on damaged bare land.

"When we returned, the river was clear again, and what touched us most was seeing new shoots emerging from land that had been damaged by old temporary structures," Penpa Norbu said.

"Vegetation grows extremely slowly on the plateau, so seeing those new shoots was the most direct evidence that the restoration was taking effect."

The case later prompted prosecutors to look beyond the area around the salmon farms.

Dromo county, also known as Yadong county, is an important border area with a frontier stretching about 290 km. As infrastructure projects have advanced, prosecutors have also identified problems including waste dumping, damage to native grassland and unauthorized excavation at some construction sites.

Prosecutors have since worked with multiple government departments to push for corrective measures and urge construction companies to standardize operations, seeking to protect the fragile plateau environment while allowing border infrastructure projects to proceed.

For Penpa Norbu, the salmon case showcased how environmental protection and economic development can reinforce each other.

"Protecting the river also means protecting an important source of income for local people," he said. "In the end, we safeguarded both the environment and their livelihoods."

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CHINA





Left: Yellow sorting robots ferry parcels during a shopping festival at a logistics center in Deqing, Zhejiang province, on June 18. NI LIFANG / XINHUA
Right: A robotic arm sorts parcels on a production line at China Post's Jianggao mail processing center in Guangdong province in May. DENG HUA / XINHUA

Robot on the line

China's massive parcel logistics industry embraces tech in race for efficiency

By LUO WANGSHU in Guangzhou
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At a busy parcel sorting center in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, a humanoid robot works alongside human colleagues on a sorting line, repeatedly picking up packages and feeding them into the system. On a large screen overlooking the floor, its output is displayed directly against performance figures for human workers.

It does not tire, but for now, it remains slower and far more expensive than an experienced human operator.

Eight of these humanoid units have undergone trial runs at the center since March, capable of feeding as many as 1,200 parcels an hour into the sorting system, said He Yong, deputy director of China Post's Jianggao mail processing center.

Yet while eye-catching, the machines represent a technology still in its rough experimental phase — a high-tech snapshot of the transformation unfolding across China's logistics landscape.

By 2030, annual express delivery volume is expected to reach 270 billion items, according to the country's postal industry development plan for the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period.

After decades of explosive, volume-driven growth powered by the expansion of e-commerce, China's express delivery sector has reached a structural turning point. Volume is no longer the metric that matters most.

Handling over 100 billion parcels in the first half of the year alone, logistics giants can no longer survive simply by adding handling capacity, and so have shifted their focus to operational efficiency and unit-cost reduction.

Companies are increasingly turning to artificial intelligence, robotics, autonomous vehicles and digital management systems to improve the efficiency and resilience of one of the world's largest logistics networks.



Clockwise from left: A robot sorts parcels during the 2026 World Robot Conference in Beijing on Aug 19. REN CHAO / XINHUA
A robot transports boxes during the FAIR plus 2026 robot industry exhibition in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in April. QIN ZIHANG / FOR CHINA DAILY
Autonomous forklifts navigate around one another at China Post's Jianggao center in May. DENG HUA / XINHUA

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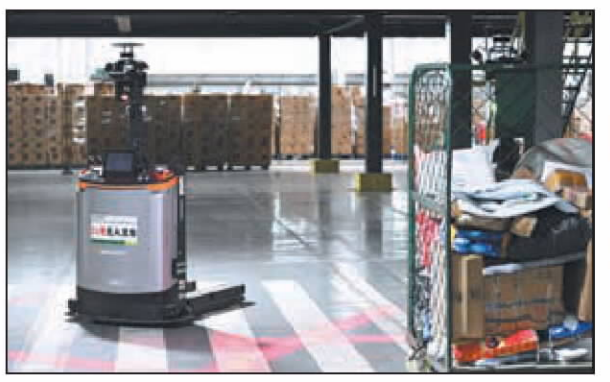

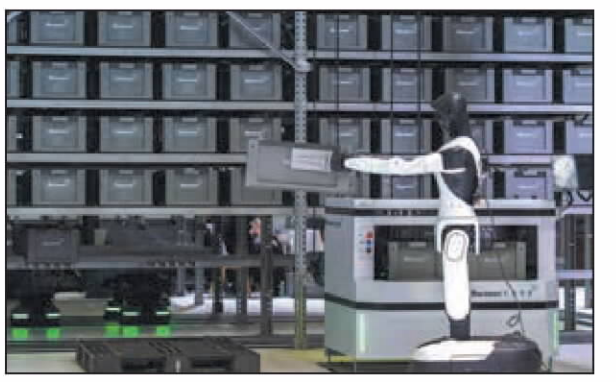

Test bed at scale

According to the postal sector's current Five-Year Plan, China aims for an 88 percent full-automation rate across large-scale processing centers.

In Guangdong, which processes approximately 22 percent of the national parcel volume, automation is expanding rapidly. Automated guided vehicles traverse warehouse floors, while 820 autonomous delivery vehicles and 247 drones operate across urban routes.

At large processing centers in Guangzhou, automation has moved well beyond conventional conveyor belts.

Robotic arms feed parcels into sorting systems, automated guided vehicles move cages and pallets across processing floors, while software increasingly monitors parcel flows and adjusts equipment in real time.

One digital system, for example, monitors congestion across sorting lines and automatically adjusts their operating speeds when traffic begins to build. At one processing center, sorting-line jams during the night shift fell from more than 20 a month to just one after the system was introduced, according to He.

Another trial system uses three-dimensional sensing to measure how much space remains inside trucks, check whether parcels are loaded properly and alert workers as vehicles approach loading bays. The center said it has cut waiting time between successive vehicles by about 20 percent.

Such changes point to an important evolution in logistics technology. Earlier automation largely focused on replacing a particular manual task with a machine. Increasingly, digital systems are being used to detect problems, adjust operations and coordinate equipment across an entire processing center.

Real-world problems

The same shift is taking place among logistics technology suppliers.

At Guangzhou-based Genye Technology, engineers have developed a three-dimensional sorting system aimed at two persistent problems in warehousing — long picking routes and limited floor space.

"Warehouse pickers used to spend much of their time walking back and forth between shelves. When orders surged, they were constantly on their feet, while labor and space costs kept rising," said Zuo Wen, general manager of the company's innovation business center.

"We developed the 3D sorting wall precisely to address those practical problems on the front line."

Instead of spreading sorting destinations across a large horizontal area, the system uses AI vision to identify items and scheduling software to direct them to vertically arranged compartments, allowing more sorting positions to be packed into a smaller footprint.

Genye said its larger systems can process up to 20,000 items an hour while taking up roughly half the space of conventional layouts.

The example illustrates how logistics technology is increasingly being designed around specific operational bottlenecks rather than automation for its own sake.

That technology is also moving out of warehouses and processing centers.

In Foshan, also in Guangdong, autonomous delivery vehicles are being tested on routes connecting express outlets, parcel stations and other logistics nodes. The city currently has 124 postal and express delivery autonomous vehicles involved in road testing across 219 routes, according to the Foshan Postal Administration.

Some companies are also experimenting with shared autonomous transport, allowing retailers and other small businesses to summon unmanned vehicles when they need to move goods rather than purchasing vehicles themselves.

The model points to a wider possibility of autonomous vehicles eventually becoming flexible urban logistics capacity rather than equipment dedicated to a single company.

National push

The postal industry's 15th Five-Year Plan calls for China to "actively develop smart postal services" and significantly increase digitalization across the delivery process. It also calls for wider use of artificial intelligence in customer service, operations, transport, collection and delivery, safety, management and warehousing, as well as upgrades to sorting, loading, transport and other equipment.

Hu Kai, spokesman for the State Post Bureau of China and director-general of its department of policies and regulations, said the sector would promote the "broad and deep integration" of AI with postal and express delivery services, accelerating applications ranging from intelligent transport and warehousing to operations and last-mile delivery.

Chen Kai, deputy head of the State Post Bureau, also said the sector will seek to extract greater value from industry data, strengthen the use of AI and develop low-altitude delivery logistics.

The push comes as the industry itself enters a different stage of development.

During the previous five-year period, China's express delivery volume rose from more than 80 billion parcels a year to nearly 200 billion, while postal industry revenue increased from 1.1 trillion yuan to 1.8 trillion yuan, according to the bureau.

The new planning period places greater emphasis on quality and efficiency rather than expansion alone.

That makes technologies such as AI, robotics and autonomous transport important not simply because they are novel, but because relatively small efficiency gains can be multiplied across an enormous network.

Human cost

For an industry that is estimated to employ as many as 8 million people, this tech-forward efficiency drive carries potentially profound consequences.

Despite this, automation does not necessarily mean removing people completely.

Parcel handling remains difficult to fully automate. Packages come in different shapes, materials and weights, while soft bags and irregular parcels can still pose problems for machines. When equipment encounters an exception, human workers often step in.

At some processing centers, the result is a gradual change in job roles rather than straightforward replacement. Workers who once spent much of their shifts repeatedly feeding parcels or moving heavy loads are increasingly taking on equipment inspection, system monitoring and exception handling.

"We don't blindly pursue full automation in one step," said He from the Jianggao center. "What matters is human-machine collaboration that actually fits the operation."

The humanoid robots in Guangzhou are themselves still being tested rather than deployed as a finished substitute for human workers.

Their potential advantage may ultimately lie less in performing one repetitive task faster than a specialized robotic arm, and more in whether they can learn different tasks and operate in workspaces originally designed for people.

That remains to be proven commercially.

Costs, reliability, safety, data interoperability and the ability to operate through demand peaks will determine whether many of today's trials become standard equipment. For autonomous delivery vehicles, regulation and road access will be equally important as deployment expands.

The next stage of China's parcel industry's technological transition will therefore be less about putting more futuristic machines on display and more about whether robots, vehicles, software and workers can operate effectively as one system.

The humanoid robot stands out on the Guangzhou sorting floor, but the bigger story is taking place around it — in the algorithms directing parcels, the machines moving them and a logistics network learning how to make better use of its enormous scale.

Autonomous vehicles find fixed route delivery role

By LUO WANGSHU
in Foshan, Guangdong

At a YTO Express outlet in Foshan, Guangdong province, courier Wang Kangkang finishes loading bags of parcels into a driverless van about the size of a golf cart, closes the cargo door and taps "depart" on his phone.

The vehicle, supplied by autonomous-driving company Neolix, pulls away on its own, joining regular traffic on a 3-kilometer run to a neighborhood parcel station. The route takes about 20 minutes, passing traffic lights, a speed bump and a narrow lane.

"This route is fixed. Once it's set, I don't have to watch it all the way," Wang said. "It's much easier than making the trip myself on a three-wheeler."

Such short, repetitive runs are emerging as one of the more practical uses for autonomous vehicles in China's vast parcel network.

Before the van was introduced, couriers at the outlet ferried parcels between the two sites on electric three-wheelers. Moving about 1,000 parcels could require at least two trips, according to outlet manager Ouyang Chaoyang.

The outlet estimates that its short-distance transfer costs have fallen by about 30 percent since it began using the vehicle last year, while the time couriers spend shuttling back and forth has been cut by about 40 percent.

"The time saved can be used for collecting parcels and making door-to-door deliveries," Ouyang said. "Those are the parts of the job where couriers can create more value."

The Foshan operation is part of a wider rollout. By the end of 2024, more than 6,000 autonomous delivery vehicles had been put into large-scale use across more than 100 types of applications nationwide, according to the State Post Bureau of China.

At one parcel station in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, more than 20 driverless vehicles handle over 30 percent of deliveries, with each carrying at least 1,500 parcels a day. Elsewhere, autonomous vehicles are being used in relay delivery models in cities such as Beijing, while some are serving villages in remote areas where conventional delivery is more costly and time-consuming.

In Foshan, their use is also extending beyond conventional parcel delivery. Small retailers can book shared driverless vans through mobile platforms to move goods between stores or replenish stock, rather than operating a vehicle of their own.

"For parcel companies, the routes are usually fixed and scheduled, more like a bus service," said Liang Haohua, head of marketing for South China at Neolix. "For smaller businesses, demand is more ad hoc — closer to ride-hailing."

The approach is still developing, but it suggests that the economics of autonomous delivery may depend as much on keeping vehicles busy as on the technology that allows them to drive themselves.

Scaling up also involves more than navigating traffic.

Foshan currently has 124 autonomous vehicles in the postal and express sector undergoing road tests on 219 routes, according to the Foshan Postal Administration. The city has been developing rules covering road access, testing, insurance, safety supervision and accident handling.

Similar questions remain elsewhere, as rules on routes, road access and stopping can vary among cities. That can make it harder for operators to replicate the same model across regions even as the technology matures, according to Jiang Haoran, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference who has studied the sector.



A worker from SF Express loads a cargo box into an autonomous vehicle in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in January last year. MAO SIQIAN / XINHUA

For now, the clearest role for driverless vans may be less futuristic than delivering a parcel directly to someone's door. They are taking over predictable journeys between depots, parcel stations, shops and villages, leaving couriers to handle the more complicated human end of the delivery chain.

About 20 minutes after leaving the YTO outlet in Foshan, Wang's van reaches the parcel station. It slows, signals and pulls over. Staff scan the vehicle, open it and begin unloading the parcels. Moments later, the doors close again and the van quietly sets off for its next stop.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE

A romance with stone

Over 15 years, researchers have turned repeated tests and failures into a systematic approach to saving fragile relics, reports **Bai Shuhao** in Chengde, Hebei.



The decorative patterns on a pedestal at Puyou Temple in Chengde, Hebei province, damaged by a lightning fire in the 1960s, have been largely restored. BAI SHUHAO / CHINA DAILY

Whether in science or art, people tend to favor stories of sudden inspiration: an element discovered by chance or a flash of insight that gives birth to a masterpiece. But most of the time, things do not happen that way.

At least, that is not how it happened in Chengde, Hebei province, where a team of stone restorers has spent the past 15 years rescuing hundreds of cultural relics. Their work has rarely offered a definitive solution. Instead, it has been a long struggle against time, marked by experiments, failures and more experiments, as they search for ways for relics to coexist with the forces that are slowly destroying them.

What they have built in the process is not a single breakthrough, but a body of experience: an approach that can be tested, repeated, and passed on.

An unsolved problem

In 2011, when Li Li arrived in Chengde, about a three-hour drive from Beijing, she stood beneath an exquisite glazed pagoda and looked at its cracked stone base. Her mind went blank.

Chengde was once home to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) imperial court's summer retreat. The city is known for the Mountain Resort, built as an imperial summer residence, and a group of surrounding temples. The site was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1994.

Li, then a researcher who had just joined the China Academy of Cultural Heritage, was not responsible for preserving the grand buildings themselves. Her task was to protect the less conspicuous stonework that supported and surrounded them: pedestals, statues, steles, and other stone elements.

Stone, by conventional wisdom, should be among the easier materials to preserve. It is hard and heavy, built to withstand wind and rain. Its apparent permanence is precisely why people have relied on it for centuries.

But the craftsmen who worked here 300 years ago could not have known what their locally sourced stone would eventually endure.

The rock is a fragile volcanic material known as tuff. It contains salt-bearing minerals, is highly porous, and readily absorbs water.

Temperatures in Chengde can reach 40 C in summer and fall to around -20 C near the ground in winter. The repeated cycle of freezing and thawing causes the stone to split into thin layers.

"Tuff is much less dense than marble or white marble," says Chen Dong, chief engineer at the Chengde Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau.

He compares the stone to a millefeuille, with layers constantly peeling away. Sometimes, he says, "You barely touch it, and it crumbles."

That was only one problem. The stones had also been battered by wind and rain, suffering from missing sections, sanding, hollowing, and other forms of damage.

Before the China Academy of Cultural Heritage took on the project, Chengde had invited experts from around the world to examine the problem, including specialists from the Getty Conservation Institute in the United States. "They all shook their heads and said it was too difficult, that there was no solution," Chen recalls.



Left, top and above: A stone lion at Xumifushou Temple and a *bixi*, a mythical dragon-like creature, at Yongyou Temple, before and after restoration, in Chengde. **Top right:** Restoration samples at the Chengde laboratory. **Above right:** Li Li, deputy director of the China Academy of Cultural Heritage. **Middle:** Routine maintenance at Pule Temple in Chengde. PHOTOS PROVIDED AND BY BAI SHUHAO / CHINA DAILY

The difficulty was partly rooted in the unusual properties of the stone. Tuff of this kind is rarely found outside northern China. Li and her colleagues traveled across the country looking for comparable examples, but found no other site with the same pattern of cracking. "We were starting from zero," Li says. "We had no idea where the road would lead. As the person in charge of the project, I didn't know where to begin."

In the early years, the team rented a small one-story house halfway up a mountain near a temple where they were working. It served as a laboratory, meeting room, dormitory, and kitchen. They painted the house blue.

"Blue represents hope," Li says.

Repairing by trial and error

It was during those difficult years, from 2011 to 2015, that Li's team began making progress in developing conservation materials.

The process was painstaking. Researchers first tested materials under simulated environmental conditions in the laboratory, making sure they would not damage the relics. Only then did they conduct small-scale experiments on the actual stone.

A single test sample might need to be observed for two years. A material could pass laboratory tests and appear ready for use, only to expand after its first winter. Meltwater from snow would seep into the stone as temperatures rose, exposing weaknesses that laboratory tests had missed.

"What's even more frustrating is that a material might survive the first winter, and crack in the second," Li says. When that happened, the researchers went back to the beginning. The cycle repeated so many times that Li could no longer count the failed experiments.

In 2012, drawing on techniques passed down by earlier generations of craftsmen, the team settled on a traditional lime-based material whose main component is calcium carbonate. Similar materials have been found at archaeological sites dating back more than 5,000 years.

But identifying the core material was only the beginning. The researchers still had to repeatedly test firing temperatures and experiment with additional ingredients to determine how the material would interact with different relics.

"No material can be called a once-and-for-all solution," says Xu Dong, who joined the Chengde team after graduating from university in 2012.

Even on the same relic, conditions could vary. A surface exposed to direct sunlight could experience greater temperature swings and deteriorate differently from a shaded side.

Repairing a carved stone dragon about 50 centimeters long can require five different color samples, says Wang Ziyi, who joined the team in 2014.

Xu and Wang were not simply researchers selecting materials. They also worked directly on the relics, carving patterns and carrying out repairs themselves. In their daily work, scientific research and hands-on conservation occupied roughly equal portions of their time.

To this day, the team continues to conduct thousands of experiments to find suitable materials and conservation methods. It has developed a systematic approach that includes cleaning and dust removal, desalination, preliminary consolidation, anchoring, grouting, pattern repair, and color matching.

In 2015, the former director of the Getty Conservation Institute visited Chengde. After seeing the damage, he expressed surprise. For Li, however, the significance of the comment was not simply the authority behind it. "It represented a voice," she says.

The team now has more than 50 members, with specialists drawn from fields ranging from science to art. Since 2011, it has worked on 15 stone conservation projects in Chengde, rescuing hundreds of valuable relics and developing more than 10 patented technologies and materials.

The team calls its approach the "Chengde experience". It rests on three principles: putting preliminary research first and carrying scientific research through the entire conservation process; integrating research, design, field conservation, and monitoring; and using technology and interdisciplinary collaboration to strengthen heritage conservation. The team has also moved beyond stone, applying what it learned to murals and other forms of heritage across China.

Finding a rhythm

As one of the younger members of the team, Xu remembers that her first assignment was a 63.9-square-meter stone staircase panel at Puren Temple, tucked away in the mountains. The panel, known as a *danbi* stone, was carved with two dragons playing with a pearl. Years of deterioration had left the dragons almost unrecognizable.

Three months later, when Xu and her colleagues had brought the two dragons back into view, she experienced her first real sense of accomplishment as a restorer.

The temple was not open to tourists. Only a handful of restorers and other workers were stationed there. In summer, mosquitoes swarmed through the mountains. Sometimes one would crawl near Xu's ear and she would barely notice. She was too absorbed in the work.

A worker once passed by and asked her: As a young woman spending every day alone at a temple, didn't she find it boring? "Everyone thinks differently," Xu says. "I can get close to the relics. I can turn something damaged into something whole. I think that's satisfying."

To Xu, conservation is a race against nature. Sometimes a restoration can look successful, only to begin powdering away after weeks of rain. To a visitor, the relic may appear barely repaired. But for the experts, it may have already undergone an intense rescue effort.

Yet, rain is not always the enemy.

After completing the stone conservation projects in Chengde, the team turned to paper murals inside a stupa in the Mountain Resort. Xu moved her work into the tower.

When rain fell and the wind picked up, she could hear the bells hanging from the eaves. The sound of rain mingled with the soft chime of the bells, and she felt calm.

Xu says that, in the end, the work is made up of ordinary, even mundane tasks. What matters is finding a little enjoyment in them, along with a sense of accomplishment.

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Mangguan rock art offers clues to ancient migration

By **WANG QIAN**
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Left: Archaeologists measure the size of a rock painting at the Mangguan site in Gengma Dai and Va autonomous county, Lincang, Yunnan province. **Right:** Rock paintings of Mangguan represent one of the well-preserved prehistoric rock art sites in Yunnan.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

If a picture is worth a thousand words, the figurative rock paintings at the Mangguan site in Southwest China's Yunnan province carry a great many more.

Published in the Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports earlier this month, a study by researchers from the Yunnan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, Nanjing Normal University, and other institutions found that the rock paintings were created at least 4,220 years ago, based on uranium-thorium dating technology.

This makes them the oldest confirmed rock art created by a settled prehistoric community in the region. The paintings predate the rock art previously documented by researchers at the nearby Cangyuan site by more than 400 years. The Cangyuan paintings date to between about 2,700 and 3,800 years ago.

Around the same time, an abrupt climate event occurred about 4,200 years ago, causing temperatures to drop in northern China.

"The coincidence suggests that drastic climate change may have driven humans to migrate from the north to the south," Wu Yun, an associate researcher at the Yunnan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology and first author of the paper, told China Daily.

Located in Gengma Dai and Va autonomous county, Lincang, the Mangguan site features red and black pigment rock paintings depicting human figures, animals, handprints and abstract signs.

Besides its well-preserved condition, Wu was particularly impressed by the use of black pigment, which is rarely seen in the rock art remains discovered in this region.

By integrating data from the three major rock art complexes of the Jinsha River Valley in Lijiang, Yunnan, Mangguan-Cangyuan in Yunnan, and the Zuojiang River in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, the research team has established a chronological framework for the three stylistic phases of rock art in southwestern China.

"The first is the late Paleolithic, about 13,600 to 8,400 years ago, represented by rock art in the Jinsha River Valley featuring realistic animal motifs. The second is the late Neolithic, from about 4,200 to 2,700 years ago, represented by Mangguan-Cangyuan rock art, which shifted its focus toward human activities. The third is the early historical period, from about 1,900 to 1,700 years ago, represented by Zuojiang rock art, whose hallmark motifs are semi-squatting human figures with bent and raised arms," Wu says.

"This helps anchor the chronology of regional Cangyuan-type rock art, filling the artistic gap in the pre-Cangyuan period," she adds.

In addition to the human figure sample, the researchers also dated 11 samples taken from different motifs clustered at the Mangguan site. Their analysis showed that the paintings were created between about 3,907 and 3,056 years ago.

Because of preservation conditions and technical challenges, dating painted rock art in southwestern China has long been difficult.

The development of high-precision uranium-series dating technology in recent years has enabled Wu and her team to sample carbonate crusts covering the rock art surfaces, determine when the crusts formed and, in turn, constrain the age range of the paintings.

"Sampling only the carbonate crusts does not disturb the pigment body of the rock art, effectively protecting its integrity. Each test requires only 10 milligrams of material, making it a nearly non-destructive sampling method," Wu explains.

Wu and her team will continue to investigate the emerging chronology of rock art in the region and explore possible connections and exchanges between communities across southwestern China and neighboring areas in Southeast Asia.

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LIFE





Left: Teen actor Omar Sherif plays an orphan who has a talent for cooking Chinese dishes in the summer blockbuster *Once Upon a Time in the Middle East*. **Middle:** Shen Teng (left) and Jiang Qiming respectively play a chef and front-desk manager at a local Chinese-cuisine restaurant in an unnamed country in the Middle East. **Right:** The restaurant takes in a group of orphans who had nowhere else to go amid the flames of war.

A recipe for peace

Blockbuster film puts war as a side dish, as food becomes a symbol for connection and harmony, **Xu Fan** reports.

French filmmaker and critic Francois Truffaut once said, "Every film about war ends up being pro-war" — a famous line that has been cited repeatedly, often by those who argue that war films inevitably glorify combat and turn violence into spectacle.

This paradox has inspired creators to seek new narrative approaches for anti-war storytelling. This summer, a Chinese blockbuster is offering just such a response: a fresh perspective on war, seen through the eyes of a Chinese chef.

Once Upon a Time in the Middle East, starring A-list actor Shen Teng as the chef, has become one of this year's most popular blockbusters. Since its debut on Aug 11, the film has grossed more than 1.6 billion yuan ($237.9 million), topping China's single-day box office charts for 14 consecutive days.

It currently holds a rating of 8.6 out of 10 on the popular review aggregator Douban, with many Chinese moviegoers praising its nuanced portrayal of human complexity amid war and its thought-provoking reflection on the longing for peace.

The third feature directed by Wen Muye, best known for his 2018 hit *Dying to Survive*, the film has an unusual premise in China's huge domestic market. Although the country has produced many war-themed films and television series over the past decades, few have combined overseas warfare with Chinese cuisine.

For thousands of years, food in China has been far more than a way to satisfy hunger. It carries memories of family and home, reflects the diversity of regional cultures, and preserves traditions passed down through generations.

These themes run throughout the film, which unfolds through the memories of its protagonist, Xu Fu, taking audiences back to 2002.

Xu, a chef with 30 years of experience, leaves his elderly mother and teenage daughter behind in northeastern China to work at a restaurant in a Middle Eastern country, hoping to pay off his debts. At the farewell dinner, he and his mother eat dumplings, a traditional Chinese culinary gesture in some parts of the country. Families customarily serve dumplings when seeing someone off and noodles when welcoming them home, symbolizing blessings and hopes for those traveling far from home.



Director Wen Muye (right) and actor Shen Teng (left) on the film's shooting site. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Upon landing on foreign soil, Xu quickly showcases his exceptional culinary skills at the Loong (Dragon) Restaurant, owned by a local official with the country's water and electricity authority. Among the dishes he prepares is "loong tide top" (dragon raises its head), a mandarin fish scored along the back and deep-fried so that it curves upward, which symbolizes rising fortunes and a bright future.

At first, everything indeed looks up. Xu's cooking quickly attracts local diners, and he becomes friends with Ma Junsheng, the restaurant's Chinese front-desk manager. But a sudden outbreak of war plunges the Middle Eastern country into turmoil, trapping the two men amid ruins and gunfire.

From there, one tense twist follows another. Xu decides not to return home after his boss makes him an irresistible offer to stay. Then, following an unexpected bombing meant to kill both American soldiers and locals, Xu and Ma are arrested and treated as suspects. Their fortunes take a sharp turn for the worse, and they soon become entangled with a group of orphans' fate — teenagers and children who are being brainwashed by extremist militants that are themselves rejected by the local population.

Yet even as the story moves deeper into the chaos of war, the film repeatedly returns to food as a symbol of connection and harmony. For Wen, that symbolism is rooted in his own cultural background.

As a native of Changchun in Northeast China's Jilin province, Wen tells China Daily that he believes Chinese cuisine conveys a deeper message: a yearning for wholeness and harmony.

"When Chinese families dine together, they traditionally gather around a round table, and chopsticks are used in pairs," Wen says, referring to the symbolism of pairs as a representation of reunion.

"So, in China, the act of eating together carries the symbolic meaning of 'ceasing conflict'," Wen adds, revealing that he hopes the movie will help audiences discover that even amid struggles and sorrow, ordinary people hold on to the humble wish of sharing a good meal.

The idea for the film dates back to 2017, when Wen was working on post-production for *Dying to Survive*, a film about an unlikely hero who smuggles medicine. "I read a news story about several Chinese people who ran restaurants in the Middle East and encountered war. It impressed me and gave me the impetus to create this story," Wen recalls.

Several years later, the director began preparing for the movie, traveling to Jordan and visiting refugee camps, where he spoke with people who had lived through war. But due to complicated international tensions at the time, he chose to cast Egyptian actors, including then 13-year-old Omar Sherif and veteran Sherif Sobhy, who play an orphan and the owner of the Loong Restaurant, respectively.

Sherif, whose great-grandfather was from Shandong province, learned Mandarin and about Chinese cuisine in Egypt for three months to prepare for the role.

Additionally, Faruk Muhammad, a young Egyptian actor who also plays an orphan, impressed Wen during his audition. For his character — a boy exploited by an extremist armed group to become a suicide bomber — Muhammad made a backpack filled with handmade "explosive" props himself, as featured in the script he was given.

"In the Arabic-speaking world, Egypt has a developed film and TV industry, as evidenced by its long-running Cairo International Film Festival, so we held casting calls there, and many actors showed up to audition," Wen says.

But the majority of the production was completed in China. Some exotic landscapes and creatures, however, could only be captured abroad. "For instance, we shot a scene of dromedaries (one-humped camels) running across the desert. In China, Bactrian camels — the two-humped variety — are a more common sight," Wen says.

To make the food scenes convincing, the production also brought in veteran chefs to coach the actors in cooking techniques and help design the dishes featured in the film. One of the most mouth-watering sequences shows Xu and Ma, assisted by more than 20 local orphans, preparing a wedding feast. The centerpiece is a large iron wok measuring more than 2 meters in diameter, turning the preparation of a celebratory meal into a striking visual spectacle.

Speaking of the wok used to prepare a fusion dish that combines iron-pot stew, a typical cooking method in northeastern China, with Arabic-style grilled fish, Wen says the scene was intended to reflect the exchange and fusion of Chinese and foreign cultures through vibrant, everyday imagery. More importantly, it highlights the shared aspiration of people from different countries for a better life.

"I'm not really a foodie, and I'm not much of a cook either. But what I want this film to say is, 'Eat well'. In China, those two words can carry much more meaning than they seem to. They hint at 'Take care of yourself'," says Wen. "In times of chaos, it can be a quiet expression of love — a wish that you stay safe, keep going, and above all, make it home," he adds.

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Dear You fills SE Asian audiences with love and nostalgia

The acclaimed film *Dear You* made its Thailand preview screening in July, bringing an exploration of heartwarming diaspora narratives to Southeast Asian audiences following its theatrical success in China.

Thai Minister of Culture Sabeeda Thaised praises the film as a vital cultural medium for conveying filial piety and celebrating the enduring ties with China.

She highlights that Thailand-China relations extend far beyond diplomacy into daily traditions, family devotion, and shared values, built on over 50 years of formal bilateral relations.

The movie, known in Chinese as *Love Letters to Grandma*, centers on remittance letters that overseas Chinese used to stay connected with their families in China. Through these letters, the characters uncover memories, love and interconnected family bonds in a simple yet deeply genuine narrative.

While the story of long-lost letters originates in China, its themes of nostalgia and generational sacrifice hold personal resonance for Thailand's vast Tio Chew-heritage (from Chaozhou, Guangdong province) population, she notes.




Left: A woman poses for a photo in front of a poster for the Chinese film *Dear You* in Ho Chi Minh City on Aug 4. **Right:** Vietnamese audience members watch the film on Aug 4. PHOTOS BY HU JIALI / XINHUA

The minister also emphasizes the importance of cinema as a vehicle for international goodwill, reaffirming the Thai government's commitment to film as a cultural asset capable of driving social and economic value while deepening artistic collaboration between both countries.

"This film is an authentic mirror of our ancestors' struggles and a testament to the longstanding bond between Thailand and China," says San Chuapanyavit, vice-president of the Tio Chew Association of Thailand, who makes a brief appearance in *Dear You*.

As a third-generation Thai-Chinese, he says this story brought back vivid memories of his father sending "*qiao pi*" (remittance letters) in Bangkok's Chinatown.

"I was glued to the screen without blinking. Despite considering myself a tough person, tears came to my eyes because the story touches the very soul of the overseas Chinese diaspora," he says.

Stressing the significance of the film's linguistic heritage, he notes that watching it in the original Tio Chew soundtrack carries a depth of emotion and cultural nuance that subtitles alone cannot convey.

"It honors the legacy of generations who crossed oceans under severe hardship to establish deep roots in Thailand, contributing immensely to Thai society while keeping their familial ties alive across generations," he adds.

The film was set for a Thai nationwide release on Aug 6, offering screenings in the original Tio Chew dialect with Thai, Chinese and English subtitles, and a Thai-dubbed one.

The film also premiered in Vietnam's southern hub, Ho Chi Minh City, in earlier this month, ahead of its nationwide theatrical release in Vietnam.

The premiere was jointly organized by Vietnamese distributors Mockingbird Pictures and Galaxy Studio, with support from the China Cultural Centre in Hanoi.

Doan Thi Trang Anh, deputy CEO of Mockingbird Pictures, says securing the distribution rights for *Dear You* in Vietnam was a special opportunity for the company and expresses hope that it could bring more Chinese films to Vietnamese audiences.

Vietnamese actress of Chinese descent Tu Ho says she felt a personal connection to the film, recalling that her grandmother often told her stories about *qiao pi* her great-grandmother sent home from Vietnam.

"I've already prepared tissues (for the screening) because I believe the film will bring back many memories through the stories my grandmother told me," she says.

Nearly 1,000 guests, including representatives of Vietnam's film industry, cultural scholars, members of the overseas Chinese community, representatives of Chinese enterprises in Vietnam, and media organizations, attended the premiere.

"I was impressed by the actors' performances and the film's balance of humor and emotion," Vietnamese director Le Thien Vien says, adding that despite its long running time, the film kept audiences fully engaged throughout.

The director notes that *Dear You* inspired him and would provide creative motivation for his next project.

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LIFE



Hong Kong's 'unofficial history'

Author Ma Ka-fai's latest novel, which concludes his trilogy, captures the essence of the city's past through the lens of secrets, martial arts and personal reflection, **Yang Yang** reports.

In July 2021, Hong Kong writer Ma Ka-fai had to stay in a suite of a resort hotel in Macao for a full 14 days without being able to go outside due to COVID-19 quarantine rules, so he took the chance to conceive his new novel, the last of a trilogy.

After seven days, and still struggling to come up with an idea for the book, Ma was feeling anxious. One night, he finally managed to fall asleep. In a dream, he heard a man asking him, "When will you start writing? I've been waiting for so long."

In a daze, Ma saw a thin man standing by the bed, dressed in a short martial arts outfit and looking like a kung fu master. Ma asked, "Who are you?"

The man cupped his hands and smiled: "I'm a ghost! I love *Longtou Fengwei* (*Once Upon a Time in Hong Kong I*) and *Yuanyang Liu Qi Si* (*Once Upon a Time in Hong Kong II*)," the first and second books of Ma's trilogy.

Ma paused for a moment, and then let out a joyful "Ha!" As his laughter echoed, the ghost vanished without a trace, and Ma woke up.

That ghost became the protagonist, Hon Tin-yan, in the third novel *Shuangtian Zhizun* (*Once Upon a Time in Hong Kong III*), published in May by New Star Press. In the introduction of the book, he recounts the ghost story.

A decade has passed since he published his debut novel *Longtou Fengwei* in 2016.

The book earned more than 20 literary awards, including being named on the top 10 novels list of Yazhou Zhoukan magazine and topping the fiction category in Southern Weekly's annual best original books list.

At the launch party for *Shuangtian Zhizun* in Beijing at the end of May, Ma, now 63 years old, said *Longtou Fengwei* was conceived when he was between 50 and 53 years old, when he "wrote in a free and uninhibited style, with words and plotlines that flowed effortlessly, full of vibrant energy".

The second book, *Yuanyang Liu Qi Si*, was written when he was between 54 and 57 years old. It moves away from the exuberance of youth and focuses on a deeper exploration, centering on the theme of "keeping secrets".

The final book in the trilogy was written between the ages of 57 and 62. His mindset and life experiences had undergone significant changes, prompting him to reflect on profound issues such as life and death and the true meaning of gains and losses, he says.

The first book follows the life of the protagonist Luk Nam-choi. Luk, a nobody from the countryside of Guangdong province, arrives in Hong Kong in 1936 and rises to be a gang leader in the city.

Against the backdrop of instability due to the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the capture of Hong Kong by Japanese forces in 1941, Luk has a forbidden love affair with a British officer.

Film director Johnnie To praises Ma's perspective in examining and portraying this tumultuous period in Hong Kong's history, as "very special and quite spectacular".

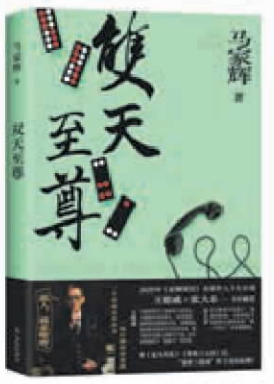
The story of *Yuanyang Liu Qi Si* takes place from the late 1930s to 1967, and focuses on a subordinate of Luk from the first novel, named Shaoyabing. After Luk dies, Shaoyabing reluctantly takes his place as boss and must adapt to his new role and overcome the challenges it presents. By the end of the novel, though, he disappears in mysterious circumstances after a string of bad luck.

Commenting on the novel, a winner of China's top literary award, the 2015 Mao Dun Literary Prize, Jin Yucheng says, "This is a novel I truly love. Its Cantonese undertone is strange yet brilliant, and the tragic emotions of the martial world swell like a vast ocean."

The trilogy's final book, *Shuangtian Zhizun,* begins in 1956 and ends in 1986 after the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. During the 30 years of the novel, Hong Kong's economy soars and the old-style underworld is transformed. But the protagonist Hon Tin-yan still clings to tradition and former values and dreams of training in martial arts.

Ma says the common theme throughout the three novels is secrets.

"The first novel is about keeping one's own secret, the second about keeping another's secret, and as for the third, it turns out that there are many secrets in life that even we ourselves may not be aware of — and if we don't know them, they might as well not exist," Ma explains.









Top: Hong Kong writer Ma Ka-fai creates a complete picture of Hong Kong during that era in *Shuangtian Zhizun*, the final book of his trilogy.
Above from left: The cover of *Shuangtian Zhizun*. Ma says he used Cantonese dialect to achieve linguistic precision in the book. The residential building Cherry House where the book unfolds. The author practices martial arts. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "I aimed to create a complete picture of the era, allowing readers to truly immerse themselves in the time and place where the characters live."
>
> **Ma Ka-fai,** Hong Kong writer

Ma's obsession with secrets began at the age of 10 after being caught stealing money. Scolded by his mother, he felt extremely ashamed. From then on, he often experienced a kind of "secret anxiety", constantly worrying that his various secrets would be exposed. This made him particularly sensitive to other people's secrets, he told the media. He says that he often observes and imagines how secrets are kept and shared, and the consequences of their revelation.

"The secret Ma Ka-fai explores is the unpredictable nature of life and human nature," David Der-wei Wang, professor of Chinese literature at Harvard University, writes in the foreword of *Shuangtian Zhizun*.

While the novels are about individuals' secrets, they are also the secrets of Hong Kong, a city that itself is a legend, Wang writes.

Liu Yang, a popular stand-up comedian and writer, says reading Ma's novels is like watching an old Hong Kong movie, full of vivid details. Between the lines, one can sense the bygone underworld and the rich essence of Hong Kong's unique charm, he adds.

For one thing, the three books' titles are very "Hong Kong-esque" and are named after three traditional hands in the gambling game *pai gow*, which is often shown in Hong Kong films.

Moreover, the trilogy, especially the third novel, contains a lot of Cantonese dialogue, dialect and even entire paragraphs of Cantonese, which can be challenging for non-Cantonese readers.

Ma says he used Cantonese dialects to achieve linguistic precision in writing. "Dialects aren't obstacles to reading; they enrich regional culture and bring characters to life," he says.

"Language is fundamental in literary creation. To bring characters to life, it's crucial to capture their tone, identity and environment accurately. Many characters in the book are from Hong Kong's underworld, and they naturally speak Cantonese. Translating everything into Mandarin would diminish their authenticity," he adds.

In the third novel, Ma included much more information about Hong Kong's cultural geography than in the previous two books. This includes elements such as the scriptures recited by Taoists during the "hell breaking" funeral ritual, lyrics from popular songs, rain-praying chants, the design and movement of the Southern Lion Dance, slogans from funeral homes, and the origins of famous Hong Kong place names like Yau Ma Tei and So Uk Estate.

Ma says that Hon, the protagonist of the novel, was born in 1957 and that Ma himself was born in 1963.

"I am familiar with and have a personal connection to that period, so it naturally led me to write more about it," he says.

His main goal in including a wealth of information about the city is to recreate the characters' authentic lives.

Dialogue and inner emotions alone can't sustain a complete story; it's crucial to build a tangible world: the characters' clothes, what food they eat, what the gambling dens look like, the popular hairstyles, and the significant events in society, including the severe drought in Hong Kong during the 1960s and the rain-praying ceremonies held by different religions, he explains.

"I aimed to create a complete picture of the era, allowing readers to truly immerse themselves in the time and place where the characters live."

In the third book, martial arts also take a central role.

Like the character Hon, Ma was deeply influenced by the Bruce Lee kung fu craze of the early 1970s. At that time, nearly every teenager in Hong Kong wanted to learn martial arts, making it a collective memory for an entire generation.

In the novel, practicing martial arts shapes the lifelong ambition of the protagonist — to become a martial arts master. Yet, he knows deep down that the traditional martial arts world has long disappeared. By the late 1970s, street fights in Hong Kong no longer relied on fists but on knives and even guns. His ideal was at odds with reality from the start, Ma says.

Another important aspect of martial arts is morality. Martial artists have principles and integrity, and these ideals influence the story's conclusion, which sees Hon refusing to follow the gang leader's orders in a bid to uphold the ethics of martial arts, ultimately leading to tragedy.

Ma notes that even today, in Hong Kong's older districts like Wan Chai, Mong Kok, Yau Ma Tei, and Prince Edward, you can still see remnants of martial arts school signs, such as those for Wing Chun and Hung Kuen. In the past, martial arts schools often doubled as clinics, reflecting how deeply kung fu is embedded in Hong Kong's culture.

"The characters in the book live between the 1960s and 1980s, and their lives are naturally intertwined with martial arts schools and kung fu," he says.

In his foreword to *Shuangtian Zhizun*, Wang describes the trilogy as "Hong Kong's unofficial history", but Ma says that "writing an unofficial history" was never the driving force of his creation.

"I didn't deliberately use characters to reflect or metaphorically represent that era of Hong Kong," he says; rather, the characters were rooted in that time, each carrying a fragment of Hong Kong's history.

The underground gambling depicted in the books is inspired by Ma's mother's frequent visits to gambling dens and her stories of them. Hon's obsession with martial arts reflects a common experience among men of that era. The Taoist and folk rituals are drawn from Hong Kong's diverse and inclusive cultural beliefs, he says.

In the three novels, many characters die unexpectedly. For Ma, although life is often expected to be a grand drama, it frequently comes to an abrupt halt.

He says this narrative choice has two underlying reasons.

The deeper reason is rooted in Ma's childhood, as several of his uncles were addicted to drugs, constantly causing trouble, and would show up at his family's door in the middle of the night asking for money. Growing up, he lived in constant, inexplicable fear, with a subconscious belief that good things do not last and that disaster inevitably follows contentment.

This sense of unease and pessimism about life's unpredictability stems from the long-standing threats he felt in his youth, forming the underlying tone of how he views the world, and leaving him always expecting sudden changes, he says.

Another more surface-level reason is John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow*, which Ma studied for his master's thesis at the University of Chicago. In the film, a conversation between Chow Yun-fat and Ti Lung is abruptly ended by a sudden gunshot that takes a life, a scene that left a lasting impact on Ma. From a narrative perspective, such sudden death scenes carry significant dramatic power, he says.

These internal and external influences led him to arrange for characters to have sudden exits. As the character Luk often says, "That's just how it is."

Beyond the pessimism about life's unpredictability, Ma intersperses a great deal of Hong Kong-style humor through his writing. He says that humor is a tried-and-true buffer, much like how people from Guangdong drink herbal tea when they feel unwell — it's something that, once found effective, becomes a lasting habit.

"Throughout my life, I've faced many setbacks in my career, finances, and relationships. I've tried approaching these challenges with a lighthearted, teasing mindset, applying the same attitude toward myself, and it truly helps alleviate heavy emotions," he says.

"Over time, this approach became a habit. If you face life in the same way for 10 consecutive days, it becomes ingrained in your daily routine. For me, humor is no longer a deliberate writing technique but an instinctive attitude toward life," he says.

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SPORTS

SOCCER

Maresca's 'perfect day', as City rallies to win

While Liverpool grabs an equalizer in more late drama



Dominik Szoboszlai (center) celebrates scoring Liverpool's second goal of its 2-2 draw with Newcastle at St. James' Park in Newcastle, England, on Sunday. REUTERS

A big welcome from the fans at the start. A stoppage-time winner at the end.

For Enzo Maresca, it was the "perfect day" as he earned his first victory as Manchester City manager.

City produced a stirring late rally in Maresca's first Premier League game in charge, scoring twice in the final 10 minutes to grab a 2-1 win at home to Bournemouth on Sunday.

Josko Gvardiol placed a finish into the bottom corner in the first minute of added time for the winner, which was initially given offside before being awarded following a video review. Marc Guehi had equalized with an 84th-minute header from a corner to start the comeback.

Maresca, the successor to Pep Guardiola, punched the air when Gvardiol's goal was awarded and went onto the field after the final whistle to hug his players.

A huge banner, reading "Welcome back Enzo," had been held aloft by City fans as the Italian — Guardiola's assistant in City's treble-winning 2022-23 season — emerged from the tunnel before kickoff.

Wearing a sharp black suit, Maresca certainly looked the part on the touchline, but the slickness synonymous with City's play under Guardiola down the years wasn't quite there until the late comeback, sparked by substitute Rayan Cherki, who set up both goals.

"It is the perfect day, to be honest," Maresca said.

"I was very pleased when the game started to see the banner on the other side. And I was pleased because we give the fans the joy of the three points at the end.

"It was quite emotional."

Maresca began his time as Guardiola's replacement with a 3-0 loss to Arsenal in the Community Shield the previous weekend and has had to deal with the departure of star midfielder Rodri to Barcelona.

City might have found a long-term replacement for Rodri in 18-year-old Morocco international Ayyoub Bouaddi, who is set to join from Lille for 100 million euros ($117 million) according to French media, but Maresca opted against Bournemouth to deploy Guehi — a center-back — as a holding midfielder instead.

It was a contentious decision given there were other midfield options on the bench, and it might prove to be a one-off, but Guehi grew into the role.

City striker Erling Haaland wasn't on the scoresheet in the first league game of the season for the first time since joining the club in 2022. He sported a new hairstyle — a buzz cut that went viral on social media ahead of kickoff — and wasted a couple of great chances to score with it.

Szoboszlai hits back

Dominik Szoboszlai converted a penalty in the ninth minute of stoppage time to salvage a 2-2 draw for Liverpool at Newcastle in a match overseen by two new managers.

Before kickoff, the teams united to pay tribute to Kevin Keegan — a star player for both clubs — following his death last month at age 75. Players from Newcastle and Liverpool wore shirts with "Keegan" and his No 7 on the back during their warm-up at St. James' Park, while there was a mosaic in the center circle, a tribute video and a huge tifo in the stands dedicated to the former England star.

Szoboszlai smashed an unstoppable spotkick into the top corner after debutant Victor Munoz was fouled in the area in a dramatic finish to the match. There was a three-and-a-half-minute wait for a video review of the decision.



Manchester City's Josko Gvardiol (24) is mobbed by teammates after scoring his side's second goal in a 2-1 Premier League victory over Bournemouth on Sunday. AP

"I really hit it good," the Hungary captain said. "I love the pressure."

Joe Willock looked to have scored a 57th-minute winner for Newcastle, one minute after coming in as a substitute and two minutes after Cody Gakpo had equalized for Liverpool. Anthony Elanga put Newcastle ahead in the fifth minute.

Liverpool striker Alexander Isak was jeered as he came off the team coach and then every time he touched the ball by Newcastle fans still bitter about his switch of allegiance last season.

Matthias Jaissle was taking charge of Newcastle for first time, while Andoni Iraola was in the Liverpool dugout after replacing Arne Slot.

"It's not the result you wanted before the game, but obviously finishing, scoring in the last minute, it gives you a better taste ... I don't think we deserved to lose the game today," Iraola said.

"I value the effort from the players, they never gave up, and, at the end, we could recover at least a point."

There was frustration for Newcastle at conceding such a late goal, but also pride, given that former coach Eddie Howe stepped down late last month and influential players like Bruno Guimaraes and Sandro Tonali left the club for league rivals Arsenal and Tottenham, respectively, over the summer.

"It's rough, especially 30 seconds before the end of the game, but that's a huge step for us. That's the mentality we need to have through the season," Newcastle forward Yoane Wissa said.

"The manager arrived three weeks ago and gave us a lot of information. Now, we showed on the pitch that we are ready for the season. We needed a win to make a statement, but in the end we got a draw. We have so much to work on."

Brighton destroys Villa

Brighton scored four goals in the opening 31 minutes and also missed a slew of great chances in a 4-0 hammering of Aston Villa in Sunday's other early game.

To make matters worse for Villa, Joao Gomes was sent off for kicking out at Brighton's Georginio Rutter in the 40th minute, but the visitor, somehow, didn't concede again.

It has been a tough offseason for Villa, with key players Morgan Rogers, Youri Tielemans and Ezri Konsa leaving and speculation surrounding the future of Ollie Watkins and goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez.

Brighton looked sharper, having been in European qualifying action in midweek.

Fan dies

A Brighton fan died after falling ill as he was leaving the Amex stadium following the win over Villa.

The 72-year-old man became unwell as he was leaving to board a supporters' club bus.

Brighton said that, despite the best efforts of emergency services and club staff, the medical team could not save him.

Brighton chief executive Paul Barber said: "We are all shocked and saddened by the loss of one of our supporters."

AP

'Unbelievable' Cherki proves his point



Enzo Maresca revealed Rayan Cherki was frustrated to be left on the bench, before the "unbelievable" Manchester City playmaker inspired a dramatic 2-1 win against Bournemouth on Sunday.

For his first Premier League game as City boss, Maresca opted for Phil Foden and Antoine Semenyo instead of Cherki.

But, with City trailing to Marcus Tavernier's first-half goal at the Etihad Stadium, the Italian was forced into a change of plan in the 62nd minute.

Maresca sent on Cherki, who is short of full fitness after the World Cup, and the French star responded by showing why he should have started in the first place.

Cherki's corner was headed in by Marc Guehi for City's 84th minute equalizer. He then played a deft pass to Josko Gvardiol, who slotted the winning goal two minutes into stoppage time.

"The impact was unbelievable, he is that kind of player," Maresca said.

"I like Rayan, I told him also after the game, but sometimes when you plan a game, and you already have (picked) four out of 11 players who arrived late (from holidays), if you go with one more, maybe the difference is too big."

Cherki sometimes frustrated Maresca's predecessor Pep Guardiola with his volatile personality and habit of unfurling flamboyant tricks instead of simple passes last season.

But Maresca insisted he had no problem with Cherki's character or ability.

"Rayan is quite a nice and clear boy. If he is not happy, he wants to show it and I know that he was not happy today, but, in the end, I had to make a decision," Maresca said.

After the previous week's thrashing by Arsenal in the Community Shield, former Chelsea boss Maresca was able to celebrate his first win since replacing Guardiola.

"It is the perfect day. I was very pleased when the game started to see the banner and we gave the fans the joy of the three points at the end. It was quite emotional," he said.

"The spirit was fantastic. It's a game we deserved to win early with the amount of chances we had."

Guehi was deployed in an unfamiliar midfield role by Maresca, alongside new signing Elliot Anderson, who failed to impress on his debut.

With City closing in on a deal for Morocco midfielder Ayyoub Bouaddi from Lille, it was likely just a short-term option.

But Maresca had no regrets about using Guehi out of position, despite his team's tepid performance.

"I know Marc from (Crystal) Palace, and always thought he could be a good midfielder. It was a good performance from him," he said.

"The good thing is, he now gives us an option for the future."

AFP

Spain's World Cup hero Torres saves PSG's blushes at Rennes

PARIS — Spain's World Cup winner Ferran Torres scored twice to claim a draw for Paris Saint-Germain, as it started the defense of its French Ligue 1 title with a 2-2 draw at Rennes.

Torres came off the bench for his Ligue 1 debut and opened his account for his new club just weeks after scoring the winning goal for La Roja in the World Cup final.

Rennes led at the break after Sebastian Szymanski and Esteban Lepaul scored at Roazhon Park, before Torres' clinical interventions off the back of two assists from fellow World Cup winner Fabian Ruiz.

"The game was difficult, we knew it would be," Torres said.

"I just put my hand up, then, with Fabian's quality, you just have to run and he puts the ball in the right place," he added.

Luis Enrique named two of his big summer signings in 26-year-old Torres and France winger Maghnes Akliouche on the bench for a game moved from the French capital, due to the poor state of the Parc des Princes pitch.

Ex-Rennes attackers Ousmane Dembele and Desire Doue were joined in the Champions League winner's forward line by Khvicha Kvaratskhelia a week on from losing 1-0 in the French Champions' Trophy to Lens.

Rennes boss Franck Haise gave a league debut to Adrien Thomasson, who joined the Bretons from the coach's former club Lens over the summer.

Well-traveled Thomasson set up the opener by feeding Szymanski, who fired home with a low effort from outside the box after 21 minutes following a pinpoint header from Lepaul in the build-up.

Rennes doubled its lead seven minutes before the break, despite PSG showing plenty of intent and even having a Doue effort chalked off for offside.

Haise's side's second came on the counterattack, with a break from winger Mousa Al-Tamari and a delicate back-heel from the Jordanian wide man helping to set up Lepaul.



Paris Saint-Germain's Ferran Torres celebrates scoring his side's second goal in a 2-2 Ligue 1 draw at Rennes on Sunday. REUTERS

PSG was wasteful in attack, failing to hit the target with efforts from Dembele and Kvaratskhelia, forcing their Spanish boss to bring Torres on for the second half.

With half an hour left, Akliouche and Ruiz were also brought into the fray, and, 10 minutes later, PSG cut the deficit when Torres made the most of a pass from his compatriot to nutmeg Rennes goalkeeper Brice Samba.

Torres and Ruiz combined again with eight minutes to go, as the midfielder crossed for the forward to head past Samba.

PSG was on top after Torres' contributions, but it was unable to find a third.

Giroud rolls back the years

Earlier, Olivier Giroud scored the opening goal as Lille gave Davide Ancelotti a winning start as coach with a 2-0 victory at Angers.

Former France striker Giroud, who turns 40 next month, broke the deadlock in the 11th minute with an excellent low drive from long range after collecting a pass from Nabil Bentaleb.

Tiago Santos volleyed in a loose ball to double the advantage just after the half-hour mark at the end of an excellent Lille move.

Davide Ancelotti, son of coaching great Carlo Ancelotti, took over at Lille in June following the departure of Bruno Genesio who is now at Marseille.

Lille finished third in the French top flight last season to qualify for the Champions League.

"It wasn't perfect, but we wanted to start strongly today," Giroud told Ligue 1+.

"We could have killed the game off earlier," he added.

Lille midfielder Ayyoub Bouaddi has been strongly linked with a move to Manchester City and, despite not being involved in the match day squad, the 18-year-old Moroccan said his potential goodbyes to traveling fans after the game.

"We don't know what will happen," Giroud said.

"If it happens, then we will want to celebrate the win for him," the former Arsenal striker added.

Former England defender Eric Dier scored the winner as Monaco edged out Le Havre 1-0 in Normandy.

AFP

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Beyond peaks
Cultural tourism drawing foreigners to Zhangjiajie
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Plateau rock glacier mapping springs surprise
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Promising future
Men's basketball team celebrates silver lining at FIBA U18 Asia Cup
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CHINA DAILY

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China steps up cross-border corruption fight

Draft legislation aims to deepen intl cooperation against graft, regulate transnational businesses

By **CAO YIN**
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Chinese lawmakers started reviewing on Tuesday a draft law aimed at combating cross-border corruption as part of a broader initiative to strengthen legal tools for repatriating fugitives, recovering assets and addressing corruption cases with international cooperation.

The draft was submitted for its first reading to the ongoing session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature.

With six chapters and 47 articles, the draft outlines the principles, scope and key positions underpinning China's efforts to tackle cross-border corruption. It defines the operational mechanisms and responsibilities of relevant departments, calling for stronger case handling and international cooperation.

The draft also clarifies the obligations of enterprises regarding integrity and compliance, and specifies legal liabilities for violations. Specific provisions included in the draft are currently under review and have not been made public.

Liu Jinguo, head of the National Commission of Supervision, who introduced the draft to lawmakers on Tuesday, said the legislation involves strategic implementation of the central leadership's plans to fight cross-border corruption.

It serves as a vital step toward establishing a comprehensive legal framework for addressing foreign-related corruption issues, he said.

Liu emphasized that making such a law is of great importance in filling the legislative gap in China's cross-border anti-corruption framework, improving the foreign-related anti-corruption legal system, and advancing legislative efforts against cross-border corruption through the rule of law.

The legislation also highlights China's firm stance against corruption, and is crucial for safeguarding national security and development interests, he added.

Liu noted that the draft law is a practical measure to regulate the healthy development of enterprises operating internationally and to foster a world-class business environment that is market-oriented, law-based and internationalized.

China is a major trading partner for more than 160 countries and regions, and it has signed Belt and Road cooperation documents with more than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations.

With more than 50,000 Chinese enterprises operating overseas, the scale of overseas assets is rapidly expanding, according to a statement released on Tuesday by the National Commission of Supervision. In this context, building a clean, integrity-based business environment is critical for expanding China's trade footprint, supporting Chinese companies amid global competition and advancing the Belt and Road Initiative, the statement said.

Liu said that by clarifying the compliance obligations of cross-border enterprises and enhancing regulatory oversight, the legislation helps guide overseas Chinese businesses to operate legally, compliantly, and with integrity.

He acknowledged the complexity and challenges of the anti-corruption battle, noting that corrupt actors are employing increasingly sophisticated and concealed methods, and that the cross-border nature of corruption is intensifying, with domestic and offshore corruption becoming more interconnected.

Liu said it is necessary to codify experiences and practices developed in the cross-border corruption battle since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, considering that the current rules in this regard are dispersed across various laws, with no systematic procedures for critical issues such as sharing case leads, reporting corruption, collaborating with foreign authorities on investigations and prosecutions, or tracking fugitives and recovering assets.

Zhang Lei, a professor of law at Beijing Normal University, underscored the importance of this legislative effort. "It clearly shows that China's commitment to combating corruption is steadfast and unwavering, which sends a strong message to the world about the progress and development of China's legal framework in this area," he said.

Humanity under attack



A man gestures as Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli attack near a refugee camp in Gaza City on Monday. Israeli airstrikes and tank fire across Gaza on Monday killed at least four people, including two children, hospital officials said. DAWOUD ABU ALKAS / REUTERS

New US sanctions on Iran threaten global economy

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

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The United States imposed a new wave of sanctions on Iran on Monday, which it said would cut off the economic lifeline that sustains the country. Experts said the move appears unlikely to force Tehran to bow down, but will further strain the global economy.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a news release on Monday that the new sectoral sanctions target five critical sectors: digital assets, technology, gold, aviation and shipping.

According to the department, starting on Monday, "the actions of Treasury and other agencies will tighten the noose and block every potential source of revenue that funds the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Iranian regime".

The department added that countries and entities continuing to do business with Iran will face heightened secondary sanctions risks.

"Every country has a defined timeline to shut down activities we have identified. If they do not take action, we will do so unilaterally through Treasury authorities," it said. "Any entity that facilitates money laundering on behalf of Iran will be removed from the US dollar system."

China firmly opposed on Tuesday these illegal unilateral sanctions, which it said lack any basis in international law and the authorization of the United Nations Security Council.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said at a regular news conference that China's cooperation with Iran has always been conducted within the framework of international law and should not be disrupted.

The country will take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard its own rights and interests, he added.

The spokesman stressed that economic warfare and maximum pressure will not help resolve the issue, but only further escalate tensions, create spillover risks, disrupt the global economic and financial order, and harm the legitimate rights and interests of other countries.

The top priority now is to ease the tensions and return to dialogue and negotiation as soon as possible, Lin said.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said, in his meeting on Monday in Tehran with Pakistan's Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, that the US must change its tone and approach in dealing with Iran, Mehr News agency reported.

In a separate meeting with Munir on Monday, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that Tehran remains determined to pursue implementation of the provisions of the US-Iran peace memorandum of understanding signed in June, Tasnim News Agency reported.

Washington and Tehran have been at odds since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the hostage crisis, in which Iranian students seized the US embassy in Tehran and took US diplomats hostage. Washington has imposed a slew of sanctions on Tehran and steadily expanded them over the past four decades.

Experts said that the latest move is likely to add fresh layers of disruption and complexity to the global economy and diplomatic efforts, particularly as Tehran maintains close communication with regional neighbors and mediators such as Oman and Pakistan.

Jawaid Iqbal, vice-chancellor of Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University in India, told China Daily that the US has been blowing hot and cold over the past several weeks with regard to Iran.

"This in itself is proof that the US is not in a position to dictate its peace terms with Iran," Iqbal said. "The latest threat of sanctions shows that Washington is trying to somehow extricate itself from a messy situation of its own making."

"Iran, on the other hand, will not bow down to Washington's terms and conditions so easily. It knows that by retaliating against America's regional allies, it can submerge the entire Gulf into chaos, which will in turn create turmoil in the world economy," he added.

Deniz Istikbal, an assistant professor and economics researcher at Istanbul Medipol University in Turkiye, noted that the economic dimension of the Iran-US conflict is intensifying, posing challenges for the global economy.

Conducting business with Iran is becoming increasingly challenging, as Washington seeks to isolate Tehran and push the government to the negotiating table by exerting financial pressure, he said.

"These developments are making the conflict increasingly costly for the global economy, while interest rates are rising and inflation is once again becoming a major concern.

"Ultimately, the cost of the conflict is creating additional burdens for the entire world, particularly for energy-importing countries, leading to higher taxation and increased borrowing needs," Istikbal noted.

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KNEADING A GOOD MEAL: LANZHOU SPECIALTY WINS FANS ABROAD

Noodle dish offers a glimpse into nation's culinary traditions

By **MA JINGNA** and **HU YUMENG** in Lanzhou



A chef prepares beef noodles for customers at an eatery in Lanzhou, Gansu province, in May. CHEN KUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

The dough stretches and folds between Ma Wenbin's hands with each flick of his wrists.

China Vibes — FOOD —

Press, knead, pull, fold — the movements follow in quick succession. In seconds, a heavy lump of dough is transformed into strands as fine as threads before being dropped into boiling water.

But for Ma, a good bowl of Lanzhou beef noodles is about much more than the noodles themselves.

"It's the broth that gives the bowl its soul," said the fourth-generation Lanzhou beef noodle maker, who has spent nearly five decades perfecting the craft behind the counter.

For people in Lanzhou, Gansu province, that bowl is woven into the very fabric of everyday life.

Some noodle shops open as early as 5 am, before the streets have fully awakened. For many locals, having the first bowl of the day — known as *touguo mian*, or first-pot noodles — is a morning ritual.

See ***Noodles,*** *page 3*

AI can restore confidence, unlock growth

WORLD WATCH
By Alessandro Golombiewski Teixeira

The International Monetary Fund in July projected 4.6 percent growth for the Chinese economy in 2026, one of the strongest results among major economies.

China's economy has also demonstrated considerable resilience in the first half of the year, with GDP expanding 4.7 percent year-on-year despite a challenging global environment.

Yet some Western economists remain skeptical of China's growth path, citing structural concerns including an overreliance on trade rather than domestic demand and adjustments in sectors such as steel, electric vehicles and solar panels.

But what both official and independent readings agree on is that households, enterprises and local governments have all become more measured about spending, investing and borrowing. One possible key lever to spur growth is boosting the willingness of households, businesses and local governments to spend, invest and borrow again. And a new cluster of technologies — smart manufacturing, space technology, the low-altitude economy, robotics, big data and, above all, artificial intelligence — is helping to build that confidence and create new opportunities for growth.

A global comparison helps explain why these technologies, AI especially, carry this weight. Global capital is increasingly recognizing the transformative potential of AI and related technologies. The point is not which company is "better", but what the gap reveals: Global capital now assigns trillion-dollar valuations almost overnight to companies considered to be at the frontier of AI, in a way it never did for the previous tech cycle's retail and software platforms.

China's growth model has long rested on three engines: exports (about 20 percent of GDP in 2024), household consumption (around 39.9 percent), and gross capital formation — the broad measure covering investment and infrastructure — at roughly 40.6 percent.

See ***Technology,*** *page 3*

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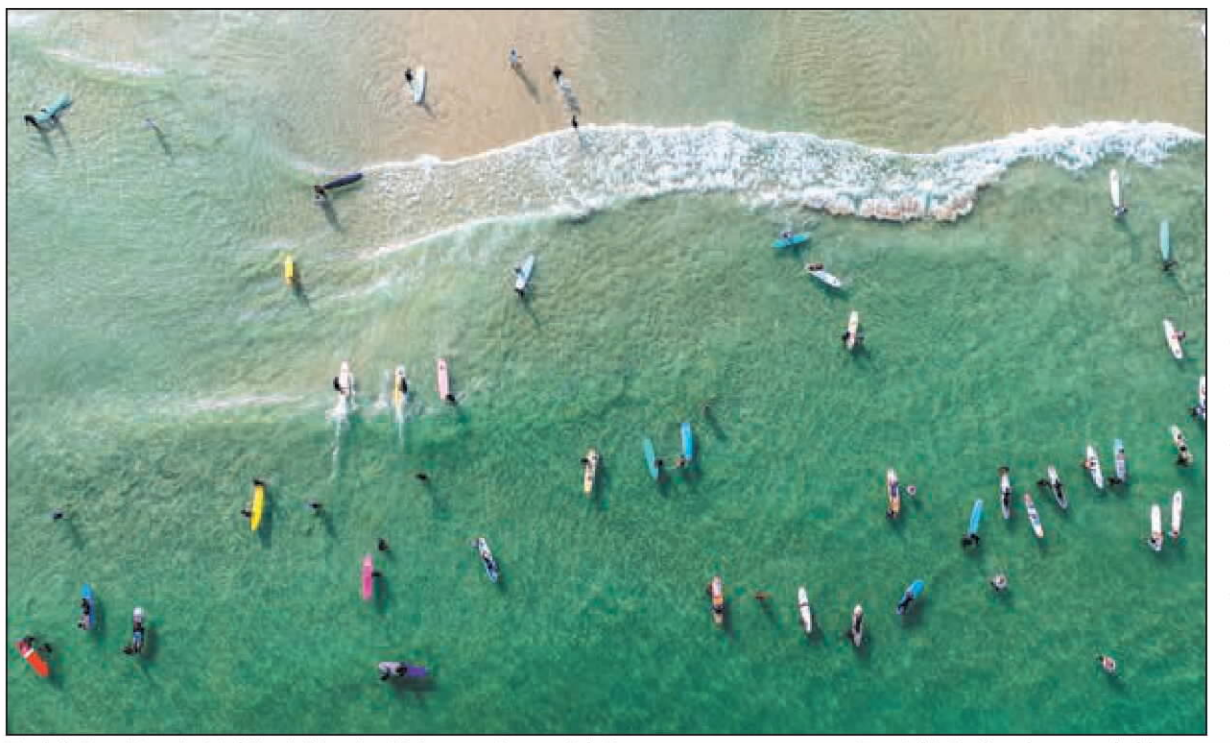
INDEPTH







Top left: Tourists enjoy jet skiing in Wanning, Hainan province, on July 11. MENG ZHONGDE / FOR CHINA DAILY **Top right:** Surfing classes are held at Riyue Bay in Wanning on Aug 13. DAN SANDOVAL / AP **Above:** People learn how to surf at the bay on July 25. MENG ZHONGDE / FOR CHINA DAILY

'Sportcation' enthusiasts find place in the sun

Younger generation flocks to Hainan coastal area for health, fun, activities and personal development

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

Qi Huan has spent four years at a Shanghai tech company, commuting two hours to work every day. She is in seven work chat groups and her heart races every time her phone buzzes on weekends.

One morning at 2 am, after finishing yet another business proposal, she stared at her screen for 10 minutes and decided on the spot to have a weeklong holiday. She immediately booked a flight to Sanya in Hainan province and a short time later arrived in the coastal city of Wanning by train. She had no itinerary or plan — just the knowledge that there was a "sports school" located there where people were active and energetic.

In Wanning, she found what she was looking for. "Before, I worked like crazy so I could have a better life. Now I realize life shouldn't be about that," she said.

Her mornings began with running or gym sessions. Days were filled with surfing, paddleboarding, and rock climbing. Afternoons consisted of more training, while evenings were filled with watching the sunset over the sea, dining, drinking, and dancing with new friends.

Qi is one of countless young people who flooded Wanning this summer. They call it "going to sports school" — but there are no gates, no uniforms and no diplomas. It's a lifestyle shaped by social media where gyms, surf clubs, paddleboard camps, beach volleyball courts, coastal cafes, bars, and long-term holiday rentals cluster together.

Sportcation is a travel model that integrates training, leisure, and social interaction, placing physical activity at the core of the holiday experience.

In China, the sportcation hashtag has generated over 40 million views. During the 2026 May Day holiday, searches for sportcation-related keywords surged 130 percent year-on-year, according to data from online travel platform Fliggy and social media platforms like Xiaohongshu (RedNote).

The rise of sportcations in China is being driven by a convergence of young urbanites seeking meaning beyond the daily grind and valuing physical exertion above passive indulgence, experts said.

The trend has also been advanced by Hyrox, a popular German-initiated fitness race that has grown from 650 global participants in 2017 to more than 1.5 million this year, with many young people in China embracing the event, according to data reported by CNBC.

Gao Shunli from the Tourism Research Center of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences said sportcation, an emerging trend of the sports tourism industry, has already demonstrated strong momentum and a high growth potential. However, its share of the overall tourism and sports industries could be bigger, and its development potential needs to be further unlocked.

The market size of China's sports tourism is projected to reach 3.88 trillion yuan ($576 billion) in 2026, Gao said.

Globally, sportcation is not new, but its growth is accelerating. The global tourism company TUI Musement's 2026 Travel Trends report named "sportcation" a key trend of the year, with bookings for sport-related activities rising nearly 37 percent year-on-year. In Southeast Asia, for instance, destinations like Bali have pioneered a "training camp" model.

Surfers' paradise

China's version, however, has developed its own characteristics, with a greater emphasis on self-improvement. The destination is the gym and the vacation is a personal development project.

Wanning's seaside playground provides the perfect setting for such journeys.

Surfing and tropical rainforest outdoor activities are two popular pursuits. As of May 15, searches for surfing-related products in Hainan grew 136 percent month-on-month, data from Tongcheng Travel showed.

Wanning has 109 kilometers of coastline, three distinct bays and more than 160 surf clubs. Riyue Bay's waves are rated among the most consistent in the world for nearly 300 days a year, with the average sea temperature hovering around 26 C. It has a dedicated community of surfers, coaches and enthusiasts, with more than 500,000 visitors coming every year for surfing, according to local tourism figures.

"China's surfing scene looks to Wanning, and Wanning's surfing is at Riyue Bay," said Li Zijia, founder of a local surf club.

International visitors are also taking notice of Wanning. Russian actor Ivan Maverick, who now resides in Wanning, said, "I've surfed in the US and Indonesia, but Wanning's wave conditions and community vibe are truly unique."

For foreign tourists, he added, "the visa-free policy and mobile payment options are also very traveler-friendly".

Booking demand for surfing-themed hotels near Wanning's Riyue Bay and Shenzhou Peninsula has risen rapidly, according to Tongcheng Travel.

Some visitors stay only a few days, buying passes and ticking off their bucket-list activities such as surfing, Hyrox, and paddleboarding, while snapping photos for their social media accounts.

Others rent apartments for a month or more, drawing up weekly training schedules and integrating exercise into their daily routines.

Avoiding a wipeout

However, the sportcation business is tougher than it looks, according to those involved in it.

Wang Zhiqiao, who runs the Wet Floor sports park on the beachfront, is called "Principal Wang" by participants in his Hyrox training sessions.

Wang realized the opportunities two years ago when he opened four training gyms in Jinan, Shandong province, betting on Hyrox before it had gained a foothold in China.

"For a city like Jinan, it was too early," he said. Only one gym survived.

An investor with Hainan real estate interests later approached him to open a gym in a hotel basement 100 meters from the sea. Wang took one look at the venue and rejected the plan. "Why not take it outside?" he wondered.

Wet Floor opened in January 2024, with the training equipment placed under coconut trees against an ocean backdrop. The Hyrox program quickly became Wet Floor's hottest offering.

Each Hyrox class regularly draws double-digit sign-ups, while other classes struggle to reach that number.

Wang said the appeal of such classes is that holidaymakers now want a nontraditional travel experience.

"The biggest difference between sports and luxury goods is that with luxury goods, you can buy them with money. But with sports, you can't," he said.

"The old middle-class status markers were about owning more luxury goods, traveling to more places, posting photos from Japan or South Korea. Now the middle class post photos of themselves doing all kinds of sports."

Wang conceded the economics of making the business profitable have been tough. Wet Floor's up-front investment was heavy, and the single location "can't make back its money", he said.

Peak season — Chinese New Year — draws about 200 visitors a day. In late May and June, the number drops to 20 or 30, and in summer it rises to 50 or 60.

To increase its viability, Wet Floor has opened a bar and restaurant next door.

But anecdotal evidence of Hyrox's growing popularity in Wanning and the rest of the country provides encouragement for operators like Wet Floor.

While there is no official data on China's total Hyrox participants, the scale of individual events is already remarkable. On Aug 15 and 16, Hyrox Shenzhen in Guangdong province attracted 12,000 athletes from 55 countries — with a total attendance of nearly 30,000.

The end of summer

In 2025, Wanning received 9.78 million tourists, generating 9.23 billion yuan in tourism revenue, according to government data.

About 70 percent of the visitors were young people, and roughly 70 percent participated in sports tourism.

For visitors such as Fang Fang from Beijing, who spent a month in Wanning, the coastal area was not simply a playground.

It offered her a chance to reflect on a healthier lifestyle and diet.

She was soon discussing the glycemic index of different foods with new friends, and eating protein before carbs, both medical recommendations to lower blood sugar spikes.

Fang also switched from evening workouts — which she said kept her awake — to morning sessions that reset her circadian rhythm.

After she returned to Beijing, she maintained the healthy habits she had cultivated in Wanning. Fitness had gone from being optional to essential.

Fang said in a laboratory "experiments fail all the time", but sports are different. "As long as you move, you see changes — in your body, in your mental state," she said.

Many of her graduate-school peers have only two stress outlets. "Either they're sports people, or they're heavy drinkers," she said, adding everyone needs a way to release pressure.

But not everyone is pleased with the influx of people to Wanning in search of sun and sports.

Some of the true "old surfers" have started to leave.

Seven years ago, before the COVID-19 pandemic, when freelance writer Chen Haiping arrived at Riyue Bay, it was pristine and low-key with only a few surfer guesthouses, he said.

"There weren't as many people, and it felt like a hermit's paradise," he said.

"Now, it has become more standardized, industrialized, but also commercialized. Most of my group, who truly embraced surfing as a lifestyle, have gradually left. They've moved to more remote bay areas around the world."

Chen said Wanning is neither a utopia nor a paradise to escape reality.

There are many real issues to deal with: rent does not match income, the cost of living is higher than expected, many things depend on transportation, and even fuel prices are higher because Hainan is an island.

"I have a deep affection for Wanning. Today, people seem to be flocking there as if heading to a carnival. I hope that after the excitement, people won't abandon it once they've had their fill."

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Left: A child practices surfing in Wanning on July 20. **Middle:** A cyclist performs stunts at a bicycle park in Wanning on Jan 18. PHOTOS BY MENG ZHONGDE / FOR CHINA DAILY **Right:** A surfer competes in the 2026 China National Artificial Surfing Pool Open in Wanning on March 7. LUO YUNFEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

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TOP NEWS

Tornado aftermath

Damaged houses and toppled trees are seen on Monday after a tornado struck Pomas in southwestern France. Local authorities said 39 people were injured, two critically, while about 300 homes were damaged. Emergency accommodation centers were opened for displaced residents.

IDRISS BIGOU-GILLES / AFP



Dialogue seeks tangible results in Sino-US ties

Representatives stress mutual respect while seeking progress in key areas

By ZHAO JIA
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Representatives from China and the United States participated in a dialogue on Tuesday in Beijing, where they called for joint efforts to translate the consensus reached by the two countries' heads of state into concrete action and tangible results, while also suggesting expansion of practical cooperation across a number of fields.

They highlighted mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation as key to keeping bilateral ties on a stable track, while stressing the need for the two countries to jointly address global challenges and bring greater stability to the world.

The gathering was the third China-US Track 1.5 Dialogue, jointly launched in October 2023 by the International Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the Asia Society as a platform connecting representatives from politics, strategy, business, academics, civil society and youth in both countries.

In May, President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump agreed to make the building of a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability the new positioning for bilateral ties, providing strategic guidance for the relationship over the next three years and beyond.

John L. Thornton, cochair of the Asia Society Board of Trustees, said Xi and Trump are both historic figures who know each other well and have a good personal relationship — a combination he described as highly unusual.

"I think it's very important that the benefit of that is concrete and seen by the people, both in the United States and in China," Thornton said.

He added that the key test was what the new positioning would mean in practice and whether it could produce results. "There are a lot of possibilities for progress, and I'm optimistic that there will be progress," he said.

> "There are a lot of possibilities for progress, and I'm optimistic that there will be progress."
>
> **John L. Thornton,** cochair of the Asia Society Board of Trustees

Christopher Nixon Cox, a member of the Richard Nixon Foundation's board of directors and a grandson of former US president Richard Nixon, called the leader-to-leader relationship "the most important thing", saying it gave him confidence about the future of bilateral ties.

While acknowledging that China and the US would continue to have differences, Cox said they should seek common ground in the fields of artificial intelligence, agriculture, food security and economic affairs to help build a stable and prosperous world.

"There are many things with AI that we can agree on," he said, citing the need to prevent it from harming children.

Cox also invoked Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972 as an example of the political courage required on both sides. "There are many lessons from my grandfather's trip to China," he said. "One is that nothing happens without courage."

Liu Haixing, minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, said that a stable China-US relationship was in itself the greatest contribution to world peace and development.

Liu called for expanding common interests, rejecting zero-sum thinking, managing differences through clear policy signals, and upholding the bottom line of no conflict and no confrontation.

Competition between major countries is normal, he said, but that should not define the entire relationship, emphasizing that it should be a healthy and positive race rather than a life-or-death gladiatorial contest.

A zero-sum approach, he added, would distort market rules, disrupt global industrial cooperation and undermine market confidence.

Craig Allen, former president of the US-China Business Council and a nonresident senior fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute's Center for China Analysis, said that both governments needed to follow the common framework agreed upon by the two leaders.

He said maintaining an open trade and investment environment was critical to achieving the two leaders' goals. Warning that decoupling would "make us both poorer" and that "neither side can afford to decouple", Allen described the Chinese and US economies as "the two engines of growth in the global economy", saying robust growth in both was essential to global stability.

Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, said that China's importance to US companies extended well beyond the size of its market.

"Think of China not as a market but as a platform. That's what's important," Stein said. China's technological ecosystem, the partnerships companies form and the experience they gain there help shape products and business processes used in other markets, he added.

The council's 2026 member survey found that 95 percent of respondents viewed their China operations as at least somewhat important to staying globally competitive.

"China is a really important part of global competitiveness for American companies," Stein said.

China ready to strengthen exchanges with India

By ZHOU JIN
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China is ready to work with India to strengthen communication, enhance mutual understanding, resolve differences and overcome obstacles, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Tuesday, calling on the two countries to be good-neighborly friends and partners that help each other succeed.

Wang, who is also director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, made the remarks when co-chairing the 25th Round of Talks Between the Special Representatives on the Boundary Question with Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval in Beijing.

Wang said that institutional exchanges and cooperation between the two countries are gradually resuming, with both sides committed to maintaining peace and tranquility in the border areas.

The two sides should place the boundary question in an appropriate position within the bilateral relationship, and continue moving forward without stalling, backsliding or deviating from the right course, he said.

Wang called on Beijing and New Delhi to gradually foster a positive narrative on China-India boundary affairs, and make dialogue, peace, consultation and cooperation the mainstream, so as to inject positive momentum into the sound and stable development of bilateral relations.

The two sides held in-depth discussions on advancing boundary negotiations, strengthening border management, improving relevant mechanisms and promoting cross-border cooperation, according to a news release issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

When meeting with Doval on the same day, Vice-President Han Zheng called on China and India to view and handle bilateral relations from a strategic and long-term perspective, and work together to implement the important consensus reached by their leaders.

The two sides should enhance strategic mutual trust, tap the potential for cooperation, maintain close multilateral coordination, properly manage differences and promote the sustained and stable development of China-India relations, he said.

As the world's two most populous and fastest-growing major economies, India and China have a historic opportunity for cooperation, Doval said, adding that India stands ready to work with China to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, properly address the boundary question and make new progress in bilateral ties.

Noodles: Legacy of Ancient Silk Road achieves modern reach, global appeal

From page 1

A steaming bowl arrives topped with slices of beef, white radish, garlic sprouts and cilantro. The noodles are pulled to order in a range of widths to suit each diner's preference. Once the last strand is gone and the broth savored to the last drop, there is a particular sense of satisfaction — a feeling locals describe as *manfu*, meaning comfortable contentment.

"Having a bowl of beef noodles is part of everyday life for people in Lanzhou," Ma said.

Yet the roots of this deeply local dish reach far beyond the city.

The clear, aromatic broth that Ma considers the soul of the dish is prepared with beef, bones and carefully selected spices — some of which, including pepper, nutmeg and fennel seeds, have traveled thousands of kilometers to reach Lanzhou.

Their journeys echo the exchanges that have long taken place along the ancient Silk Road, with Lanzhou historically serving as an important crossroads where regions and cultures meet.

Today, that movement is going in the other direction. The noodles that have long defined mornings in Lanzhou are increasingly being served far beyond Gansu — and well beyond China.

According to the Lanzhou Beef Noodle Industry Association, Lanzhou beef noodle outlets can now be found across over 60 countries and regions.

That expansion raises a question: How can a food so rooted in Lanzhou go global without losing its distinctive identity? Ma Chenghu, deputy secretary-general of the association, said the answer lies in preserving the essentials while allowing for local adaptation.

> Lanzhou beef noodles carry the imprint of the ancient Silk Road and the Yellow River civilization, and in a single bowl, you can see the meeting of Eastern and Western food cultures."
>
> **Ma Chenghu,** deputy secretary-general of the Lanzhou Beef Noodle Industry Association

At the heart of a traditional bowl is a combination known to Lanzhou diners as "one clear, two white, three red, four green and five yellow", referring to the clear broth, white radish, red chili oil, green garlic sprouts and cilantro, and golden noodles.

Behind that seemingly simple bowl lies a rigorous craft. The dough must be repeatedly kneaded to achieve the right elasticity before being pulled by hand into strands of varying thicknesses. Beef and bones are slowly simmered with spices to produce a broth that is rich in flavor yet crystal clear.

Ueno Tomokazu, a Japanese cultural communicator, came to Lanzhou to learn the craft. The dish has become increasingly popular in Japan, where diners are often seen lining up outside noodle shops.

Pulling noodles by hand, however, is harder than it looks. It requires not only strength, but also an intuitive sense of the dough — knowing when it is elastic enough, how much force to apply and how to keep the strands uniform as they multiply between the hands.

For Ueno, what stood out during his time in Lanzhou was not only the technique, but the deep emotional bond local people have with the dish.

"To make a good bowl, you need the skills, but you also need to have a genuine love for the food," he said.

As the Lanzhou specialty travels further afield, some shops have turned the noodle-making itself into part of the dining experience. Diners can watch the process, gaining not just a glimpse of the craft behind an otherwise simple bowl, but a deeper appreciation of Chinese culinary traditions.

Ma Chenghu from the Lanzhou Beef Noodle Industry Association said, "Lanzhou beef noodles carry the imprint of the ancient Silk Road and the Yellow River civilization, and in a single bowl, you can see the meeting of Eastern and Western food cultures."

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Technology: AI-driven growth strategy now requires more active policy support

From page 1

These figures capture the distinctive structure described above: Investment remains unusually high by international standards, consumption comparatively low. Exports still perform well, aided by industrial scale and diversification toward Europe and Latin America that has offset the weaker demand of the United States, but investment-led growth is harder to sustain as infrastructure can no longer serve as an unlimited stabilization tool.

Greater confidence should be built in consumption. Retail sales rose 3.7 percent in 2025, online retail increased 8.6 percent, and final consumption contributed 52 percent of GDP growth — five points more than the year before. That is a meaningful shift, but not yet a full substitute for property-led growth.

History offers a guide. Japan after 1990 showed that even near-zero rates cannot force households focused on repairing balance sheets to spend. China's own reform era is more encouraging: Deng Xiaoping's 1992 Southern Tour shifted expectations so decisively that real fixed investment rose 28.2 percent that year. Confidence returns when policy signals are sustained. China's own experience demonstrates how stronger expectations can unlock investment, entrepreneurship and economic activity.

> **China's own experience demonstrates how stronger expectations can unlock investment, entrepreneurship and economic activity.**

This is where AI — and the wider array of frontier technologies now emerging in China — becomes economically relevant, not as a symbol but as a potential fourth engine reinforcing the other three.

In exports, it can lift manufacturing productivity and push companies into higher-value segments, as Chinese labs such as DeepSeek have shown they can already do on the global stage. China's world-class manufacturing base gives it a strong platform for turning AI advances into productivity gains across the real economy.

In investment, it can redirect capital from basic infrastructure toward computing power and data centers — the very assets global markets now reward with premium valuations.

In consumption, it can open up demand in healthcare, education and digital services, while creating new products, services and employment opportunities for households.

The scale on display at the 2026 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance, backed by evident State commitment, signals this is a growth strategy, not a side project. Technology alone cannot inject confidence in all sectors. Turning that into domestic confidence still requires more active policy support — so that AI-driven growth becomes secure jobs and rising incomes, and eventually stronger household confidence and consumption.

China's transition can be summarized simply: In the earlier growth phase, expansion generated confidence; in the phase ahead, confidence will have to generate expansion. An economy with real capacity and increasingly sophisticated sources of innovation and growth, is still working to fully unlock the confidence needed to put that capacity to work. AI, if it can convert conference-hall momentum into household-level trust, may be the engine that helps supply it.

The author is a former tourism minister of Brazil, a distinguished professor at Tsinghua University and a professor at The Chinese University of Hong Kong in Shenzhen. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Birthday treat



Giant panda Katyusha enjoys a birthday cake at Moscow Zoo in Moscow, Russia, on Monday. Katyusha was the first giant panda ever born in Russia in August 2023.

PELAGIYA TIKHONOVA / SPUTNIK

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WORLD

Blaze battle



Firefighters battle a three-alarm fire along Main Street in Old Newhall, California, on Monday. The blaze broke out at 2:55 am, prompting an additional response as flames and smoke intensified, with flames destroying multiple businesses. MEDIANEWS GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES

China fuels tourism in Australia

Digital shifts reshape travel demand as arrivals edge closer to pre-pandemic peak

By ALEXIS HOOI in Sydney
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Australia's tourism industry recorded steady growth toward pre-pandemic levels, with the Chinese market helping fuel the pillar sector as it rides on digital and other technological trends amid global challenges, according to the latest analysis.

Travel to Australia is on the rise, with short-term visitor arrivals growing by 8 percent year-on-year to 9.1 million in 2025-26, according to figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on Aug 14.

Visits to the country have risen for the fifth year in a row, but they are still 3 percent lower than the peak of 9.3 million in 2018-19, it said.

Robin Mack, managing director of Tourism Australia, the government agency responsible for attracting international visitors to leisure and business events, told China Daily that in the year ending June 2026, Australia welcomed more than 1.1 million visitors from China, which was 18.2 percent more than the previous year.

"China continues to be a top inbound tourism market for Australia. We have seen the number of Chinese travelers arriving in Australia steadily increase since travel resumed in early 2023," he said.

China was Australia's largest tourism market by both visitor numbers and spending in 2019 and has "bounced back relatively quickly" to become the country's second-largest source of visitors, after New Zealand, and its largest market by spending, Mack said.

At an industry briefing on Aug 20 covering the latest trends and market insights, Mack also said international confidence in travel continues to rise as the situation in the conflict-hit Middle East, with its disruptions to fuel and other global supply chains, becomes the new "normal".

"Despite initial disruptions to travel earlier this year, Australia continues to welcome visitors from around the world. Australia's appeal as a destination remains strong, and importantly traveler confidence, and intention to visit, are steady," he told China Daily, adding that while there is a downturn in bookings from the United Kingdom and Europe in the months ahead, those in other key markets, notably China, are up.

"Our marketing continues to focus on building demand with campaigns targeted to key markets, working closely with distribution and airline partners to convert demand into bookings and a broad range of visitor experiences on the ground," Mack said.

He referred to Australia's "world-class nature and wildlife" as the main draws for Chinese visitors, as well as "great food and drink experiences".

Maturing market

"As the market continues to mature, Chinese travelers are sampling the best of Australian produce in urban and regional settings," Mack said.

The industry briefing also covered how artificial intelligence was becoming increasingly important in the sector's digital and technological development.

Tourism Australia's chief marketing officer Susan Coghill highlighted how 81 percent of Chinese travelers "use AI for trip inspiration, more than anywhere else".

Travelers now trust AI more than influencers to plan their travel, with AI-referred traffic to travel sites also up more than 2,000 percent since late 2024, she said.

"One is about how we create desire and how we connect emotionally with travelers and make them want Australia," Coghill said.

"Another is about how we get discovered by the machines; so it's AI tools and social platforms becoming more and more about how people are researching the next holiday or business event. We want to make sure that Australia ... is in the answers," she said.

John Pastor, who organizes tailor-made tours in Sydney, told China Daily he is banking on more Chinese tourist arrivals, in part by investing in advanced translation technology to help him communicate better with them.

"The Chinese are friendly, smart and generous," he said. "I like to create memories for people with their experiences here."

Zhang Liyun, an information technology professional from Shanghai, said her family of five is set for a trip to Australia during the Chinese holiday period in October.

"We'll be covering Sydney and its surrounding areas," said Zhang, 42. "Australia continues to be an attractive destination in the Southern Hemisphere, with its great outdoors and vibrant cities."

Beyond pandas, open doors draw visitors from afar



Chang Jun
Reporter's log

FIRST PERSON VIEW

I walked into the conference room not expecting much. Another tourism promotion event, another PowerPoint deck, another round of polished talking points. But something felt different last month as soon as I stepped into the room where officials from Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, told attendees that the city, with thousands of years of history, has much more to offer than its iconic giant pandas.

Industry representatives, policymakers, travel agents, and service providers packed the room shoulder to shoulder. There was an energy I had not felt at one of these gatherings in a long time.

Jason Carter, regional director for the USA and Canada at the World Travel and Tourism Council, or WTTC, said China's travel and tourism industry had entered a period of rapid expansion. His statement was hard to argue with: the numbers were solid. In 2025, China hosted more than 68 million international visitors, up 15.5 percent year-on-year, nearly triple the global average. Those visitors spent $135 billion in China, while the country's total economic contribution from tourism reached $1.8 trillion, growing 9.9 percent year-on-year — more than double the global average of 4.1 percent.

I found myself joining the chorus of loud cheers and applause.

Well, I am not ashamed of losing my composure. Since the COVID-19 pandemic first struck in 2019 and cast its long shadow over the world, I have felt suffocated by a relentless flood of gloomy headlines — economic downturns, business slowdowns, store closures, declining tourism, eroding public confidence, and the drumbeat of war. Against that bleak backdrop, words like growth, expansion, job creation, and profit, riding on the wave of China's tourism boom, are nothing short of music to my ears.

Carter was clear that none of this was accidental. The recovery is the product of China's real work at every level. Services were upgraded, policies refined, and procedures streamlined to remove any hurdle an overseas visitor might face. Vowing to continue its openness, China now offers visa-free access to 50 countries unilaterally, with reciprocal agreements covering another 29. More than 30 million foreign nationals entered China visa-free in 2025 alone.

This is a remarkable gesture from China — an open, standing invitation to friends all over the world, extended with hospitality and backed by millennia-long history, cultural richness, and tourism resources.

Chengdu is a microcosm of this broader trend. Qiu Wei, director of the Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Culture, Broadcast-TV, and Tourism, promoted his hometown at the event by underscoring Chengdu's charm of blending high-tech innovation and ecosystem diversity with a laid-back lifestyle.

It seems to me that being named the Happiest City in China for 17 consecutive years is a strong selling point for Chengdu — or any place that can provide a temporary haven for people worn down by the pressures of modern life. Fortunately, China has many similar tourist attractions to host those who are heart-wrenched and physically fatigued.

The hard work appears to be paying off. I talked to Alex Mortensen, sales manager at the HiSEAS International Tourism Group, who specializes in arranging trips to China for US travelers.

What impressed him the most about traveling in China was the efficiency, well-trained staff, and cost-effectiveness. He stayed at the Four Seasons in Chengdu with his family in June. "Compared to what you pay in the United States, the price was incredibly enticing — and the service was exceptional."

Mortensen is neither the first nor the last to return with a positive impression of China, I believe. When these positive experiences become the new normal and go viral across internet communities, the success story of China's tourism industry will continue.

Deputy Consul General Cao Yibin closed warmly. "Tourism brings people closer together and builds lasting friendship," she said. In the current climate of US-China relations, those words carry particular weight.

I left with a half-built Chengdu itinerary on my phone and, for the first time in a long while, something that felt like optimism. The numbers are real. The doors are opening. The cities are ready.

The only question is whether enough people on this side of the Pacific are willing to go find out for themselves. Based on what I heard there, more and more of them are.

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Online
See more by scanning the code.

Europe heat waves kill 35,000, strain insurers

By EARLE GALE in London
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At least 35,000 excess deaths have been recorded during heat waves that have scorched Europe this year, The Guardian newspaper has reported.

The final death toll is likely to be far higher because data is not yet available for half of Europe's nations, and because none have yet published excess death totals for August.

The provisional death toll has prompted the US credit rating agency S&P Global Ratings to warn that Europe's heat waves will cause a spike in insurance claims, and increase the cost of life insurance and medical insurance.

It said insurance companies will have to pay many extra claims, including for crop damage caused by droughts, and devastation left by wildfires.

"Beyond heat-related deaths, it's also deteriorating health conditions and the resulting increase in treatment and hospitalizations that might weigh on insurers' financials and, subsequently, increase premiums," S&P Global Ratings said in its analysis.

Europe's fast-aging population is more susceptible to heat-related health issues, the company added, and "the increasing share of elderly people ... suggests that heat-related mortality in Europe is likely to rise".

A recent study in The Lancet Planetary Health found that people aged 60 and older are more susceptible to excess heat because they sweat less and because their hearts work harder as their blood vessels cannot widen and increase flow.

Of the 35,000 excess deaths recorded so far in Europe, 10,650 occurred during a heat wave between June 22 and June 28, with 9,000 of those deaths among people aged 65 and older.

The Robert Koch Institute, a public health agency in Germany, said 9,600 of the 10,650 deaths happened in Germany, where a typical summer usually leads to around 2,000 heat-related deaths.

Excess fatalities

The heat-related deaths mean Europe is likely to see its largest number of excess fatalities since July 2022, when there was a spike connected to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Karl Lauterbach, a former German health minister, said last week that the latest figures are likely to be massive underestimates.

The four heat waves that have hit Europe so far this year have largely impacted the western side of the continent, where they have broken several records, including in France, where the hottest national average day on record was recorded. In Germany, temperatures topped 40 C for three straight days in June. And Spain saw many days of at least 42 C.

The hot weather has been attributed to human-made global warming exacerbated by an El Nino weather system.

Swallowed by grief



A man mourns next to the covered body of a person killed during an overnight raid by an armed gang on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince in Kenscoff, Haiti, on Monday. The attack left at least 47 people dead and 22 injured, as Kenscoff has endured about a dozen gang attacks since last year, according to the United Nations. PATRICE NOEL / REUTERS

US proposes H-1B fee exceeding $100,000

WASHINGTON — The US Department of Homeland Security, or DHS, on Monday proposed a $103,265 fee for employers hiring highly-skilled foreign workers through the H-1B visa program, marking the agency's latest move to restrict the visa program on new grounds.

The move came after a previous effort to charge $100,000 for the visa was struck down by the courts.

"The proposed fee would generate revenue to recover a portion of the federal government's costs for administering the lawful immigration system," the DHS said in a news release.

The new fee is designed to recover a portion of the full costs of providing immigration adjudication and naturalization services incurred by multiple federal agencies in processing, adjudicating and supporting the lawful immigration system, according to a document scheduled to be published in the Federal Register on Tuesday.

The DHS estimates the proposed fee would generate approximately $8.8 billion annually, based on projections of petitions for the annual cap of 85,000 H-1B visas, according to the release.

Under the proposed rule, the additional fee would not apply to H-1B petitions that are not subject to the cap, such as petitions filed by certain nonprofit research organizations, governmental research organizations, and institutions of higher education, the release added.

The public will be given a 30-day period to submit comments on the proposed rule before it can take effect.

"If finalized, the new proposal would place a significant new burden on the technology and finance sectors, which rely on the H-1B visa to hire top international graduates from US universities," The Wall Street Journal reported.

The latest proposal came two months after the Trump administration's $100,000 fee on new H-1B visas was struck down by a federal judge in Boston, Massachusetts. The judge ruled that the executive branch exceeded its authority and violated the Administrative Procedure Act.

Plan may backfire

CBS reported that the plan could backfire by encouraging US companies to shift jobs overseas, especially in specialized fields such as research and development. It could also further deter international students from studying in the United States.

On Aug 10, the US State Department announced that it had revoked more than 175,000 visas since January 2025, when Trump began his second term.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is preparing to revoke the business and tourism visas of up to 200,000 foreigners who have applied for or are currently seeking asylum status in the United States, according to a report by The Associated Press on Tuesday.

"If it happens, the move would be the largest single mass revocation of visas in US history and would likely face legal challenges," the report said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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WORLD

In memoriam



People light candles next to a collapsed building two months after massive earthquakes in La Guaira, Venezuela, on Monday. The country's interim government on Monday reported 6,509 deaths from the twin earthquakes. MARYORIN MENDEZ / AFP

Japan Cabinet's poll ratings drop

Decline reflects rising public doubts about governing philosophy: Experts

By LIU JIANQIAO
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Latest Japanese opinion polls show support for Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's Cabinet has continued to decline, reaching its lowest level since she took office. Experts said the drop reflects growing public doubts about the administration's governing philosophy, policy competence and approach to governance.

The approval ratings fell to 41 percent in a Mainichi Shimbun survey conducted on Saturday and Sunday, their lowest level since the administration came into office in October 2025. A Kyodo News poll at the same time also found that the approval rate for Takaichi's Cabinet fell 3.5 percentage points from the previous survey in July to 50.2 percent.

The key focus of the weekend polls was the government's plan to cut the consumption tax on food from the current 8 percent to 1 percent for two years starting in April 2027.

The support for the policy stood at 54 percent in a Yomiuri Shimbun survey and 52.7 percent in the Kyodo News poll. An ANN survey found that 47 percent of respondents supported the measure, while 42 percent opposed it. Mainichi's survey showed a different trend, with 47 percent of respondents viewing the policy negatively, compared with 33 percent who viewed it positively.

Although three of the four polls showed more respondents supporting the tax cut than opposing it, anxiety over its consequences for government coffers remained high.

A high percentage of Kyodo's respondents, 71.7 percent, expressed concern over the impact of the tax cut on government finances, while a similar proportion expressed the same concern in ANN's poll.

Yomiuri's poll found that a majority of respondents were worried that the tax cut could make it more difficult for the government to sustain the social security system. Many questioned whether the government would be able to restore the tax to its original rate after the two years.

Besides, according to the Kyodo poll, 42.6 percent of respondents said they disapproved of Takaichi's decision to omit the word "remorse" from her address at a ceremony on Aug 15 marking Japan's defeat in World War II.

Liu Shuliang, an associate researcher at the Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences, said that public concerns over the tax cut policy underscore the continued pressure Japanese households face from rising prices and higher living costs.

The government's economic and livelihood policies, dubbed "Sanaenomics" by the media for their resemblance to "Abenomics" by former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, are essentially election-driven measures aimed at securing short-term political support, rather than addressing Japan's long-standing structural economic problems, Liu said.

He noted that in response to mounting public concerns over rising prices and the increasing cost of living, the Takaichi administration has introduced measures such as consumption tax cuts in an effort to win public support by offering immediate policy benefits.

"However, such measures could further increase fiscal risks and place a heavier burden on future governments and generations, while the administration appears both unwilling and unable to pursue structural reforms that would challenge Japan's entrenched vested interests," he added.

Slush fund scandal

Chen Hong, director of East China Normal University's Asia Pacific Studies Center in Shanghai, highlighted that 73.8 percent of respondents in the Kyodo News poll opposed Takaichi's plan to appoint lawmakers implicated in a political slush fund scandal to key positions.

These findings indicate that the Japanese public remains deeply dissatisfied with political funding scandals, political ethics and what is often described as "Liberal Democratic Party-style factional politics". It also suggests that such problems remain deeply rooted in Japanese politics and have yet to be effectively addressed, Chen said.

Since taking office, the Takaichi administration has pursued a distinctly conservative, and in some areas, right-leaning policy agenda, experts said.

"Over the past year or so, the Takaichi Cabinet's policies on national security, foreign affairs, historical perceptions and reform of the imperial household system have increasingly aligned with the core demands of Japan's right-wing forces, further pushing Japanese politics in a right-leaning direction," Liu said.

The administration's rightward political shift is likely to exacerbate long-standing ideological divisions between the left and right in Japanese politics and society, prompting political forces and social groups to take more clearly defined sides, Chen said.

"This could weaken social cohesion, undermine political and social stability, and further deepen polarization in Japanese society," he added.

Forum calls for Asian unity amid geopolitical challenges

By ZHANG YUNBI
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Asia is now in urgent need of boosting unity, shelving differences and building consensus when faced with challenges such as geopolitical rivalry, gaps in technologies and power politics, political figures and policy advisers have said.

They made the point at the Conference on Building a Peaceful and Prosperous Asian Community with a Shared Future, a high-level dialogue in Beijing on Tuesday.

The event gathered over 300 delegates from countries in various parts of Asia, including political leaders as well as executives of think tanks, friendship organizations and media.

At the conference's opening, Wang Dongming, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, voiced his hope that all parties would act on the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity and implement the four major initiatives — the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative, and Global Governance Initiative.

He called on parties to join hands in advancing the building of a community with a shared future for Asia and to jointly write a new chapter of peace, development, cooperation, and prosperity for Asia.

Omar Razzaz, Jordan's former prime minister, raised concerns over challenges posed by cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence, to Asia, which represents about 40 percent of the world's total GDP and 60 percent of the global population.

The younger generation is going through cognitive atrophy because of AI. While manual labor is being replaced by robotics and AI algorithms, economic monopoly by some IT giants based in Western countries may translate into political hegemony, he said.

He quoted President Xi Jinping as saying at the opening ceremony of the 2026 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in July that "AI development should not be a solo performance by a single country, but a symphony of international cooperation".

"I could not agree more. This is something that each of us needs to be involved in," he said.

Yukio Hatoyama, former Japanese prime minister, warned that armed conflicts persist around the world, and economic sanctions and bloc-based politics have become a weapon in diplomacy.

"What our era requires is not the continuation of an old order based on the strength of nations," he said.

Hatoyama noted that China, as a major country, does not coerce others through force but influences them through virtue, and it builds trust through reciprocity and cooperation.

Tao Jian, a leading Chinese scholar on international relations studies and former president of the University of International Relations in Beijing, underlined the importance of Asian countries joining hands in partnership building and resilience buildup against economic, political and social impacts brought by factors, including bloc confrontation.

"Only when Asian nations fully recognize that they are all sailors on the same ship will they be able to truly join forces and move forward together amid raging storms," he said.

Sodiq Safoyev, first deputy chairman of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan, said the region needs not just economic connectivity, but also "identity and a space of shared values".

Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, former Pakistani prime minister, said Asia "needs security that is common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable, where no country seeks security at the expense of another".

ACFTU Special

Man masters legendary machine to produce aircraft parts for country

From model workers and master craftsmen to factory hands and gig-economy workers, China's vast workforce is the bedrock of national development. Launched by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, this series shines a spotlight on the responsibility and resilience of the modern Chinese working class, documenting their struggles and stories from the front lines to showcase the dedication, craftsmanship and pioneering spirit driving progress across every sector.

By YUAN SHENGGAO



Ye Linwei, team leader of the 80,000-metric-ton die-forging press crew at China National Erzhong Group Deyang Wanhang Die Forging, reviews operations at the production site.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The first time Ye Linwei stood beneath the 80,000-metric-ton die-forging press, he was 26. Towering 42 meters above him — as high as a 15-story building and weighing 22,000 tons — was a legendary machine.

Ye, now 40, is team leader of the press crew at China National Erzhong Group Deyang Wanhang Die Forging. The press, developed by Erzhong Group, is one of the largest in the world and built to forge aircraft parts.

"I've dreamed of building aircraft since I was a child," Ye said. "My first encounter with the 80,000-ton press was as a freshman. It hadn't broken ground yet, but its legend was already whispered in every corner of the heavy machinery world."

In 2006, Ye was studying civil construction at Sichuan Polytechnic University when he learned his school was training specialists for an 80,000-ton press to support the development of homegrown aircraft. A budding pilot at heart, he switched to the forging program. "If I couldn't be the pilot," Ye recalls thinking, "I could at least help build the plane."

By 2012, the press was ready. So was Ye. Following a rigorous selection process, he was chosen as a candidate for the inaugural operation team.

The challenge was unlike anything in the textbooks. With no mature operating procedures to follow, Ye faced a maze of components: 10 kilometers of hydraulic piping, tens of thousands of electrical control modules and a mechanical frame that tolerated no mistakes.

"Mastering this unprecedented steel has no road map to follow; every step forward felt like navigating uncharted waters," Ye said.

To close the gap between theory and reality, Ye buried himself in studying the machine. During the day, he climbed the press to examine its structure against the blueprints. At night, he stayed at the console, recording data.

"At the toughest stage, we ran over a hundred trials on a single parameter. Constant tweaks, constant checks," Ye said. Undeterred by the setbacks, Ye's work finally paid off. He cracked the operating code a year early, earning the position as the press' inaugural chief.

Operating an 80,000-ton giant is less about brute force than microscopic control. Over years of repetition, Ye has developed a near-instinctive feel for operating the machine. "I taught myself to listen to the equipment," Ye said. By ear, Ye spots machine faults. He once used the press to crack an eggshell without rupturing the membrane inside.

That precision proved vital in national key projects, most notably in forging the C919's vertical stabilizer and its main landing gear. Working beside the press, Ye and his colleagues ran repeated trial forgings, adjusting parameters until the margin of error disappeared. The successful forging supported the aircraft's final assembly, maiden flight and commercial service.

Ye and his team took over 2,500 days to crack the core technology for central-wing titanium alloy edges, delivering more than 130 critical forgings, all now in active service.

"In aviation, nothing is trivial. Every forging is a layer of insurance for flight safety; there is zero tolerance for error," Ye reminds himself and his crew. Over the years, Ye's team has produced nearly 40,000 high-precision forgings. Among them are the world's largest gas turbine disc, ultralarge integrated titanium bladed disks and high-strength TC17 titanium alloy components.

"Serving national megaprojects as a frontline worker is my greatest pride," Ye said. For him, the work is less about awards and more about a quiet promise that ensures every part leaving the shop floor is strong enough to fly.



Waddle weigh

A zookeeper tries to lure penguins onto a scale during the annual Weigh In at the Zoological Society of London on Monday, as London Zoo's animals are weighed and measured on a regular basis as a way of continually monitoring their health, development and even identifying pregnancies.
FRANK AUGSTEIN / AP

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COMMENT

Editorials

US needs an exit ramp for itself, not an 'economic D-Day' for Iran

Watching a superpower that cannot win a conflict pretend it can win an economic siege would be comic if it weren't so tragic.

That is what we witnessed this week, when US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent stepped forward to declare the "single greatest financial offensive ever marshaled against an adversary" — in this case Iran — only to acknowledge that Washington was not actually naming the countries to be punished or imposing secondary sanctions yet. There would be a "cure period". The penalties would come later.

Washington wants to convince Tehran that tougher measures are coming while keeping its own options open. But the much-hyped "economic D-Day" looks more like a damp squib.

The United States' latest campaign targets almost 60 individuals, entities and vessels and expands the reach into digital assets, gold, technology, aviation and shipping. Failing to fully throttle Iran's oil exports, Washington is technically waging an open assault on the non-dollar financial order to preserve the US' dollar hegemony.

China — one of Iran's trading partners — has made its position clear. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said sanctions and pressure tactics do not resolve problems; they only escalate tensions and damage global economic growth and financial stability. China urges all parties to return to political settlement through dialogue and negotiation.

Washington cannot turn every trading partner into a US accomplice in the Middle East crisis. China will do what is necessary to protect its legitimate rights and interests.

The irony is that while Bessent was announcing an economic war, Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, was traveling to Tehran after speaking with US President Donald Trump. Pakistani sources said Washington had asked Islamabad to use its influence to bring Iran back to negotiations.

The world has seen this double act before. Washington has repeatedly made extravagant claims about the Strait of Hormuz, at one point declaring that the US blockade was "100 percent effective" and that it had "complete control", when evidently it didn't.

By dictating timelines for other countries to cut ties with Iran in the listed fields, Washington has all but admitted that domestic pressure has left it desperate to escape the mess that it created.

The whole world, particularly Iran, can clearly see that the US administration appears increasingly trapped in a crisis of its own making. Gasoline in the US has risen above $4 a gallon. Inflation and living costs remain painfully high. The US national debt has climbed beyond $40 trillion, while the US administration is intervening in the Treasury market to support demand for government bonds.

Against that backdrop, the Iran conflict offers an irresistible political stage. A US administration under domestic economic pressure before the midterm elections can always look stronger by threatening a foreign adversary and telling the rest of the world what to do. In politics you get far more mileage out of managing expectations than you ever will from keeping your word.

Iran has already endured decades of sanctions. It has built mechanisms to diversify its economic relationships. Tehran says it has prepared a two-year plan to withstand the latest US measures. Whether that plan succeeds is another question. But expecting new sanctions alone to produce a result that has not been achieved in nearly half a century is hardly a strategy.

The longer this war and economic siege continue, the more the costs spread — to global energy markets and ultimately to US households. The US administration does not need another "economic D-Day" for Iran. It needs an exit ramp for itself.

After its many military misadventures, the US should have learned by now that you cannot bomb a nation into submission, sanction it into surrender or bluff your way out of a quagmire created by yourself. At some point, even superpowers have to choose between the theater of strength and the hard work of diplomacy.

The last time the US administration played listmaker to the rest of the world, it was the great tariff fiasco — a spectacle later ruled unlawful and remembered for its lose-lose consequences. Yet here we are again, with Washington dusting off the same playbook, this time in the name of the Iran conflict. History is unlikely to be kind to this rerun.

People-to-people exchanges enduring bridge

Ronald Sakolsky, a retired teacher from Pennsylvania, the United States, recently returned to China after more than 20 years, completing a personal journey that began with a simple act of kindness. In an era of strategic rivalry and political turbulence, his story serves as a poignant reminder of what truly sustains international relations.

In 1999, while teaching English in Luoyang, Henan province, Sakolsky was inspired by a television report on Yin Yuzhen, a Chinese woman fighting desertification in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. Moved by her perseverance, Sakolsky raised $5,000 to support her tree-planting efforts on the barren land.

This week, he walked through the very land he helped rejuvenate, now a thriving forest and ecological garden. "Nothing but a miracle," he said, standing beside Yin. Their journey, from a small donation to a flourishing forest, encapsulates a powerful truth: individual human connections can transcend geopolitical divides and create lasting, tangible change.

This narrative is especially important today, as some politicians in the US continue to view China as a strategic rival, leading to restrictive policies that hinder bilateral cooperation and escalate tensions.

In such an environment, official channels often stall or get mired in suspicion and zero-sum thinking. However, international relations are not solely the domain of politics; they are also built on a foundation of mutual understanding between people from different walks of life.

When political rhetoric becomes adversarial, people-to-people exchanges act as crucial stabilizers, dismantling stereotypes, building trust and highlighting our shared humanity. As Sakolsky put it, "All Americans need to realize that Chinese and Americans can be family. We can get over the differences if we focus on the similarities."

This sentiment is not naive, but points to a historical truth. Ultimately, it is the people who uphold the bridge of understanding when political winds turn harsh. In times of diplomatic strain, grassroots connections play a critical role in keeping communication lines open and fostering dialogue and mutual understanding.

These interpersonal and cultural exchanges are the stabilizing forces for China-US relations, reminding both nations of their shared interests and the human connections that transcend political disagreements. Through sustained engagement at the individual and community levels, the potential for collaboration and peaceful coexistence is kept alive, even amid geopolitical tensions.

The promising areas for this cooperation should include green development and climate change — afforestation is part of these endeavors. As the world's two largest economies, China and the US share a common interest in combating climate change, advancing green technology and restoring ecological balance.

Yin's story is a metaphor for the engagement in these fields. With help from Good Samaritans such as Sakolsky, her painstaking efforts, which have turned over 4,600 hectares of desert into an oasis, are a victory for all of humanity.

Sakolsky's role sets an example of how cooperation can flourish despite political uncertainties. By focusing on shared environmental goals, both China and the US can contribute to a global public good while building a reservoir of trust and mutual respect that can positively influence other aspects of their relationship.

People-to-people exchanges and dialogues play a vital role in fostering mutual trust and cooperation. Demonstrating the broad scope of such links, the third China-US Track 1.5 Dialogue was held in Beijing on Tuesday, bringing together representatives from Chinese government departments and think tanks, as well as US representatives from several organizations. Centered on expanding economic and sci-tech cooperation, this face-to-face engagement exemplifies the kind of direct communication that is urgently needed between the two countries now.

It is through such sustained exchanges and cooperation that humanity's remarkable cultural tapestry endures and thrives.

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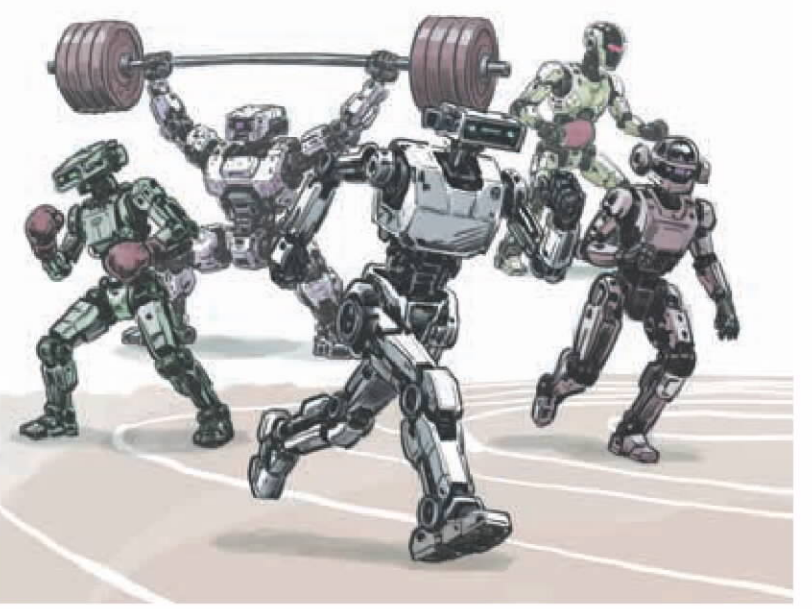

Opinion Line

Latin America knows who is cooperative, who exploitative

Apparently, in the eyes of some United States politicians, the latest threat to Latin America is not invasion, inflation or being treated like Washington's backyard. It is a Huawei router.

Juan Pablo Segura, the US assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, who oversees US foreign policy and relations across Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada, has issued a warning worthy of a Cold War spy thriller: Huawei, ZTE, Hytera, Hikvision, Dahua and DJI are "high-risk technologies" because Chinese law supposedly "forces" them to "spy, hack and shut down" networks.

The message to Latin America is essentially: Trust us. We know what surveillance looks like.

China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian called the baseless accusations fact-distorting fabrications and blatant techno-bullying. And Beijing's diplomatic mission in Panama accused Washington of acting like a thief crying "Stop thief".

The US' unwarranted alarm bell rings hollow because Washington has a credibility problem. The US has a long record of electronic surveillance, tapping and cyber operations, including across Latin America and the Caribbean. So when Washington suddenly becomes the hemisphere's anxious aunt warning everyone about "Chinese spyware", Latin Americans have a reasonable question: Who exactly is listening to whom?

And, why should Panama, Brazil, Peru or any other Latin American country be told which telecommunications equipment, drones or cameras as it may buy?

Washington's answer is "national security". But that phrase is becoming remarkably elastic. It now seems capable of covering everything from semiconductors and ports to lithium, telecommunications and, apparently, even *siu mai*, Chinese steamed dumplings.

There is a more uncomfortable explanation: China is gaining influence because it is offering things Latin America actually wants. It is building ports, railways, factories and digital infrastructure. The Chancay Port in Peru has shortened shipping times between South America and Asia dramatically. Chinese companies are localizing production of electric vehicles and cooperating on telecommunications, renewable energy and advanced manufacturing projects.

Washington wants Latin America to provide oil and critical minerals for US supply chains and to exclude Chinese companies. The US' trade initiatives come with geopolitical conditions. Its immigration policies have alienated millions of Latin Americans. And the US' maneuvering in the Panama Canal has revived fears that Washington still regards the hemisphere less as a community of sovereign states and more as a US preserve.

That is the problem with the "Donroe Doctrine" as it is known. The old Monroe Doctrine said, in effect, that outsiders should stay out of the US' neighborhood. The new version seems to say something more alarming: Latin Americans themselves should be careful about whom they invite into their neighborhood.

The seizure of control over the Balboa and Cristobal ports after pressure to push out CK Hutchison should be a caution to the region. If a company can operate legally for decades and then discovers that geopolitics has suddenly rewritten the contract, every investor should ask what "sovereignty" means when Washington disapproves of the business partner.

China does not want Latin America to become a zero-sum game arena. If US companies want to win local contracts, they should compete by offering better projects, better financing, better technology and better partnerships — instead of relying on Washington's coercion to dictate whom Latin Americans are permitted to work with.

If Washington keeps shouting "Chinese spy" every time Latin America buys a camera, a drone or a telecom system, it may eventually become just background noise.

Latin American countries have witnessed and taken full note of everything the US has done to Panama, Cuba and Venezuela. And they have noticed who is offering projects — and who is offering threats.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Standards for AI-driven services to help customers

Editor's note: *China's first national standards for coordination between human and artificial intelligence-driven customer service will come into effect on Sept 1. China Central Television spoke to Xue Jun, director of the e-commerce law research center at Peking University, about the new standards. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The integration of AI into business operations, particularly in after-sales service, is one of the most common applications. AI-powered customer service can significantly reduce operating costs, prompting many companies to adopt AI solutions for handling after-sales inquiries and resolving service issues.

However, while many businesses are reluctant to invest heavily in human customer service, AI technology is not yet fully mature. This has led to a growing number of consumer complaints.

To address this problem, the national standards set rules to guide the development of the sector. The objective is to use technology to deliver after-sales services more efficiently and at lower cost, without compromising the consumer experience.

One common problem is that customers struggle to reach a human customer service representative, often finding themselves trapped in repetitive automated responses or being endlessly directed from one service to another, with no clear path to human assistance.

There are two possible reasons for this. First, although AI is increasingly being used for customer service, the technology is not mature enough to handle every problem. When an AI system encounters an issue it cannot resolve, it may simply keep the customer going around in circles.

Second, some companies may deliberately make it difficult for customers to find a way out of the automated system, hoping to exhaust customers' resolve to pursue their complaints and avoid addressing the underlying issues.

The new standards emphasize coordination between human and AI customer service because the two approaches have different strengths: AI offers efficiency, while humans provide superior user experience. These two strengths are not necessarily in conflict.

As AI technology continues to evolve in China, AI-powered customer service may eventually be able to resolve most customer issues. Then consumers may not care whether they are interacting with an AI system or a real person.

The problem today is that AI technology is still developing. Businesses must not pursue efficiency at the expense of the user experience. This is precisely why coordination between AI and human customer service is important. When AI can effectively handle an issue without affecting the customer experience, it should be used to improve efficiency. However, for complex or unique problems, the system must be able to quickly transfer the case to a human representative.

This coordination is essential to truly respect and protect consumer rights and interests. The new standards establish a very effective mechanism for achieving this coordination.

The potential applications of AI go beyond customer service, including marketing and promotional activities. Unlike human employees, AI systems can operate round the clock without fatigue. But when AI is used for outbound calls or marketing, businesses must strictly comply with the laws and regulations on marketing, advertising and commercial promotion.

They must not infringe on the rights and interests of others or abuse the technology simply because AI is a cheaper option. Technological advances should be used to improve efficiency, but always within the bounds of the law.

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VIEWS

China and the World Roundtable | Media Cooperation with New Possibilities

Editor's note: *The 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation convened in Beijing on Aug 20. One of the parallel sessions, "AI Integrated Applications in the Radio Television and Audio-Visual Sector", explored how artificial intelligence and digital technologies are creating new possibilities for China-Africa media cooperation. Below are reflections from four of the speakers, as reported by Li Wei of China Daily.*

China-Africa can usher in AI media revolution

AI could help Africa find its voice



Aurélie Adam Soulé Zoumarou is the minister of digital economy and communications for Benin.

A young African woman loves to sing, cherishing both her talent and her country. For years, talent like hers was confined by geography, language and the prohibitive costs of reaching a wider audience. However, technology is beginning to change that. With digital platforms, artists who once had only a small audience can make their voice heard far beyond their local communities.

The potential of artificial intelligence in Africa is not just about making existing technologies faster or cheaper. It also offers the opportunity for more people to share their stories, in their own languages, and on their own terms.

This is particularly important in countries such as Benin, where more than 50 languages are spoken. Much of today's digital content is produced in a few dominant languages, creating a less visible digital divide. While people may have access to smartphones or the Internet, the technology often does not speak their language.

AI could change that. It can help produce and translate radio and television programs, educational materials and other forms of public information into local languages at a scale and cost that were previously unimaginable. Instead of relying on expensive, large-scale productions, communities could create content that responds to their own needs and circumstances.

The same technology can also help Africa preserve its rich history. Digital tools can help restore and organize archives, including historical records that might otherwise be lost. This ensures that future generations can connect with their heritage.

But a larger digital public sphere also introduces new risks. When everyone can become a publisher, the question is no longer simply who can speak, but how society can distinguish reliable information from manipulation. Cybersecurity, misinformation and the responsible management of digital platforms will therefore become as important as expanding access to technology itself.

This is where international cooperation can make a difference. Benin's experience shows that cooperation with China should extend beyond the mere transfer of technology. China's expertise in digital education, media platforms and technological applications offers valuable lessons for African countries to adapt to their circumstances. The goal should not be to reproduce another country's model, but to leverage technology to serve local needs.

Africa's technological future should not be measured by the number of AI systems it develops or how quickly it catches up with global technological powers. A more meaningful measure may be whether technology enables more Africans to learn, create, preserve their history and participate in public life.

The AI revolution will be truly inclusive only when it amplifies voices that have too often been left at the margins and empowers them to tell their stories through technology.

Beyond hardware, build human capacity



Evariste Ngamana is the minister of state for communication and media and the government spokesperson of the Central African Republic.

When a country acquires new technology, the most visible signs of progress are often the easiest to quantify: cameras, broadcasting equipment, digital networks and computers. However, for countries striving to build their media industries, the more important question is how technology can create lasting local capabilities.

The experience of the Central African Republic offers valuable insights. In a country where radio and television are essential channels for public information, educating young people and supporting economic activity, digital technology presents enormous opportunities. China has already supported the country in broadcasting, professional training and exchanges among journalists. Such cooperation can enhance media reach and connect more people with information.

Yet technology alone cannot create a flourishing media industry. The Central African Republic is also working to strengthen its media infrastructure, expand coverage, improve content production and develop a larger pool of trained professionals. But several basic constraints have to be addressed. Sophisticated broadcasting systems need reliable power, connectivity and maintenance systems. A newsroom cannot become digitally capable simply because new computers have been installed.

This is why the most important part of digital cooperation may be the part that is least visible: people.

A camera can be delivered, and a broadcasting network can be built. But the ability to operate a newsroom, produce engaging programs, edit videos, manage digital platforms and develop sustainable media businesses has to be cultivated. Developing local expertise is essential to turning technological cooperation into sustainable development.

This distinction becomes even more important as AI transforms the economics of content production. Social media and AI tools are lowering the cost of producing and distributing audio and video. For young people in the Central African Republic, this could open possibilities that were once reserved for organizations with substantial financial and technical resources. They can now become not merely audiences for digital content, but also its producers.

The significance of this shift extends beyond the media industry. A country capable of producing its own news, educational programs and cultural content has greater capacity to communicate with its citizens and to present its perspective to the outside world. Digital transformation, in this sense, becomes a question of who gets to create and disseminate knowledge.

The next stage of China-Central African Republic cooperation should place greater emphasis on joint capacity-building. Training journalists, developing technical skills and jointly producing audiovisual content could have a more significant impact than adding more hardware. Joint production, in particular, offers a way to turn cooperation from something delivered by one side into something created by both.

That doesn't mean infrastructure is not important. On the contrary, reliable electricity, communications networks and appropriate equipment are essential. But infrastructure should be developed alongside training, knowledge transfer and long-term maintenance. Otherwise, the hardware may outlast the capacity needed to operate it.

This principle applies in other countries as well. Across the developing world, digital transformation is often described as a race to acquire the latest technologies. But technological development is not a shopping list. The real question is whether societies can absorb technology, adapt it to local circumstances and eventually use it to create something of their own.

The success of international digital cooperation should therefore not be measured by what is delivered, but by what endures: the skills acquired, the local industries created, the content produced and the capacity to innovate and develop sustainably in local contexts.

The ultimate goal of cooperation is not merely to increase the use of technology, but to empower people to adapt, innovate and create with it. It is to give people the capacity to make technology their own.

When everyone can create, trust matters more

For much of modern history, publishing required an institution. A newspaper needed a printing press; a television station needed cameras, studios and transmission needed networks; a broadcaster needed a frequency; and a publisher needed a distribution system.

That world is rapidly changing. Today, a smartphone can be a camera, a radio station, a television studio and a publishing house all at once. Social media can transform an ordinary person into a global broadcaster. AI is propelling that transformation further, making it possible to produce text, images, audio and video with a speed and sophistication that once required a professional newsroom.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY



Ibrahim Manzo Diallo is the president of the National Communications Observatory, Niger's media regulatory authority.

This may be one of the most consequential changes in media history. It gives millions of people a new ability to speak for themselves. But it also poses a challenge that is hard to ignore: When everyone can produce information, how do we determine what to trust?

AI can help a journalist produce an audiovisual report in minutes. It can also generate images of events that never happened, imitate voices of people who never spoke and create videos that appear to show something that never occurred. Social media can spread knowledge to millions of people, but the same networks can also amplify rumors, manipulation and disinformation at extraordinary speed.

The challenge, therefore, is not to choose between technological progress and caution. It is to build the institutions, professional standards and public literacy that enable societies to benefit from new technologies without being overwhelmed by their abuse.

This is reshaping media regulation. In the age of radio and television, regulators focused primarily on broadcasters: who could operate, what could be transmitted and the standards to be followed. The digital world is much harder to contain. When almost anyone can publish and algorithms can distribute content to millions, regulation must increasingly address the information environment itself.

This requires more than rules. It requires people who understand technology, journalism and ethics simultaneously. Young people, in particular, need the ability to recognize manipulated information, understand how digital platforms shape what they see and question content that appears convincing simply because it looks real. Media literacy is no longer a specialist skill, but a fundamental aspect of citizenship.

For African countries, there is another dimension to this challenge. The question is not only whether Africans can consume information, but who gets to produce the images and narratives through which Africa is understood.

The ability to produce and distribute their own content offers African countries the opportunity to introduce more diverse perspectives into the global information space. Television programs, documentaries, films and digital media produced by African journalists and creators can offer perspectives that are difficult to capture from afar. The goal should not be to replace one dominant narrative with another, but to create a more plural information space where different societies can speak for themselves and listen to one another.

This is one area where China-Africa media cooperation can take on a broader meaning. Cooperation should go beyond technology and equipment to include professional exchanges, joint research, training and, above all, co-production. Chinese and African media organizations could collaborate on documentaries, television programs, journalist exchanges and mechanisms for verifying digital content. Such projects would not merely increase the volume of information but would also help build mutual understanding.

China's expertise in applying AI and digital technologies to the audiovisual sector, as well as its efforts in cybersecurity and digital media, offers useful areas for cooperation. But the objective should not be to import a ready-made model. The goal is to develop approaches that reflect local realities while allowing countries to learn from one another.

Africa's young population adds urgency to this effort. A young person with a smartphone and an internet connection can now acquire skills, create a documentary, build an audience or start a digital enterprise with resources that were once not enough. The task is to make sure that these new tools create producers and creators rather than merely larger audiences.

The larger question facing the media industry is therefore no longer who has access to information, but who has the ability to create it, verify it and give it meaning.

AI may make information abundant, production faster and communication cheaper. But it cannot decide what deserves to be believed. That remains a human responsibility — and perhaps the most important one the digital age has given us.

Time for Africa to take tech leapfrog



Yang Hanhan is the director of the AI-generated short drama "Huo Qubing".

For much of the past century, the global film industry has been governed by a simple fact: making movies is expensive. Money, talent, technology and distribution have created formidable barriers to entry, allowing only a few Western countries to dominate the industry and shape the narratives that reach global audiences.

AI is beginning to change that equation. For developing countries, it offers something more important than a cheaper way to make films: the chance to bypass an entire industrial model rather than spend decades trying to catch up with it.

There are three propositions to consider. First, AI is breaking down the century-old barriers of the traditional film industry. Second, China has already demonstrated on an industrial scale that AI-generated content can dramatically reduce production costs while accelerating the process. Third, Africa might be uniquely positioned to seize this opportunity, precisely because it is not constrained by the legacy of a mature film industry.

Why have latecomers struggled to compete with Hollywood and other established film industries? The answer lies in four barriers: capital, talent, distribution and industrial infrastructure.

A successful feature film or television series is the result of decades of accumulated expertise, huge financial investment, specialized teams and cross-border distribution networks. Established film powers have spent generations building these systems. For newcomers, replicating them from scratch is costly, time-consuming and, ultimately limiting.

AI changes the starting point. A conventional blockbuster such as *Avengers: Endgame* required hundreds of people and months of work on visual effects. By contrast, comparable AI-generated material can now be produced by a single creator in roughly an hour, at a computing cost of less than 1,000 yuan ($149), based on the experience of Chinese creators. The significance is not merely that one film can be made more cheaply, but that an entire layer of industrial accumulation can be bypassed.

China's emerging AI film industry offers a glimpse of what that could look like. Production can now be managed through an end-to-end AIGC workflow, covering everything from scripts and storyboards to visual assets, video, music and distribution. This means smaller teams, shorter production cycles and much lower costs. A core team of three to five people can produce a 120-minute AI drama within three days at a computing cost of less than 30,000 yuan. A similar live-action production would typically require months, dozens of professionals and hundreds of thousands — or even millions — of yuan.

Nor is AI limited to short dramas. It is already being applied to films, animation, special effects, advertising, promotional videos and digital characters. In other words, AI is not simply making conventional productions more efficient. It is expanding what can be produced by creators who previously lacked the resources to enter the industry.

This is where Africa may have an unexpected advantage. Africa's greatest asset is cultural abundance: its languages, histories, traditions, landscapes and diverse societies. Global audiences may be increasingly familiar with standardized Hollywood formulas, but stories rooted in the African experience remain dramatically underrepresented on the world stage. For decades, production constraints limited the reach of those stories. AI could remove that constraint.

The technology is highly adaptable. Characters, settings and visual styles can be localized rapidly, allowing established production workflows to be combined with African stories, aesthetics and cultural references. The result could be something more significant than cheaper filmmaking: the creation of a new global content ecosystem in which African creators are not merely consumers of other people's stories, but producers of their own.

For a century, much of the world's cinematic influence has been concentrated in a handful of countries. The opportunity created by AI is not to run faster on the old track, but to build a new one.

That is the real meaning of technological leapfrogging — and Africa has every reason to believe it can be among the leaders of the new race.

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

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GLOBAL VIEWS

ERIK SOLHEIM

Chinese miracle

It shows that, with the right approach and continued collective efforts, one generation can travel a road that took others centuries



Today China is one of the fastest moderning countries on Earth. Extreme poverty is gone and the green transformation of the global economy runs through China. No other major nation, at any point in human history, has reduced poverty at such scale and such speed.

Out of that long road, I draw four lessons for the rest of the world.

The first lesson is political leadership dedicated to going the last mile to eradicate poverty. At the end of 2012, close to 100 million rural Chinese still lived below the poverty line. They were not in Shanghai or Shenzhen. They were in the mountains of Gansu, Guizhou and Yunnan provinces, in villages the market would never reach on its own. China sent officials to live in those villages and solve the problem family by family. Could this household run ecotourism? Could that one grow a new mountain crop, or sell handicrafts online? Should another move to a town nearby? Not cash handouts but creating productive work, for everyone, down to the very last village. I know of no other country that has attempted anything like it. By 2020 the job was done. Every last person was helped out of extreme poverty. That is what leadership dedicated to development actually means.

The second lesson is family farming. China's reforms started in the fields. Earlier this year I visited Xiaogang village in Anhui province, where it all began. In 1978, 18 farmers there divided the collective land among their families and started working it as their own. One year later the harvest jumped. Their village became the model for the whole country, and the reform that followed lifted many people out of hunger. I asked one of those farmers, now an old man, what made the difference. His answer has stayed with me. "We had no idea we were making history," he said. "We only wanted our families to eat well. That is the entire secret." A family that owns its harvest tends its land like a garden and squeezes more from each hectare than vast industrial estates manage. And a nation of hundreds of millions of such families is food secure in the most fundamental way, because the people who grow the food are the people who eat it, with the surplus flowing to the towns and the income staying in the countryside to pay for houses and schools.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

The third lesson is special economic zones, concentrating industries in competitive regions. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China created four zones. The most famous, Shenzhen, sat next to Hong Kong. In 1980, it was a fishing town of some 30,000 people. Today, it is a city of over 18 million, one of the fastest-growing cities in the history of the world. The idea behind it is simple. Gather the best people, the best technology and firm government support in one place and let them learn from each other.

The United States proves the same point today. Some of the finest computer talents crowd into the San Francisco Bay Area, and out of that concentration has come one of the strongest innovation hubs in the world. Many governments hesitate to favor one city over others. But for a country trying to break into world markets, there is no way around concentration. And the development paradigm of special zone travels well beyond China. I have seen it in Ethiopia. Its construction of industrial parks draws on the development experience of Shenzhen, and Chinese companies such as shoemaker Huajian helped build them.

The fourth lesson is that green is gold. Going green is not a constraint on the economy. It is a huge opportunity for jobs and prosperity. In the past, development meant pollution, because fossil fuels were the only road to wealth. The United Kingdom and the US both took that road. In 2005, when visiting Anji county, Xi Jinping, then Party secretary of Zhejiang province, said that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets. China has since proved it in hard numbers. According to China's General Administration of Customs, electric vehicles, lithium batteries and solar products, what the Chinese call "the new three", earned close to 1.3 trillion yuan ($192.8 billion) in exports in 2025, three and a half times the level of 2020, and have made China the indispensable nation of the green economy.

The green wave has moved beyond industry into nature itself. China has the largest area of artificial afforestation by far. More than 66 billion trees have been planted since 1978. I have seen them myself in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, walls of forest rising against the desert. China is building the world's largest national park system and has brought the giant panda and the snow leopard back from the edge of extinction. As one keynote speaker at the Symposium 2026 for Eco Forum Global Guiyang in Guiyang, Guizhou province, this summer I heard Chinese colleagues explain how they are turning the restoration of rivers such as Chishui River into tourism and growth. The environment is no longer the price of development. It is an engine of it.

And the growth engine is being renewed again. The old three pillars of Chinese exports were built on intensive labor. Remarkably China remains the global leader in all three.

The new three — electric cars, batteries and solar panels — are built on green technology. Now China speaks of the next new three — artificial intelligence, robotics and innovative medicine. The change runs deeper than products. China is beginning to export capabilities, not just goods but the knowledge behind them, from drug development to intelligent manufacturing. The country that once staked its future on labor-intensive industries is now staking it on scientific innovation.

Can these lessons be copied wholesale? No. The whole system cannot be transplanted. But the lessons and inspiration can travel, and each of the four lessons has already demonstrated this in practice.

The thread that runs through all four lessons is the one those farmers in Xiaogang grasped without any theory. Under strong leadership, people have a real reason to build, and they will build farms that reward hard work, zones that gather talent and a green economy that renews the country. Each is a way of releasing the energy of ordinary people and making sure no one is left out. And that is why China's message to the developing world is one of enormous hope.

The author is the chair of the Europe-Asia Center and the former under-secretary-general of the United Nations. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

LI SILE AND ZHANG XIAOHUI

Old wisdom of balance shines anew

Shaped by ancient Chinese philosophy, the practice of *taijiquan* can help foster inner composure and mutual understanding across civilizations



Li Sile



Zhang Xiaohui

Over the centuries, *taijiquan*, or tai chi, has evolved from being a combat-oriented martial art form — rooted in traditional Chinese principles of yin and yang equilibrium and flexible resistance, and practiced by a relatively small circle — into an everyday practice that emphasizes physical health, mental well-being and harmonious living.

Unlike its combative origins, modern international *taijiquan* competitions are not fighting sports. They judge athletes on the execution of choreographed routines, assessing form, balance, rhythm and flow. The sport's growing popularity was vividly demonstrated in April at the fifth World Taijiquan Championships in Burgas, Bulgaria, which drew 400 athletes from 44 countries and regions — up from 320 participants from 32 nations and regions in the previous edition in Singapore. This November, *taijiquan* will reach another historic milestone when it becomes an official medal event at the Summer Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, Senegal.

In recent years, greater evidence has emerged that *taijiquan* has transcended its martial arts origins to become a cross-cultural lifestyle, embraced by people seeking relief from constant strain and a gateway to mutual understanding across divides.

In 2020, UNESCO inscribed *taijiquan* on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Last year, UNESCO designated March 21 as International Taijiquan Day, the first UN-recognized international day named after a martial art.

Against the backdrop of intensified cultural competition and widespread societal anxiety, the centuries-old practice delivers humble, tangible lessons for individuals and communities striving to build gentler, more harmonious human connections.

Rooted in intertwined traditional thought, *taijiquan* embeds the core Taoist ideas of yin and yang equilibrium and the Confucian preference for moderate coexistence within every shift of weight and turn of the limbs. Its accessible, body-based wisdom requires no complex academic background, making it uniquely capable of bridging gaps between disparate communities across continents.

Statistics from China's national sports authority confirm *taijiquan* attracts regular enthusiasts across more than 180 countries and regions. About 3 million overseas learners have become registered formal lineage disciples under certified Chinese masters, and thousands of international students travel each year to Wudang Mountain in Hubei province for long-term immersive training. Jake Pinnick, a practitioner from the United States, who obtained formal lineage certification after prolonged practice on Wudang Mountain, a Taoist holy site, exemplifies how consistent practice bridges cultural divides through shared, embodied experience.

Major countries including the US, Germany and Japan have built nationwide *taijiquan* or tai chi federations, arranging regular public courses and inter-city group events to share this harmony-centered practice with local residents.

This traditional wisdom has steadily woven itself into mainstream global daily life. Primary and secondary schools across multiple nations integrate *taijiquan* into scheduled break-time activities, while some universities list it as an official physical education elective.

Young people's surging enthusiasm for *taijiquan* may stem organically from their shared modern struggles and aspirations to find mental and physical equilibrium amid mounting daily pressures, rather than top-down promotion.

Confrontational mindsets continue to drive estrangement between neighbors, communities and nations, leaving people worldwide searching for simple, low-cost ways to rebuild mutual trust. *Taijiquan* meets this demand by translating millennia-old Chinese philosophical values into repeatable everyday physical practice, prioritizing personal inner peace as the foundation of collective harmony.

Turning to its philosophical core, *taijiquan* embodies a foundational precept long embedded in Chinese thought: sustainable collective harmony invariably originates from individual inner tranquility. Texts from Taoist and Confucian classics all uphold this principle, which *taijiquan* brings to life through structured physical movement.

As practitioners flow through often slow, seamless routines, they gradually release built-up stress, irritation and latent hostility, stepping out of humanity's instinctive "fight or flight" defensive mode. Far from simple leisure or relaxation, each sequenced *taijiquan* motion guides practitioners toward balancing internal yin and yang energies, calming inner turmoil to foster a placid, compromise-oriented outlook that shapes how people interact with those around them.

Another philosophical pillar drawn from ancient Taoist thought centers on the enduring maxim from the *Tao Te Ching*: Gentleness prevails over rigidity, and pliability over brute strength. Rejecting the reflex to meet friction with head-on resistance, *taijiquan* trains practitioners to align with natural rhythms and respond flexibly and strategically when met with overwhelming force. This lesson comes to life during pushing-hands drills, in which practitioners anchor their core firmly while flexing appropriately against outside pressure.

Translated into everyday human interactions, this mindset offers a pragmatic blueprint for cross-group coexistence: hold fast to one's own identity and core values, yet respect the unique life paths and legitimate needs of others. This way of thinking stands as a gentle counterweight to zero-sum, adversarial mindsets that strain personal, community and cross-cultural bonds, taking measured flexibility not as weakness, but as thoughtful, sustainable conduct for shared living.

Adding to its universal appeal, *taijiquan* is also easy to pick up. Built around fundamental bodily actions familiar to every human being — standing, stepping and shifting weight — it easily crosses geographic and cultural divides without rigid entry barriers.

Unlike ideologies or spiritual traditions that demand strict doctrinal commitment, *taijiquan* requires no prior adherence to specific beliefs. Communication forged through shared body movement bypasses linguistic barriers, opening up an organic space for spontaneous mutual understanding among people of disparate cultural backgrounds.

International Taijiquan Day and its accompanying global celebrations now sit as a footnote to *taijiquan*'s worldwide expansion. But the art's power to unite people operates independently of that single annual observance. The core insight behind the UN's institutional recognition shines brightly: Humanity universally craves practical tools to ease internal unrest and bridge divides, and *taijiquan* fills this grassroots need. It equips ordinary people with small, transformative personal qualities to engage others with patience and restraint.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Every opening and closing stance of *taijiquan* gently recalibrates a practitioner's emotional balance, and every calm-minded participant carries that balanced mindset into daily exchanges, adding incremental warmth and understanding to an increasingly volatile and fragmented social landscape.

As millions of people across the world embed harmony-focused ancient wisdom into their everyday lives through regular *taijiquan* practice, mutual respect may evolve from abstract ideal into a lived, accessible reality. Anchored in every extended breath and coordinated movement, humanity's collective pursuit of shared well-being develops into a persistent, embodied global practice — solid proof that age-old Chinese wisdom of balance can deliver gentle, practical guidance for people everywhere seeking kinder, more harmonious ways to live alongside one another.

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BUSINESS

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Bourse seen enduring fluctuations

Equities expected to retain their longer-term investment appeal

By ZHOU LANXU in Beijing and **SHI JING** in Shanghai

Chinese equities are expected to retain their longer-term investment appeal despite spillovers from heightened global market volatility, underpinned by China's distinct technology opportunities and ongoing reforms to improve shareholder returns, experts said.

The A-share market has been fluctuating amid external volatility as rising US long-term Treasury bond yields and sticky inflation expectations — alongside ongoing geopolitical tensions — put global equities under pressure.

Domestically, concerns that the current listing wave of tech champions — such as chipmaker CXMT and Unitree Robotics — might possibly strain market liquidity also weighed on the market.

A shares ended mixed on Tuesday, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index edging up 0.19 percent to 3,889.44 points, while the growth-oriented ChiNext Index fell 1 percent to 3,397.52 points.

Despite the recent volatility, UBS' medium-term view on Chinese equities remains constructive. The Swiss wealth manager continues to rate China equities as attractive, while emphasizing that the opportunity set is broader and more balanced than it was earlier in the year.

James Wang, head of China strategy at UBS Investment Bank Research, said that northbound flows via the stock connect programs turned net positive in the second quarter, with a record $33 billion in net inflows into A shares.

That was compared to a $1.8 billion outflow in the previous quarter, Wang said, led by purchases in the industrials and information technology sectors.

Zhu Liang, chief investment officer for AllianceBernstein in China, said the Chinese market offers opportunities arising from both growth-oriented sectors and ongoing reforms.

"In artificial intelligence, while Chinese tech companies exposed to global export supply chains could be affected by overseas volatility, a more diversified range of AI opportunities — including those engaged in homegrown alternatives to imported technologies and cost-effective large language models — continues to offer investment value."

Nevertheless, Zhu said investors should avoid excessive concentration in a single AI theme given the historically extreme valuation gap between A-share high and low-valuation sectors, citing city commercial banks as a potential sector to help offset volatility associated with the AI theme.

On the reform front, Zhu said regulators have been advancing improvements in corporate governance, while listed companies have gradually increased dividend payouts and share buybacks. The overall market has begun to see net share buybacks rather than net financing, providing support for A-share performance.

At a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on July 30, it was stressed that comprehensive reforms of investment and financing in the capital market should be deepened to enhance its resilience and boost market confidence.

Kelvin Tay, chief investment officer for Asia at Pictet Wealth Management, said the large-scale offerings of emerging technology champions in China may create a short-term imbalance between stock supply and demand, weighing on market performance this year.

However, such near-term pressures do not undermine the longer-term investment case for China, Tay said, adding that he sees exposure to China as essential for investors' portfolios over the next five to seven years.

"The newly listed companies have strong fundamentals, with decent profitability and positive net cash flow, pointing to solid long-term growth potential for the Chinese stock market," Tay said.

Liu Jipeng, a professor at China University of Political Science and Law and a senior capital market expert, said a healthy bourse should enable the majority of investors to benefit from long-term value creation, rather than becoming a zero-sum game in which gains by a small group come at the expense of others.

Liu said regulatory efforts should prioritize market fairness, arguing that some quantitative trading strategies that rely on technological advantages to profit at the expense of ordinary investors should be better regulated.

Tian Xuan, dean of Peking University's Guanghua School of Management, suggested that policies for refinancing — as well as mergers and acquisitions — should be further optimized so that the quality of listed companies can be improved from the outset.

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Briefly

Bankruptcy law draft revision reviewed

Chinese lawmakers on Tuesday began reviewing a draft revision to the Enterprise Bankruptcy Law, with the second draft incorporating refinements to provisions on individual bankruptcy, bankruptcy protection, restructuring and cross-border bankruptcy. Based on feedback from the first draft, the second draft adds a new section on pre-restructuring consultation. In addition, the draft improves provisions on cross-border bankruptcy, clarifying the extraterritorial effect of bankruptcy proceedings, the jurisdiction of Chinese courts and mechanisms for international judicial assistance. The current law was enacted in 2007. The first draft of the revision was submitted to the 17th session of the 14th National People's Congress Standing Committee in September 2025 and was later released for public comment.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 11 pips to 6.7852 against the US dollar on Tuesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY



View of Shein's booth during an expo in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. HUANG TAIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

What is behind Shein's drop in valuation?

By LI JIAYING
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Shein's Hong Kong IPO is testing how public investors value a global e-commerce model being reshaped by slower growth, rising fulfillment costs and tighter rules for low-value parcels, industry experts said.

At the top of the proposed HK$47.6 ($6.07) to HK$49.5 range, Shein would have a market capitalization of up to $27 billion, roughly 70 percent below its nearly $100 billion private valuation in 2022.

Pan Helin, a member of the expert committee for information and communication economy under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, attributed the valuation reset partly to the maturity of e-commerce, where growth has slowed and competition has intensified.

"Shein's rapid rise in 2022 coincided with overseas supply-chain disruptions and sharp price increases, while today's market conditions leave less room for the exceptional growth expectations reflected in its earlier private valuation," Pan said.

Pan added that Hong Kong investors generally apply more restrained valuations to mature internet businesses, particularly apparel e-commerce, which operates in a largely established market. Capital has also recently shifted toward artificial intelligence-related companies, further limiting the valuation premium available to traditional e-commerce platforms, he said.

Although HK-listed e-commerce and internet companies are currently trading at relatively low valuations, a Hong Kong listing could help Shein reduce the compliance risks associated with cross-border fundraising and facilitate its domestic operations, Pan noted.

"It would give Shein access to a market recognized by international investors while also bringing it closer to domestic investors, particularly as the Chinese mainland could become a more important growth market for the company in the future," he said.

Pan's comments came as overseas policy changes have added to the company's operating pressure. The United States ended duty-free de minimis treatment in May 2025 for covered goods from the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong that had previously entered in parcels valued at no more than $800. From July 1 this year, the European Union also abolished its customs-duty exemption for consignments valued at no more than 150 euros ($175) and introduced a temporary duty of 3 euros per item category.

The e-commerce giant is responding by shifting from its previous direct-to-consumer shipping model into a more flexible business-to-business-to-consumer pattern — consolidating goods in China, shipping them to Europe in bulk and completing delivery from local warehouses, said Chen Liteng, a senior analyst at the Internet Economy Institute, a domestic consultancy.

"This model subjects the goods to the EU's regular apparel import tariffs instead of a flat duty on each item category," Chen said. "Even after adding the cost of sorting, packing and local delivery, the model's total cost remains below the per-category duty incurred by direct shipment of small parcels."

The senior analyst added that the use of local warehouses could also reduce customs-related costs while allowing Shein to retain the inventory discipline of its signature "test-and-repeat" model, under which products are initially made in small batches and replenished according to demand.

The IPO comprises about 280 million Class B shares. At the midpoint, without over-allotment, net proceeds are expected to reach HK$13.1 billion. According to its prospectus, the company has earmarked 40 percent for technology capabilities, 40 percent for brand building and global expansion, 10 percent for corporate responsibility and the balance for general purposes.

Pool cleaning robots make global splash

By ZHENG YIRAN in Shanghai
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With technological breakthroughs, Chinese companies are driving structural changes in the pool cleaning robot sector.

According to a recent report jointly released by global market consultancy IDC, the global shipment of pool cleaning robots is expected to hit 3.97 million units by 2029, with a compound annual growth rate of over 20 percent.

The market pattern dominated by foreign companies five years ago is gradually being rewritten by domestic manufacturers. On the cross-border export side, a group of Chinese enterprises with self-developed capabilities have transformed from simple production execution roles to technology solution exporters.

Data from market consultancy huaon.com show that in 2024, the world's top five cable-free swimming pool cleaning robots in terms of shipment were all Chinese companies — Wybotics Co Ltd, Sunwoda Electronic Co Ltd, Sensomics, Wavefuture and Shenzhen Aiper Intelligent Co Ltd. The five companies took up 51.4 percent of the world's cable-free swimming pool cleaning robot market.

Another Chinese company from Taizhou in East China's Zhejiang province, Deep Cleaner, is also making a noticeable splash in the market. Established in 2022, the company had an annual shipment volume of over 100,000 units by 2025, a customer repurchase rate exceeding 70 percent, and a product return rate controlled at 2 percent to 3 percent, far below the industry average of around 15 percent.



A pool cleaning robot seen at an expo in Tianjin earlier this year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In addition, more than 95 percent of the company's products are sold to overseas markets, covering three major categories — underwater cleaning, water surface cleaning and swimming pool disinfection and sterilization, and all core components are self-developed.

Wang Hua, general manager of Deep Cleaner, said: "Pool cleaning robots are a category with a high proportion of plastic parts. The shell, internal structural components, transmission gears, seals — almost all are injection molding parts built on molds. The first step for a swimming pool robot from design to mass production is not the circuit board or motor, but the mold."

The factory of the company is located in Huangyan in Taizhou, the most densely populated area of China's mold industry. From mold design, steel processing, heat treatment, mold testing to injection molding mass production, Huangyan has the most complete mold industry chain cluster in China. Whether it's mold delivery time or repair response speed, Huangyan takes a lead in the country.

In terms of research and development, the company invests 7 million yuan ($1.04 million) to 8 million yuan annually, and has technical cooperation with Zhejiang University and Zhejiang University of Technology. These two universities have a deep academic accumulation in the fields of motor control, fluid mechanics and materials science, which happen to coincide with the core technology direction of swimming pool cleaning robots.

Lin Xianping, an associate professor at Hangzhou City University, said that domestic swimming pool robots are completing the transformation from original equipment manufacturer assembly to technical solution output, with the vast majority of products sold to the European, American and Australian markets.

Intensified efforts to help attract more FDI

By ZHANG CHENXU
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China's intensified efforts to attract foreign investment and promote two-way investment cooperation will help global businesses better tap opportunities arising from the country's vast market and innovation-driven industrial upgrading, while underscoring its firm commitment to opening-up, officials and experts said.

Their remarks came ahead of the 26th China International Fair for Investment and Trade, one of the country's key platforms for promoting mutual investment.

Scheduled to take place Sept 8 to 11 in Xiamen, Fujian province, the fair is expected to connect capital with projects across borders, reinforcing China's role as both a major destination for — and source of — global investment, they added.

"The fair has so far drawn delegations from 123 countries and regions, with 60 set to take part as exhibitors," Ling Ji, vice-minister of commerce and deputy China international trade representative, said at a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday.

Finland and Saudi Arabia will serve as guest countries of honor at this year's fair, Ling said. Saudi Arabia will send a large economic delegation to CIFIT for the first time. Investment from the kingdom into China surged 343.7 percent year-on-year in the first seven months, Ling's ministry said.

Zhao Zenglian, vice-governor of Fujian province, said the exhibition area at this year's fair will cover 200,000 square meters. The fair will feature 14 specialized zones spanning three major sections — "Invest in China", "Chinese investment" and "International investment".

Foreign firms and business associations have also shown strong interest in attending, Ling said.

Foreign investors now look beyond merely labor and land costs, placing greater weight on China's industrial ecosystem, infrastructure, access to green power and computing capacity, he added.

The latest data demonstrate that shift. In the first seven months, the number of newly established foreign-invested enterprises in China rose 4.4 percent year-on-year to 37,711, while foreign direct investment in actual use totaled 438.33 billion yuan ($65.23 billion), with the pace of decline easing from a year earlier, said the Ministry of Commerce.

Notably, FDI in high-tech industries rose 32.7 percent year-on-year, accounting for more than 40 percent of the national total, Ling said.

In a world facing rising protectionism and geopolitical tensions, foreign enterprises are looking to deepen their investment in China as a hedge against external shocks, said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

On outbound investment, Ling said China's outward FDI flows rose 11.1 percent year-on-year to $213.58 billion in 2025, while its total accumulated outward FDI value reached $3.4 trillion, ranking among the world's top three for the ninth consecutive year.

China will broaden economic and trade cooperation with other countries in the second half, expand trade in services and promote more balanced trade, according to a State Council report on the implementation of this year's plan for national economic and social development, delivered to the NPC Standing Committee for review on Tuesday.

The report also called for better outbound investment management, stronger support services for Chinese companies overseas, and further efforts to attract and make better use of foreign investment.

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BUSINESS

Hunan scenic area boosts hot spot bona fides

Wulingyuan's spiked peaks made famous in 2009 blockbuster movie *Avatar*





Top: Foreign visitors get a taste of local wedding customs in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, on Aug 14.
Above: Visitors experience the Cili Banban Dragon boat in Zhangjiajie on Aug 14.
PHOTOS BY GENG FEIFEI / CHINA DAILY

By LI JING
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On a theater stage framed by the towering sandstone peaks of Wulingyuan Scenic Area in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, Pablo, a Spanish tourist, donned traditional Tujia wedding attire, playing the role of bridegroom as hundreds of spectators cheered.

The mock ceremony at Charming Xiangxi Theater offered him an unforgettable introduction to local customs. For local business owners and operators, it represents something more strategic — a golden opportunity to attract tourist revenue after travelers descend from the world-famous Zhangjiajie peaks.

"We had never seen a performance like this," Pablo said afterwards. "I would like to learn more about traditional Chinese culture."

Across Zhangjiajie and neighboring historical towns in western Hunan, rising inbound arrivals are encouraging businesses to expand beyond scenic-area tickets into evening entertainment, accommodation, dining and cultural experiences.

Official data underscore the momentum. Zhangjiajie welcomed 860,700 inbound visits from 195 countries and regions in the first seven months, up by 19.01 percent year-on-year. Tourism foreign-exchange earnings increased 40.52 percent to $98.5 million.

The demographic profile of visitors is also undergoing a structural shift. European and US travelers accounted for nearly 35 percent of total inbound arrivals, with their numbers rising 211.36 percent year-on-year and helping diversify a market long dominated by travelers from South Korea.

This surge has been powered in large part by China's expanding visa-free policies. China has expanded unilateral visa-free access to citizens of 50 countries for stays of up to 30 days, while nationals of 57 countries are eligible for its visa-free transit policy, following the addition of Kyrgyzstan and Vietnam on Thursday.

Zhangjiajie Hehua International Airport is among the 65 designated ports for the transit policy. The airport operates 13 passenger routes to eight countries and regions, and long-haul travel Western visitors increasingly bundle the city into multi-stop itineraries across China.

For years, Zhangjiajie's international acclaim rested largely on its quartz-sandstone pillars, famously associated with the floating mountains in the blockbuster 2009 film *Avatar*. Today, regional stakeholders view these iconic vistas merely as the starting point of an extended consumer journey.

"The underlying business logic is to shift from one-off gate admissions to capturing spending across the entire travel chain as visitors extend their stays. Accommodation, dining, performances and immersive cultural experiences can all generate additional revenue," said Huang Yuanji, vice-president of Hunan University of Finance and Economics.

At Charming Xiangxi Theater, which showcases the heritage of the Tujia, Miao and other ethnic groups, the number of overseas visitors reached 116,000 from 188 countries and regions between January and July, up 43 percent year-on-year.

To bridge cultural divides, the theater provides subtitles in English and Korean, with Russian and Spanish in the works. Promotional materials have also been tailored. Traditional acrobatic acts, for example, are introduced using references to Chinese kung fu that foreign viewers intuitively grasp.

"Foreign visitors might not know what Xiangxi is, but they know Zhangjiajie's mountains and are interested in authentic traditions. Our job is to interpret local heritage in ways they understand," said Xu Shan, general manager of the theater.

A short distance away, Xiangxi Fu, a newly opened cultural tourism attraction in Wulingyuan, welcomes guests with traditional drum performances, ethnic folk songs and ceremonial welcome wine before ushering them into a courtyard complex dedicated to centuries of Tusi history.

The attraction says foreign visitors account for 30 to 40 percent of its tourists.

"Our goal is to transform static heritage exhibitions into participatory workshops and performances, giving visitors compelling reasons to linger in town after their mountain hikes," said Tang Linfang, the site's marketing director.

A different experiment is unfolding in downtown Zhangjiajie. On July 10, Dayong ancient town reopened after an extensive renovation led by Zhangjiajie mango cultural tourism, a joint venture involving local operators and leading broadcast media.

The riverside complex blends historical architectural style streets with television-themed shops, youth-oriented cultural merchandise, craft workshops, street performances and evening boat rides. Within its first month, it drew more than 1 million visits and generated more than 10 million yuan ($1.49 million) in business turnover.

"We want travelers who spend their daylight hours among the peaks to return downtown at night for an entirely different cultural texture," said Zhou Yang, general manager of the operating company, adding that roughly 80 percent of weekend visitors arrive after dusk.

This strategy to capture extended stays is rippling across neighboring destinations in the Xiangxi Tujia and Miao autonomous prefecture.

In the town of Furong, perched dramatically above a cascading waterfall, foreign tourists browse tea workshops, stroll through historical alleyways and stop to dine alongside locals who still live inside the centuries-old settlement.

The town received 6.53 million visits in 2025, including 338,000 from overseas, up 61 percent year-on-year, according to local official figures.

Zhong Fei, chairman of Hunan Huaxia Investment Group — which operates the destination through a JV with the local government — said international tourists accounted for roughly 40 percent of independent arrivals and about half of independent visitor spending.

Evening performances, guesthouses and hands-on workshops have helped extend average stays from half a day to one or two nights in the town, Zhong said.

Local restaurants have also adjusted. Local smoked pork appears on pizzas and in burgers, while coffee is sweetened with local ginger candy, offering foreign visitors familiar formats with local flavors.

"The visitors are not just coming for the scenery. They are interested in the culture and in seeing how local people live," Zhong said.

Crucially, the town has preserved its ancient social fabric, retaining native residents within the scenic core. The settlement hosts roughly 200 guesthouses and nearly 1,500 small nighttime enterprises, with locals making up 80 percent of the resort's workforce.

Further south, Fenghuang ancient town received 111,313 inbound tourist visits in the first half, up 5.12 percent year-on-year, while inbound tourism spending increased 15.18 percent to $44.3 million, said Xiang Yang, deputy head of the Fenghuang county government.

To connect these scattered gems, Hunan provincial authorities are accelerating development of the "Greater Zhangjiajie" international tourism zone, spanning 38 county-level areas across five cities and prefectures, including Zhangjiajie, Xiangxi and Huaihua.

The province has introduced eight inbound tourism routes and aims to attract 2 million inbound tourists annually by 2027, targeting $1.12 billion in inbound tourism spending.

Challenges persist. Huang said overseas travel agencies still tend to sell the mountain parks as standalone destinations, while fragmented administration, limited transport connections and uneven international services continued to restrict travel beyond Zhangjiajie's best-known attractions.

The provincial plan seeks to address those gaps by improving transport connections, developing cross-regional itineraries, upgrading multilingual services and encouraging tourism companies to work across administrative boundaries.

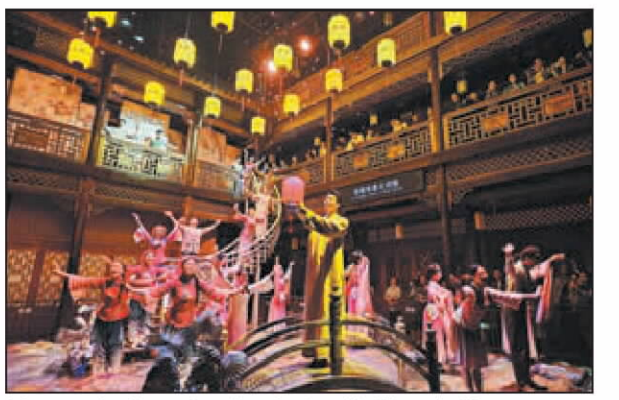
Huang emphasized that while eliminating low-cost package competition and administrative barriers takes time, the evolving mix of inbound visitors provides strong tailwinds for higher-value, tailor-made products.

The vibrant overseas reception across regional theaters, craft workshops and historic towns demonstrates that global travelers are eager to explore beyond the mountains.

"By improving regional connections and enabling travel agencies, hotels and cultural-tourism businesses to work together across the region, visitor flows can be converted into tangible and sustainable economic growth," Huang said.

He Chun in Changsha contributed to this story.

Immersive *Changde Stories* a boon to night economy



A large roving live-action show is staged in Changde, Hunan province, on Aug 13. Visitors follow performers to experience the region's history and charm. GENG FEIFEI / CHINA DAILY

By LI JING

As night falls over Changde in Central China's Hunan province, visitors board boats and follow actors along a historical riverside quarter, moving between illuminated waterways, old streets and a small theater as *Changde Stories* unfolds.

The immersive production, which blends local history, traditional opera and digital projections, has become a primary engine for the city's burgeoning night-time economy. After the show, visitors spill into nearby restaurants and handicraft shops, extending an evening of entertainment into hours of consumer spending.

This integrated model is helping the Changde River Street block convert into business for local merchants. The 1.5-kilometer block received 18.25 million visits in 2025, up 75 percent year-on-year, while revenue rose 58.9 percent to 1.24 billion yuan ($184.39 million), according to local official data.

Crucially, more than 70 percent of revenue was generated at night, underscoring the commercial value of retaining visitors in the area beyond daytime sightseeing.

Changde's success highlights the growing role of services in driving domestic consumption. National service retail sales increased 5.3 percent in the first half of 2026, outpacing the 1.1 percent rise in goods retail sales, with tourism, cultural and recreational services among the fastest categories, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

At the block, *Changde Stories* serves as the evening's centerpiece. First staged in May 2025, the production uses the Chuanzi River as a natural stage to weave the city's history with local folk music and customs.

Spectators watch from boats and stroll through the old quarter before entering an indoor theater, becoming part of the performance amid floating live sets. More than 50,000 people have attended since its debut.

The route seamlessly channels audience traffic into restaurants, tea parlors and specialty retailers, forging a cohesive "show-shop-dine" consumption chain.

Gastronomy plays a pivotal role in that momentum.

At Changxiangyue, a 1,400-square-meter restaurant serving local specialities such as *leicha*, or pounded tea, Changde rice noodles and claypot dishes, daily customer numbers have exceeded 2,000 during peak periods.

"During holidays, customer traffic can be five to 10 times the normal level," said store manager Zhu Xueqin.

Nearby, a rice-noodle restaurant has sold more than 2,000 bowls on its busiest days, while snack and tea shops continue serving customers through lunch, dinner and late-night periods.

The integrated approach delivered standout gains during the five-day May Day holiday, when the block received nearly 1 million visits, peaking at more than 200,000 on May 1 alone.

Businesses generated 66.56 million yuan during the holiday, with food and cultural experiences accounting for more than 70 percent of revenue, according to local official data.

Rich heritage provides the lasting anchor. The block hosts 87 intangible cultural heritage projects, ranging from woodcarving and traditional incense to Changde opera and *leicha*.

More than 800 regular heritage performances drew more than 300,000 spectators between March 2024 and August 2026. Notably, half of the audience was born in the 1990s or later, suggesting that traditional art forms are finding new consumers through live performances and social media.

"A commercial district must be rooted in culture," said woodcarver Pan Nenghui, who is working with his wife on a 30-meter carving inspired partly by the writings of celebrated Hunan-born author Shen Congwen. "The essence of intangible cultural heritage is to bring our culture alive."

The block has also embraced technology-driven attractions. A traditional Chinese medicine zone launched in May features herbal dining, artificial intelligence-assisted diagnostics and a holographic installation of ancient TCM physician Zhang Zhongjing. It received nearly 100,000 visitors in its first month.

This steady influx has solidified the commercial ecosystem. Waterfront shop occupancy has reached 100 percent, while the merchant survival rate has improved by nearly 60 percent since the block's launch.

Changde's approach closely matches national initiatives prioritizing service-led consumer demand and calling for upgraded performing-arts offerings, vibrant night tours, and deeper integration among scenic sites, dining and retail. In the city, that policy has crystallized into a proven formula: captivate visitors after dark with immersive art, and sustain them with rich local culture, food and entertainment.

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CHINA

Scientists map rock glaciers on plateau

By **LI MENGHAN**
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Chinese scientists have identified 132,867 rock glaciers across 16,500 square kilometers of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau in the first comprehensive inventory of its kind.

While glaciers are what come to mind when people think of the plateau's "solid reservoir", the number and significance of rock glaciers — periglacial landforms made of ice-rich debris that slowly move downhill in cold alpine environments — have been seriously underestimated.

The figure exceeds the total number of rock glaciers previously known worldwide, suggesting a long-standing underestimation of their quantity and their role in the plateau's frozen water reserves.

The study was published recently in the journal Science Bulletin. The dataset has been made public through the National Tibetan Plateau Data Center.

Although not true glaciers, rock glaciers serve as indicators of mountain permafrost and potential reservoirs of solid-water. The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, dubbed a core part of the "Asian Water Tower", is home to one of the largest concentrations of mid- to low-latitude permafrost on Earth, nurturing many rock glaciers.

However, a comprehensive and unified dataset tracking the movement of rock glaciers has been elusive, largely due to the challenges posed by the region's high altitude, rugged terrain and the labor-intensive nature of manual data interpretation.

The research team integrated high-resolution optical remote sensing imagery, radar data and digital elevation models to develop a deep-learning method for automatically detecting rock glaciers across the plateau. They employed multi-temporal radar techniques to extract surface deformation rates and obtained kinematic data for 99.3 percent of the cataloged features.

In addition to location and boundaries, the inventory records the morphological type, terrain attributes, glacier connectivity and motion status for each unit, supporting research into rock glacier activity and periglacial geomorphic dynamics.

Notably, the team estimated that ice stored within the plateau's rock glaciers is equivalent to roughly 92 to 186 cubic kilometers, which is comparable to the storage capacity of dozens of large reservoirs.

"This represents a solid-water reserve in the Asian Water Tower that has been largely underestimated," said Feng Min, a professor at the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences who led the study.

"This discovery could have substantial implications for long-term hydrological regulation in regions lacking glaciers or where glaciers are rapidly retreating," Feng added.

The dataset also provides insights into geohazard risks. Rock glaciers creep continuously and, where they intersect roads or river valleys, can trigger ground deformation, river blockages and debris flows. By documenting the spatial relationship between rock glaciers and nearby infrastructure, the inventory offers a new tool for assessing mountain hazards, Feng noted.

"When mapping permafrost, we used to lack direct geomorphic evidence. Rock glaciers are natural markers that indicate where frozen ground exists," Feng said.

He said that the dataset is expected to support permafrost monitoring, water resource assessment, cryospheric hazard identification and surface process modeling, while providing an important baseline for reassessing the global extent and water storage of rock glaciers in cold mountain regions.

Bridging cultures through innovation



Youth from China and abroad photograph a bionic hand playing an electronic piano in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday. The international science exchange event welcomed 50 offline attendees, including international students, domestic university students and experts, alongside over 5,000 online participants. The event focused on cutting-edge AI fields like brain-computer interaction and bionic technology, fostering dialogue and collaboration while advancing Hangzhou's international sci-tech ecosystem. LI ZHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Officials to face lifelong ecological accountability

Guideline outlines when leaders may be held liable for protection failures

By **HOU LIQIANG**
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Chinese central authorities on Tuesday unveiled a guideline on holding Communist Party of China and government leaders accountable for ecological and environmental damages, with a clear emphasis on lifelong accountability.

The document, issued by the general offices of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, makes clear that accountability is not limited by time or position.

Where distorted views of governance performance, violations of the new development philosophy and the requirements for high-quality development, or other similar acts have caused serious ecological damage, the responsible persons shall be held strictly accountable, "regardless of whether they have been transferred to another post, reassigned, promoted, left office or retired", the guideline said.

The rule applies to leading members of local Party committees and governments at or above the county level, relevant departments of the central and State organs, and related institutions. It also refers similar cases involving township governments, public institutions, development zones and State-owned enterprises to the same framework.

In defining major accountability situations, the rule said local principal officials should be held responsible if they fail to carry out central decisions on ecological civilization, make decisions that breach laws or policies, or cross the red lines for environmental protection, minimum standards for environmental quality, and ceilings on resource utilization.

It also covered failures in promoting green transition, poor coordination in ecological protection and mishandling major pollution or ecological incidents.

For other local leaders, accountability may be triggered when they fail to supervise departments under their charge, tolerate violations, or mishandle environmental funds, it said.

For department leaders, examples include issuing rules that conflict with environmental laws or policies, greenlighting projects that fail to satisfy statutory requirements, failing to enforce inspection requirements, or ignoring public complaints and reports, according to the document.

The rule further specified that leaders who use their influence to obstruct environmental inspections, interfere in judicial handling of environmental cases, meddle in project approvals, or order the falsification of statistical, survey, assessment, monitoring or environmental impact data will be held accountable.

Accountability measures may include reminder talks, criticism and education, orders to make self-criticism and admonition; organizational adjustment and punishment; and disciplinary penalties.

Suspected criminal acts must be transferred to the relevant authorities for handling under the law, it noted.

Government bodies that are responsible for the supervision and administration of ecological and environmental protection must, upon discovering any circumstances warranting accountability as prescribed in these measures, conduct an investigation into the ecological and environmental damage in accordance with the law and within the scope of their duties, the guideline ruled.

It said, where the issues involve major ecological and environmental damage, or where complex problems cut across regions, watersheds, or departmental boundaries, the investigation may be escalated to a higher-level authority.

Disciplinary inspections, environmental and resource inspections and departure audits of natural resource assets may uncover major ecological damage or official negligence, it continued. Such cases must be referred to the disciplinary and supervisory authorities and the personnel departments under established procedures. Those bodies will then pursue accountability in line with regulations, discipline and the law.

The guideline shall take effect upon promulgation.

Gift exchange highlights duo's long-lasting green drive and friendship

By **WANG SONGSONG** in Ordos, Inner Mongolia and **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot

Yin Yuzhen, a national model worker renowned for her decades-long desertification control efforts in Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, exchanged gifts with her American friend Ronald Sakolsky on Tuesday, as part of his long-awaited reunion tour in China.

The gift-giving ceremony took place in the morning. Yin presented Sakolsky with embroidered insoles inscribed with the words "desert" and "friendship", along with the phrase "never forget". Other gifts included an embroidery piece bearing the message "one Earth, one dream", with images of the planet, trees, and the names of both individuals, as well as a plate with their portraits on it and some local specialty foods.

In return, Sakolsky, who hails from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, brought gifts for his Chinese counterpart, including a scarf and a hat featuring the Pittsburgh Steelers, an American football team.

He also brought two large suitcases, adding that "I brought two suitcases because I know China. They are almost full and I only just arrived. I have to take these gifts home."

Sakolsky expressed his gratitude to the China Education Association for International Exchange, saying, "Let us not forget that CEAIE. I would not be here if it were not for CEAIE. They sent me to China. Now I am back again."

Their remarkable story began in 1999 when Sakolsky, who taught English in Henan province under a China-United States teacher exchange program, organized by CEAIE, was moved by a television report on Yin's tireless efforts to turn the desert green. He raised $5,000 in donations to support her afforestation work — a sum that helped transform the barren landscape into a thriving forest of over 50,000 trees.

"I am just playing my part in a broader story. I thought it was impossible. She made it possible," said Sakolsky as he reflected on their shared mission.

He added, "She shares the same dream to make the Earth more beautiful. She made the changes. Now the Earth gives it back: all the trees, fruit, vegetables. She is the miracle hero and she never quits."

> "She shares the same dream to make the Earth more beautiful. She made the changes. Now the Earth gives it back: all the trees, fruit, vegetables. She is the miracle hero and she never quits."
>
> **Ronald Sakolsky,** a retired teacher from the United States

On the same day, Sakolsky visited the global innovation research and development headquarters of Kargobot Autonomous Driving and experienced an unmanned bus.

"I've never been in a vehicle with no driver. It is amazing and it proves that Ordos is a city of the 22nd century," he added.

According to Yao Kai, vice-president of the headquarters, the technology makes cargo transportation more efficient and environmentally friendly, contributing to ecological protection efforts.

Sakolsky arrived in Ordos on Sunday to reunite with Yin for the first time in 26 years. Their emotional reunion, which attracted wide public expectations after Yin's online search for her benefactor went viral in May, has been hailed as a vivid example of people-to-people friendship between China and the US. On Monday, the pair planted three evergreen trees together in Maowusu, China's fourth largest sandy area, fulfilling a promise made during their online reconnection months earlier.

According to previous reports, Sakolsky's trip to China will run through Sept 1 and includes visits to Henan and Beijing.

Contact the writers at wangsongsong@chinadaily.com.cn

Online
See more by scanning the code.



Yin Yuzhen presents an embroidery piece bearing the message "one Earth, one dream" as a gift to Ronald Sakolsky in Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, on Tuesday. ZENG YUE / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Pioneering designer of JH-7 fighter-bomber dies

By **ZHAO LEI**
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Chen Yijian, chief designer of China's JH-7 fighter-bomber and an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, died on Monday in Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province. He was 96.

Born in June 1930 in Fuzhou, Fujian province, Chen grew up amid the flames of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and completed his primary and secondary education in his home province.

In interviews prior to his death, Chen said when Japanese forces invaded his hometown of Fuzhou, he was forced to move with his father to Nanping county. With no air-raid shelters available, he and his family would often flee into the mountains whenever Japanese warplanes carried out bombing raids.

Chen explained that the Japanese pilots were so brazen that they flew extremely low — so low that people on the ground could clearly see their faces.



Chen Yijian

After graduating from high school in 1948, he applied to Xiamen University in Fujian, listing the newly established aeronautical engineering program as his only preferred choice.

"I was determined to study aviation and build aircraft — if we had no planes of our own, we would continue to be bullied by others," he said.

Three years later, following a nationwide restructuring of university departments, Chen and his classmates in the aeronautical engineering department were transferred to Tsinghua University in Beijing to continue their studies.

After graduating in 1952, the young engineer was assigned to the State-run No 122 Factory in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, now known as Harbin Aircraft Industry under the Aviation Industry Corp of China.

At the time, the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53) was underway, and a number of damaged Chinese aircraft were rushed to aircraft factories in Harbin, Shenyang and other cities for repairs. Upon reporting for duty at the factory, Chen joined the repair work and gradually acquired the knowledge required for aircraft design.

In late 1956, Chen was selected to join the People's Republic of China's first aircraft design office, the predecessor of the Shenyang Aircraft Design and Research Institute in Liaoning province. It was there that his career in aircraft design took off.

He participated in the early development of several models, including the JJ-1, New China's first domestically developed aircraft, the CJ-6 trainer and the Q-5 attack aircraft.

In 1961, the Shenyang institute was formally established. That same year, Chen was promoted to head of fuselage design at the institute.

In 1964, Chen was transferred to the Xi'an Aircraft Design and Research Institute, now known as the AVIC First Aircraft Institute, where he was mainly involved in the development of the Y-7 transport aircraft and took part in modification work on two bomber models.

During the mid-1970s, Chen took the lead in exploring the development of a next-generation tactical bomber. Their proposal was accepted by the government and military in 1977, resulting in the launch of the H-7 bomber project.

In 1978, Chen was appointed deputy chief designer of the Xi'an institute. In 1982, he was named chief designer of the new aircraft, which by then had been renamed the JH-7 "Flying Leopard" fighter-bomber.

With no prototype or reference model to draw on, Chen broke with convention and, despite considerable pressure, made the decisive call that the new jet's design standards would be brought in line with international norms.

In his 50s, Chen taught himself to write simple aircraft design software. The JH-7 became one of the earliest aircraft models in China to use computer-aided design.

In December 1988, the long-troubled JH-7 finally made its maiden flight, followed by a decade-long flight-test phase. It underwent more than 1,600 test flights before receiving design certification in August 1998.

In 1999, the JH-7 received the top-grade prize in the national science and technology advancements awards. Chen was elected an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering in December that year.

After stepping away from aircraft design, Chen served as a professor of aeronautical engineering at several domestic universities and took part in feasibility studies for China's domestically developed large aircraft.

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CHINA

CROSSING THE STRAIT

Editor's note: *The Taiwan question is a key focus for China and the international community. China Daily is publishing a series of reports to track hot Taiwan-related topics and address disinformation from the Democratic Progressive Party administration.*

Fujian league attracts cross-Strait players

Taiwan soccer talent find goals, massive crowds at mainland matches

By **ZHANG YI** in Xiamen, Fujian and **HU MEIDONG** in Fuzhou









Clockwise from top left: Team Xiamen and Team Jinmen exchange gifts before a friendly match in Xiamen, Fujian province, on July 5. Taiwan's Peng Chia-en waves a flag for Team Xiamen. Taiwan's Huang Wei-chieh (right) dribbles during a match representing Team Fuzhou. Supporters cheer for both teams during the Xiamen-Jinmen friendly match. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The Fujian city soccer league is inviting Taiwan players to compete on the Chinese mainland, and welcoming residents from across the Strait to enjoy the matches firsthand to deepen compatriot affinities and bring hearts closer together.

Representing Fujian province's nine cities and the Pingtan Comprehensive Experimental Zone, 10 teams and nearly 500 amateur players are competing in the tournament, which will conclude with the final in October.

To boost cross-Strait integration, Fujian — the primary ancestral home for Taiwan compatriots — allows every participating team to add two Taiwan players to its roster. By August, 19 Taiwan players had joined different city teams, according to the Fujian provincial administration of sport.

Data shows that more than 1,500 people from Taiwan have attended matches across Fujian, and that the league serves as an active catalyst for deepening cross-Strait people-to-people exchanges.

Ni Pei-hsu, 24, from Taiwan, joined Fuzhou's soccer club in late June after learning about the recruitment online and was drawn by the massive crowds. It's his first time playing on the mainland.

At Saturday night's match, Fuzhou defeated Longyan 3-1 at the Fuzhou Strait Olympic Sports Center. Ni repeatedly tore through the opponent's defense, while his teammate Huang Wei-chieh, also from Taiwan, scored the opening goal.

"Hearing fans shout my name during the match felt incredible, an experience I've never had before," Ni said, adding that he could feel the energy from the nearly 50,000 spectators who filled the stadium.

Ni said he enjoys living, dining and training together with his teammates in Fuzhou. They visit local scenic spots and watch movies on weekends, inspiring him to stay and continue his soccer career on the mainland.

Another Taiwan compatriot, Yang Chih-po, joined the Pingtan soccer club in June through a coach he met during previous matches in Fujian.

On June 27, he made his debut in Pingtan's away match against Nanping. In the 65th minute, Yang scored the winning goal from a set piece. This marked his very first goal since joining the league, helping Pingtan secure a crucial 1-0 victory and snapping their previous seven-game losing streak.

Recalling his debut, although Yang felt nervous due to the massive crowds both in the stadium and online, he remained focused. "With such a great opportunity, I told myself to just enjoy this stage and perform well," he said.

"There are many young soccer players on both sides, and the sports environment and atmosphere on the mainland are excellent," Yang added, encouraging more Taiwan players to hone their skills and embrace the challenges on the mainland platform.

By reserving dedicated viewing areas and distributing free tickets, the league warmly welcomes both first-time and frequent visitors from Taiwan. It has also established a short-video collection event to encourage soccer fans from both sides to cheer together.

Chen Yu-hsuan, a Taiwan student at Xiamen Information School, performs as a cheerleader for Xiamen's club. Her squad wears white uniforms representing Xiamen's symbolic egrets, and ocean-blue ones representing the sea, beautifully capturing the coastal city's unique local character.

"When our team scores, the whole stadium erupts, and I stand up cheering with everyone in pure excitement," Chen said.

As a Taiwan student residing in Xiamen, Chen said that representing the city before crowds of both local and visiting fans makes her feel incredibly proud of her life and community on the mainland.

Rita Chen and her husband Joe Peng traveled from Taoyuan, Taiwan, to Xiamen over the weekend specifically to cheer for their son, who played for Xiamen on Saturday night against Putian. Prompted by the soccer matches, the trip marked the family's very first visit to the mainland.

In July, their son, Peng Chia-en, represented the team of Jinmen, an outlying island off the coast of Fujian, in an exchange match against Xiamen — a key sub-activity of the city league that drew many Taiwan spectators. After touring locally to boost cross-Strait understanding, Peng and another Taiwan player were officially invited to join the Xiamen squad, while another two joined the Nanping club.

"We discovered that so many people support soccer matches in Xiamen, which is rare in Taiwan," Chen said. "The atmosphere is incredible. I hope other Taiwan compatriots who are interested can come over, enjoy the soccer spirit, and grow."

Zhang Yuehong, assistant coach of the Xiamen team, said: "Taiwan players travel to Xiamen to play just like visiting relatives. There is a very harmonious atmosphere as soccer enthusiasts from both sides exchange ideas and build friendship."

The matches offer talented Taiwan players more opportunities to showcase their skills, Zhang said, adding that the league lays a foundation for the possibility of Taiwan soccer teams joining the tournament in the future, which is a highly anticipated wish for many Taiwan players.

"The league is like a seed planted in the hearts of sports-loving young people from Taiwan," said Lee Chen-hsuan, a Taiwan player participating in the league.

Lee, president of the Pingtan Taiwan Business Association who moved to the mainland in 2016, said the event serves as a grand platform for those from Taiwan to experience diverse local customs and Fujian's unique culture.

"Many from Taiwan want to participate in the event," Lee said, noting that participants can also integrate into coaching staff and logistical support teams to gain broader experience in the sports industry.

Lee added that the event's influence is expected to extend to other provincial leagues in Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Sichuan provinces, inspiring more young Taiwan players to explore and develop careers across the mainland.

Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, said that grassroots city soccer leagues across the mainland have ignited the passion and energy of fans from both sides of the Strait every weekend this summer.

"In the Fujian league, Taiwan players fight alongside their mainland teammates, scoring multiple goals and receiving passionate support," Zhu said. "Facts prove that anyone with passion and perseverance can win applause on an expanding stage."

Wang Jinghan and Qiu Yuwen contributed to this story.

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Online
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Animal communicator heals pet owners' hearts

By **ZHANG YI** and **HU MEIDONG**



Tseng Yi-ju, from Taiwan, works in her pet studio in Xiamen, Fujian province. WANG JINGHAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Tseng Yi-ju, who comes from Taiwan, has served hundreds of pet-owning families on the Chinese mainland, helping people decode the unspoken needs of their animals while healing the hearts of the owners.

With the rapid expansion of the pet market and a growing focus on the human-animal emotional bond, she has found a clear direction for her entrepreneurial career in this emerging field in Xiamen, Fujian province.

"Xiamen feels just like home to me," Tseng said, noting that her move to the coastal city in 2021 was eased by its familiar climate, warm hospitality and strong government support for Taiwan entrepreneurs — including intellectual property workshops that greatly accelerated her start-up's growth.

"People increasingly treat pets as core family members," Tseng said. Her business integrates patented animal communication training and custom pet accessories.

Tseng recalled one corporate executive who joined a session to bridge the gap with younger employees as he wanted to organize pet-centric activities to boost team cohesion, and hoped that understanding pets would help him better connect with the younger generation, as many raise pets.

"The initial and primary motivation of most clients is simply to forge a deeper, more meaningful connection with their own pets," Tseng said, noting that proper communication also offers critical solutions to severe animal behavioral issues.

Tseng shared a case where an indoor cat was constantly biting its own fur bald despite medical tests showing no physical illness. Through a communication session, she discovered the cat felt disturbed and unsafe due to its noisy environment.

This was because the cat owner's former apartment had poor soundproofing and creaky floors.

The owner later reported that the self-harming behavior stopped after she relocated to a quieter residence.

Tseng also helps owners navigate emotional crises during pets' final days. She recalled a client who enrolled because his dog was extremely old, deeply desiring to understand and accompany his companion through its final stage.

Another client sought Tseng's help for an aging cat suffering from severe organ failure following major liver surgery. During that emotional session, they spent most of their time addressing the owner's past regrets and saying a proper goodbye. The cat remarkably stabilized afterward, allowing the owner to adjust his life and maximize their remaining time.

Liu Jingruo, a Xiamen resident, experienced the deep emotional impact of this practice when she sought Tseng's help for her 17-year-old poodle, Youyou, which suffered from a painful, ruptured abdominal cyst.

"Veterinarians across the city warned me that Youyou was too old to survive an operation," Liu said. However, through a joint session with Tseng, she learned that the dog actually desired the surgery so it could leave the world with a whole body.

Tseng maintained constant communication with the owner and the dog right up to the operation. Just three hours after surgery, the elderly poodle managed to stand up independently.

"I burst into tears when I saw it. It was so tough," Liu said. "Though Youyou later passed away, the experience left me with absolutely no lingering regrets."

The experience inspired Liu to study animal communication herself, finding it deeply therapeutic. She now allows her middle-school child to join the training to help the teenager understand the pure, selfless love that animals offer.

Liu said that there are times when her child prefers to confide in the family pet rather than speak to her. "The animal might give the child a gentle gaze or a very calming feeling," she said.

Sun Xiaonan, another student, found that studying communication heightened her ability to manage multi-pet households, especially after she adopted a fierce stray cat that bullied her resident pet.

Sun discovered that her resident cat was enduring immense stress just to keep the peace and spare its owner from conflict. By providing targeted reassurance, Sun successfully gave the animal an emotional outlet, preventing further stress accumulation.

"Having reliable, trustworthy animal communicators is essential for modern families," Sun said, adding that she believes this specialized emotional support is quickly shaping up to be a major future trend across the mainland market.

Liu Yizhou and Wang Jinghan contributed to this story.

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Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

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Where law meets humanity

A suspense drama follows three legal professionals to explore justice, morality and human nature beyond courtrooms.



(From left to right) Francis Ng, Zhong Chuxi and Zheng Yunlong portray three legal professionals whose lives become intertwined in a decade-spanning case in the suspense drama *The Trembling of Cicada*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By WANG XINGWEI
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In the courtroom, criminal defense lawyer Ding Ning methodically presents evidence and points out uncertainties she has uncovered in a rape case. Rather than simply accepting a guilty plea, the young lawyer works to protect the legal rights of her client, a young nursing home caregiver accused of rape.

The scene appears in the first episode of the suspense drama *The Trembling of Cicada*.

Starring Hong Kong actor Francis Ng, Chinese mainland actor Zheng Yunlong and actress Zhong Chuxi, the drama premiered on Zhejiang TV on Aug 20 and is also available on streaming platforms including iQIYI, Tencent Video and Migu Video.

Through the perspectives of three legal professionals, the drama gradually unveils a complex case spanning more than 10 years, using the law as a lens through which to explore justice, moral choices and human nature.

For Ng, who plays judge Yu Songfan, the role offered a new experience despite more than three decades in acting.

"It was a rare opportunity. Almost every scene carried its own emotions and meaning, so I never allowed myself to relax," Ng said.

It is his first time playing a judge on the Chinese mainland, and the role gave him an opportunity to gain a better understanding of a judge's work.

"My character, Yu Songfan, carefully researches each case before it reaches the courtroom, and judges must deal with many cases every day. It made me realize just how demanding their work can be," Ng said, adding that judges need to remain clear-headed and make balanced judgments based on evidence and legal procedures.

For Zhong, who plays criminal defense lawyer Ding Ning, the role prompted her to think about a profession that can sometimes be controversial in the public eye because it involves defending people accused of serious wrongdoing.

"It takes courage to become a criminal defense lawyer," Zhong said.

She noted that being a suspect does not necessarily mean a person is guilty, and that criminal defense lawyers work to safeguard the legal rights to which suspects are entitled.

"Cases are rarely one-dimensional. There are often many sides to them," Zhong said. "At its core, the work of a criminal defense lawyer is about upholding justice and equality, and I find that deeply admirable."

> "At its core, the work of a criminal defense lawyer is about upholding justice and equality, and I find that deeply admirable."
>
> **Zhong Chuxi,** actress

For her, Ding's story is also one of personal growth. "Ding goes through a transformation after a long period of dormancy, much like a cicada emerging from underground. In that sense, her journey also echoes the title of the drama," Zhong said.

While Ding seeks to protect the rights of the accused, Zheng's character approaches the law from a more morally ambiguous direction.

Zheng plays prominent lawyer Zhao Yijie, who is adept at reading and manipulating others while navigating the gray areas of the law.

"It's an unconventional role," Zheng said. "He has his own ambitions and difficulties, but the way he deals with them can be quite unusual."

For Zheng, portraying the character required looking closely at the relationship between the legal profession and human nature.

He believes lawyers need to interact with people and, more importantly, understand them.

"My character, Zhao Yijie, is very good at identifying people's weaknesses. He observes them, provokes them and sets traps for them, pushing them to the point where they lose their rationality," Zheng said.

"When you play a complex character, you have to understand exactly where that complexity comes from and what lies behind it," he added.

That complexity also shaped how Zheng approached the character. As a musical theater actor, he drew on his stage experience while adapting it to the different demands of television.

"Stage and television are completely different. On stage, you're always conscious that some audience members are sitting far away, so your movements and expressions often need to be larger and more pronounced," he explained, adding that television acting, by contrast, calls for greater subtlety.

But beneath Zhao's dramatic persona and the twists and turns of the plot, Zheng believes the story ultimately deals with questions that extend beyond the legal world.

"It touches on something many people may experience: when you face adversity or even injustice, how do you overcome the negative emotions that come with it?" he said. "That is a universal theme, and I think it can resonate with audiences overseas as well."

According to the production team, the drama is set to reach audiences worldwide, with priority given to Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei.

Zheng said cross-cultural communication can be strengthened by finding emotional connections that resonate with people from different backgrounds.

He cited a production of *Hamlet*, in which he performed last year, as an example. Although the play is a Western classic rooted in a different cultural tradition, its central questions about choice and uncertainty remain recognizable centuries later.

Believing sincere emotions can cross language and cultural boundaries, Zhong hopes Chinese productions can offer international audiences perspectives they have not encountered before.

She likens an actor to a transmitter. "Our job is to convey emotions, ideas, values and perspectives," she said. "Chinese culture is incredibly diverse, and we are still exploring new ways to present it. I hope this drama can offer overseas viewers a fresh take on Chinese suspense storytelling."

For Zhong, audiences encountering stories from other cultures are often searching not for differences, but for something recognizable in themselves.

"They may see something of their past, their future or the possibilities in their own lives," she said.

"As a young actress, I also hope to keep discovering new possibilities for myself," she added.

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Rewriting the story together

China-Africa media cooperation is expanding through co-production, training and technology, with greater emphasis on local voices and shared storytelling.

By **SHAMIM ZAKARIA**
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When asked how direct media partnerships could give African countries a greater role in shaping how they are represented internationally, Chernor Bah, Minister of Information and Civic Education of Sierra Leone, returned to a fundamental question: Who gets to tell the story?

"For years, Africa has been diminished and Africa's story has been told by Western narratives," Bah said. "Those narratives do not exalt us and they never make us really the heroes of our own stories."

Bah's concern was the extent to which Africans themselves help shape coverage of their continent. Closer China-Africa media cooperation, he said, offered "a huge opportunity to learn from each other" and to "author a different story" rooted in people's experiences, cultures and aspirations.

That idea ran through discussions at the 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation, held in Beijing from Aug 19 to 21. Delegates noted that authentic representation requires practical involvement at every stage, from developing ideas and identifying sources to local-language reporting, editing and distribution.

The forum brought together about 400 representatives from China and 45 African countries, including a record 33 ministerial-level guests from African countries, according to the organizers. It was co-hosted by China's National Radio and Television Administration, the Beijing municipal government and the African Union of Broadcasting.

The forum came as 2026 marks the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Africa and is the China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges. Egypt became the first African country to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1956.

Co-production emerged as a main way to give local partners a role from the outset, bringing them into story development, editorial decision-making and production, rather than simply exchanging completed programs.

Dr Ismaila Ceesay, Minister of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services of The Gambia, said agreements reached with Chinese partners, including arrangements involving the country's public and private broadcasters, should provide a foundation for moving beyond content exchange toward co-production, particularly of programs concerning young people, culture and history.

Chinese programs were already being broadcast weekly on two television stations in The Gambia, Ceesay said, while a coordinating team was being established to bring media organizations together around co-production.

He also identified modern technology, digital skills, technology transfer and newsroom modernization as pressing needs. Gambian professionals trained in China, he said, should apply and share their knowledge at home so that one training opportunity can benefit an entire newsroom.

Ceesay described young journalists as eager to demonstrate their abilities and adept at using technology to introduce their cultures and countries. Bringing Chinese and African journalists together during planning and production, he said, could also build lasting professional relationships and improve access to local languages, sources and knowledge.





Top: Journalists interview a guest at the 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation in Beijing. **Above:** The 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation takes place in Beijing from Aug 19 to 21. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Tech expands reach

Beyond policy discussions, the forum gave delegates a close look at the technologies increasingly shaping media production. They visited the 8K facilities of Beijing Radio & Television Station (BRTV) and the 33rd Beijing International Radio, TV & Film Exhibition (BIRTV 2026). The forum also featured three themed exhibition areas presenting China-Africa media cooperation, audiovisual innovation and cultural exchanges.

Displays included digital content management systems and a mobile production vehicle using 5G, AI and cloud tools.

Marie-Louise Diallo, deputy director-general of Guinea's national daily Horoya, said she was highly impressed by BRTV's technical capabilities, particularly the image quality offered by its 4K and 8K systems.

She also noted that Guinean journalists were participating in a training program in Beijing.

Infrastructure cooperation is also extending beyond broadcasting. Bah cited a project in Sierra Leone where, in July 2025, he led the signing in Beijing of a $5 million memorandum of understanding with China's Diming Yimo (Tianjin) Printing Co Ltd to modernize Sierra Leone's Government Printing Department, provide equipment and training, and support a national printing training institute.

Some displays also showed how technology could address another challenge raised repeatedly at the forum: language.

At a display by Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, an AI function translated speech and written messages in real time. An interactive map generated a postcard for a selected African country.

Speaking during a visit to BIRTV 2026, Jean Maurice Uwera, deputy spokesperson for the government of Rwanda, identified language as a practical obstacle to the wider circulation of audiovisual content.

"Chinese culture is quite rich, but there is always that barrier of language," he said, adding that dubbing and subtitles could help productions reach audiences who might otherwise be unable to engage with them.

As AI plays a larger role in media production and distribution, the issue also extends to which languages such systems can recognize. Bah said African languages should be included in AI models and African partners should participate in developing them. Such cooperation, he said, could improve translation and digital tools for the communities whose stories they carry.

Bah noted the exchange should also work both ways, with African stories reaching Chinese audiences just as Chinese stories reach Africa. Joint reporting and content creation, he added, could introduce audiences to everyday life, entrepreneurship, history, culture and the experiences of young people.

The forum released a joint declaration and announced 80 achievements in China-Africa cooperation in areas including production and exchange, professional development and media technology. According to the organizers, the declaration advocates sustained news cooperation, joint productions, program translation and mutual broadcasting, AI application and governance, and youth exchanges.

For Ceesay, the purpose of such cooperation ultimately comes back to how people understand one another.

The objective, he said, should be to "tell our story, tell the African story, tell the Chinese story" in a way that enables people to understand one another's challenges, aspirations and history.



Participants in the 7th Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation pose for a group photo. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Seeds of health care take root in mountain villages

By **MENG WENJIE**
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In July, as cicadas echoed through the mountain villages of Enshi Tujia and Miao autonomous prefecture, Hubei province, 20-year-old Wu Yutong followed a village doctor along winding paths to visit local residents. As she met elderly villagers, she felt an unexpected sense of familiarity.

"Their accents sound very similar to those in my hometown, so I feel like I am seeing my own grandparents," Wu said.

Wu, a clinical medicine student at Taikang Medical School (School of Basic Medical Sciences) of Wuhan University (WHU), was among 17 students who traveled to Baiguoshu village to study rural healthcare and provide health education to elderly residents and children.

The visit was part of a tradition stretching back nearly a decade. Since July 2017, when the school's first group of 19 students established a volunteer health service base in the village, successive groups of medical students have returned to continue the work.

Wei Lei, a professor at the school and the team's instructor, was leading the program for the fourth time. The program included undergraduates studying clinical medicine, stomatology and public health. Wei said serving rural communities allows students to understand what it means to be a medical worker in ways textbooks alone cannot.

Over the years, the initiative has expanded from basic health checks to chronic disease follow-ups and research on local disease prevention. This year, the students turned their attention to how digital technology is changing access to healthcare in rural areas.

Focusing on the digital empowerment of primary-level healthcare, the team conducted research in Baiguoshu and seven surrounding villages, visiting hospitals, health centers, village clinics and residents' homes to examine the use of digital medical services at different levels of the healthcare system.



Volunteers from Wuhan University teach students how to use bandages at Enshi No 3 Middle School in Hubei province in July 2026. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

For team leader Li Wen, 20, the fieldwork revealed a gap between technological progress and accessibility. Questionnaires showed that many residents over 65 struggled to use smartphones or self-service registration machines when making medical appointments.

The students discussed their findings with local health authorities and proposed placing illustrated guides beside registration machines to help elderly patients better understand how to use them.

"It may not be solved overnight, but through sustained efforts, we can make progress little by little," Li said.

But the program's impact is not measured only in research findings and proposals. Years of repeated visits have also brought tangible changes to villagers' lives.

Wu recalled the case of a villager named Long Fubing. In 2024, the team discovered during a medical consultation that Long had severe hypertension and began monitoring his condition. When Wu met him again this year, she found that his health had improved significantly. He was taking medication regularly and no longer stopped treatment without consulting doctors.

"Standing there, I felt I was seeing the results of years of work by previous teams," Wu said.

Long's experience reflects broader changes across the village. In 2017, 45.7 percent of residents had fallen into poverty because of illness, while only 2.49 percent put health knowledge into practice in daily life. By 2025, 87.5 percent of surveyed villagers were receiving regular checkups, and all surveyed patients with chronic diseases were taking medication as advised.

"These figures show that an important idea has gradually taken root among villagers — health should be managed proactively rather than addressed only after illness occurs," Wu said. "This is the most valuable achievement of the past 10 years."

A decade of visits has brought more than medical services to Baiguoshu — it has also forged a lasting bond between the students, villagers and younger generations.

That bond was clear to Ning Zhenghao, 22, a basic medicine student who led the team in 2025. Although many villagers were meeting him for the first time, they immediately recognized the WHU T-shirts worn by the students.

"They told me that our team's story had even been recorded in the village archives," Ning said.

Ning and his teammates also gave health education classes at Baiguoshu village primary school, where he was encouraged by the children's enthusiasm for learning and their grasp of basic health concepts.

"Every health education class we give plants a seed in children's minds — an awareness of the importance of caring for their health," Ning said. "Perhaps one day, some of them may enter the medical field and use their knowledge to improve healthcare in their hometown."

Li Bo contributed to this story.

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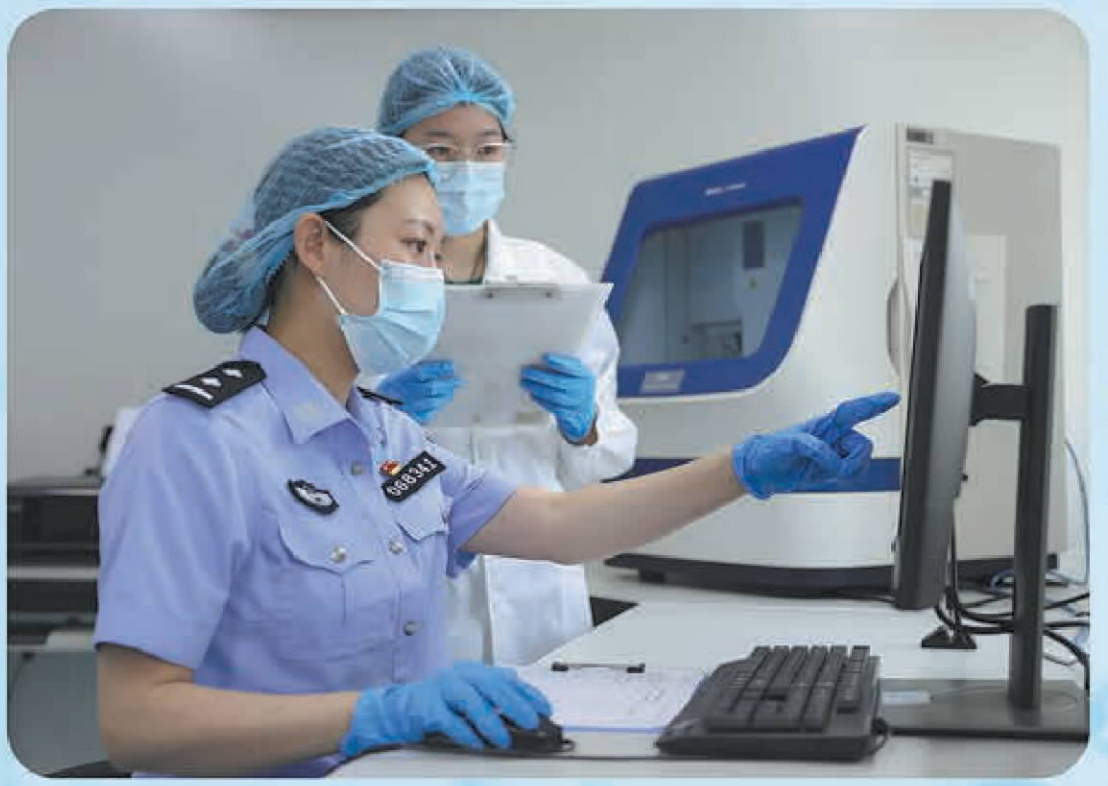
Truth found in tiny traces

Zhang Mengting combines biotechnology training with police work, helping investigators identify suspects, crack difficult cases and bring families back together.





Left: Zhang Mengting (front), a forensic DNA analyst with the Xiangyang Public Security Bureau in Hubei province, analyzes results on a computer with a colleague. **Right:** Zhang conducts laboratory work.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By GUI QIAN and **LIU KUN**

On a sweltering afternoon in August 2020, mosquitoes and other insects swarmed around a dilapidated shack in Gucheng county, Xiangyang, Hubei province.

Police believed a suspect who was on the run after committing a serious crime might have spent the night there.

After receiving the call, Zhang Mengting, a forensic DNA analyst with the Xiangyang Public Security Bureau, went to examine the scene.

Bending over, she searched the entire shack inch by inch. Once. Twice. Ten times.

Finally, on a worn sleeping mat, Zhang spotted a dark-red bloodstain measuring only about 2 millimeters across. It was not human blood, but blood left behind by a mosquito that had been swatted.

She carefully collected the almost imperceptible trace and took it back to the laboratory for analysis.

"Evidence doesn't reveal itself," Zhang said. "Only by staying focused and examining a scene meticulously can we find the crucial clue among countless traces."

DNA extracted from the blood eventually led police to the suspect, who had fled elsewhere, and the case was solved.

Zhang, however, stresses that solving cases is a team effort.

"Tracing the suspect's escape route and figuring out how he got there all depended on colleagues from other police units," she said. "I simply did my part."

Her ability to spot such an unlikely clue grew out of her scientific background and an unconventional path into policing.

Zhang, 32, is a native of Xiangyang. After graduating from Qingdao University in Shandong province in 2016 with a degree in biotechnology, she worked in new media and advertising.

In 2019, when the Xiangyang Public Security Bureau began recruiting DNA analysts from outside the police academy system, Zhang applied.

The decision brought her back to an ambition she had expressed years earlier. In middle school, when her English teacher asked students what they wanted to be when they grew up, Zhang answered, "A police officer."

"I found it fascinating that a tiny detail could help reconstruct the truth step by step," she said.

A changing profession

Her scientific training soon found a practical application in police work. The criminal technology unit where Zhang works covers a range of disciplines, including DNA analysis, trace evidence examination, forensic medicine, chemical and physical analysis, document examination, imaging and electronic evidence.

"Police academies usually focus more on training officers in investigation and case handling," Zhang said. "But policing today also brings together specialists from different fields, combining traditional investigative experience with better teamwork and procedures, as well as technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence. This makes investigations more efficient and precise."

> "If I could say one thing to the person I was back then, I would tell her: 'I hope you always hold on to your respect for science, your determination to pursue the truth and your commitment to serving the people.'"
>
> **Zhang Mengting,** a forensic DNA analyst

In recent years, more people without police academy backgrounds have entered the public security system through open recruitment, including some from fields outside the sciences. Zhang's career reflects that broader shift toward a more professionally diverse police force.

For Zhang, combining her biotechnology expertise with police work has yielded concrete results.

In 2024, a bottle was thrown from a high-rise residential building in Xiangyang and it struck a car below. With more than 1,000 people living in the building, investigators faced the challenge of narrowing down a suspect.

Rather than recommending that blood samples be collected from every resident, Zhang extracted DNA from the rim of the broken bottle. The DNA profile provided investigators with a crucial piece of evidence as they worked to identify the suspect.

Another case took her work in a very different direction. It involved a family separated for half a century.

In 1974, a 3-year-old boy referred to by the pseudonym Zhao was abducted and trafficked. His mother provided a blood sample for inclusion in a DNA database in 2017, but the search stalled because no DNA sample was available from Zhao's father, who had died.

Zhang and her colleagues proposed an unconventional solution: collecting blood samples from Zhao's biological brothers and using algorithms to infer their deceased father's genetic information.

The approach eventually helped establish the family connection, and mother and son were reunited after 50 years apart.

In more than six years as a police officer, Zhang has examined over 16,400 biological samples without error. Her DNA work has contributed to identifying suspects in more than 320 difficult cases, locating 35 missing or trafficked people and reuniting 42 families.

On April 29 this year, Zhang was awarded the Hubei May 1 Labor Medal.

But the moments she values most do not come with an honor or a title. As a technical officer who spends much of her time in the laboratory, Zhang rarely gets to meet victims or receive their thanks in person. After a case is closed, however, she often asks colleagues the same question: "How did the case turn out?"

Hearing that a difficult case has been solved or that her work has helped someone gives her a sense of fulfillment. "I realize that my expertise can really make a difference for victims," she said.

For Zhang, that sense of purpose goes back to what first drew her to detective work as a schoolgirl: the idea that something small, examined carefully, can reveal something much larger.

"If I could say one thing to the person I was back then, I would tell her: 'I hope you always hold on to your respect for science, your determination to pursue the truth and your commitment to serving the people,'" Zhang said.

Contact the writers at guiqian@i21st.cn

Global Insights

China's C919 through an AI student's eyes

On July 13, at 10:20 pm, I boarded a flight from Harbin in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province to Beijing, where I would transfer to another flight to Budapest and return home to Europe. The trip marked the end of my first academic year at Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT).

I expected the Harbin-Beijing flight to be an uneventful first leg of a long journey home. Instead, it became my first experience aboard the C919 — China's domestically developed narrow-body passenger jet — and it gave me a new perspective on the country's technological progress and my own studies in artificial intelligence.

Because we boarded via a jet bridge, I did not get a clear view of the aircraft from the outside. I realized it was a C919 only after entering the cabin and noticing that the interior looked different from those of the aircraft I usually flew on.

This discovery immediately excited me and gave the flight an unexpected sense of significance.

Although the cabin layout was familiar, several details on this Air China aircraft made the experience feel modern. The first was the wireless in-flight entertainment system. After connecting my phone to the onboard network, I could open a portal offering films, television programs and games. It did not provide regular internet access, but it allowed passengers to use their own devices as personal entertainment screens.

Another practical feature was a dedicated phone holder above the tray table. I could place my phone at a comfortable angle, connect my headphones and watch a Chinese action movie without having to hold the device throughout the flight.

I was beginning my journey back to Europe, yet I was still surrounded by the Chinese language, Chinese entertainment and an aircraft that represented one of the country's major engineering achievements.

Silent precision

The flight felt calm and comfortable throughout, but what stayed with me most was the fact that everything worked exactly as it should.

As a passenger, I experienced only a quiet cabin and a smooth flight. Behind that ordinary experience, however, countless electronic, mechanical and software systems had to work together with exceptional precision and reliability.



Bartosz Turczynski shares his perspective on China's technological development through his experience aboard the C919. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

As a first-year AI major at HIT, I began to think more deeply about those hidden systems. My courses included electronic circuits, computational thinking and practical programming in C, a widely used programming language. Until then, much of what I had learned existed mainly in the form of diagrams, exercises and small programs.

Sitting inside the aircraft connected those subjects to a much larger world of engineering. It made me consider how sensors, electronic components and software systems must cooperate continuously to keep a modern aircraft operating safely.

The area that interests me most is AI-assisted and increasingly autonomous aviation. Such technologies could help pilots interpret sensor data, identify abnormal conditions, optimize routes and make safer decisions.

For me, this area represents an exciting combination of AI, electronics, software and physical engineering.

I had already encountered this combination on a much smaller scale during a two-week robotics program at HIT over the winter vacation. At the end of the program, my group built a small autonomous vehicle that could receive information from sensors, process it and respond through movement.

The vehicle was simple but seeing it act according to our code changed my understanding of robotics. We were no longer only reading about autonomous systems; we had created one ourselves.

Before coming to China, I knew that the country was developing rapidly, but that knowledge was mostly abstract. During my first year here, I began to encounter technology not only as a topic in the news, but also through my studies and daily life.

The robotics program gave me the opportunity to help build a small autonomous system. The C919 flight allowed me to experience a far more complex engineering achievement as an ordinary passenger.

By the time we landed in Beijing, my initial surprise had developed into something more lasting. The flight gave me a clearer sense of why I had chosen to study AI and how much I still had to learn. It also strengthened my confidence in my decision to study in China, where the connections among research, engineering and everyday life are becoming increasingly visible.

Written by Bartosz Turczynski, a Polish undergraduate student majoring in AI at Harbin Institute of Technology. He has studied Chinese for five years and is particularly interested in AI, robotics and China's technological development.

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SPORTS

BASKETBALL



Team China players pose on the podium after finishing second in the FIBA U18 Asia Cup with an 89-79 loss to Australia, its best finish since winning the tournament in 2014. FIBA

China celebrates silver lining

Under 18s narrowly miss out on Asia Cup glory, but runner-up finish hints at a golden future



Team China players celebrate reaching a first U18 Asia Cup final in 12 years after beating New Zealand 79-66 in Saturday's semifinal. FIBA



The rise of school-league prospects, such as Lyu Feiyan (center) of Tsinghua University High School, shows China's youth basketball pipeline is evolving. FIBA

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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It might have been a near-miss, but an inspiring run at the FIBA U18 Asia Cup has delivered a silver lining for the future of Chinese basketball, with the national program committed to revamping its talent development system.

For a second straight summer, Chinese men's basketball has fallen just short of continental glory, but its youth squad's runner-up finish at the Asian showpiece, after being overpowered by Australia 89-79 in Sunday's final, was anything but a disappointment.

The squad's gutsy final run, which marked the country's best result at the biennial U18 tournament in 12 years, has served up as encouraging a boost for the national program's rebuild as the senior squad's narrow one-point defeat to the mighty Aussies at the Asia Cup a year ago.

The last time China's U18 team won the continental title was in 2014, when Australia and New Zealand were not yet included in FIBA's Asian zone.

Despite coming up short against the Emus in the final in Ahmedabad, India, the Chinese team successfully avenged its 15-point loss to New Zealand in the 2024 semifinal, taming the Junior Tall Blacks 79-66 at the same stage on Saturday to reach its first title decider in over a decade — while securing a spot to next year's U19 World Cup in the Czech Republic.

Head coach Wang Jianjun, who guided his young squad to tournament bests in assists per game (27) and three-point shooting (43 percent), took pride from the teenagers' fighting spirit and future potential.

"From start to finish, everyone fought for every possession in every minute and every second of the game. I'm grateful for all the hard work these players have put in and I am really proud of them," Wang said in his post-final news conference.

"We have regrets about missing out on the title, but youth is our biggest advantage.

"This silver medal proves the huge potential of this young team. This precious international tournament experience will lay a solid foundation for their future growth.

"I hope they can show the world what they've got at next year's World Cup."

Talented, but lacking some physical and mental maturity, the Chinese team was dominated in the paint, out-rebounded 57-35 by the Emus with a stark 26-6 disparity in offensive rebounds, which allowed the Aussies 36 second-chance points.

However, the fact that Team China was the youngest among all quarterfinal contenders, with an average age of 17.2 years old and with four key members born after 2010, signifies a bright future for the squad.

Sixteen-year-old starting forward Zhang Yizhaojie, a versatile 6-foot-7 (2.03 meters) scorer, led China with a game-high 20 points in the final, before being selected into the All-Star Five as the youngest player in the tournament's best lineup.

He didn't get carried away by the recognition, though. "Playing against such a physical, high-intensity team like Australia has made me realize just how much we have to improve," said Zhang, who also led the team's scoring across the whole tournament, averaging 14.3 points per game.

"We need to further improve our ability to keep up with the physical nature and high intensity of international play."

Young center Li Junxian, a raw, 18-year-old talent that stands at 2.12 meters, notched a double-double of 15 points and 12 rebounds in the final, while sharp-shooting guard Zhang Yuchen, another 16-year-old prospect, added 13 points and seven assists on Sunday.

Zhang Yuchen also led the entire tournament field in three-point accuracy, shooting 56.2 percent from 16 attempts beyond the arc.

His rise from China's high-school league to the international spotlight, after leading Tsinghua University High School to the national championship in May, underlines China's evolving youth development system.

Once relying heavily on State-run sports schools and professional league clubs' youth reserves, the drafting scope of Chinese basketball is now expanding to school leagues, overseas academies and commercial training institutes.

Four of the 12 players on the current U18 squad were selected from outside the traditional pipelines, with Zhang Yuchen emerging as the brightest prospect and turning heads of North American scouts.

According to Li Qun, a former Chinese national team guard and a youth training promoter, Zhang Yuchen has attracted serious interest from Arizona-based Bella Vista College Prep School and the Royal Crown School in Canada, suggesting a potential move this fall with an eye on earning a future NCAA scholarship.

"A young guard like Yuchen, who attacks aggressively to make plays for teammates, fits into the modern style of basketball, and we should make it possible for him to tap into his full potential," said Li.

Zhang Bin, a former youth training director with the Chinese Basketball Association, stressed it's critical to give developing talent more international exposure and more competitive opportunities as early as possible.

"We have more games at home for junior players than ever, but the intensity and quality are still not enough," he said. "We should encourage more young talent to explore pathways to develop and study overseas."



Zhang Yizhaojie, China's top scorer at the tournament, was selected into the FIBA U18 Asia Cup's All-Star Five. FIBA

Klay joins Heat, set to team up with Adebayo, Antetokounmpo

MIAMI — Klay Thompson has signed his deal with the Miami Heat, which waited patiently for weeks to see if it would get the chance to add the sharpshooter to its reworked roster.

Thompson — who is No 4 on the NBA's all-time three-pointers list with 2,899 — cleared waivers Sunday afternoon and wasted little time finalizing a two-year deal worth about $11.5 million. The second season of the deal is at Thompson's option.

In many ways, the deal makes sense for both sides. Thompson makes no secret about how much he loves the water and boating; the Heat plays its home games at the edge of Biscayne Bay. He's of Bahamian heritage; the island nation is a short flight from Miami and is home to a sizable base of Heat fans. And, perhaps most importantly, the Heat knew it wanted to add shooting to surround the newly acquired Giannis Antetokounmpo and incumbent center Bam Adebayo.

"Klay is one of the most iconic players to ever suit up in the NBA," Heat president Pat Riley said. "A four-time battle-tested world champion who will fit perfectly into his role as an all-around player at both ends of the court. We all talk about his shooting skill, but there is so much more he brings to the game. We are blessed that Klay chose the Heat in our quest to challenge for championships."

Thompson, a 36-year-old about to enter his 14th season (not counting two missed because of injury), fits that bill perfectly. He's a career 41 percent shooter from beyond the arc, and last season marked the 11th time that he's made more than 200 three-pointers in a season. For context, only seven times in its history has the Heat had a player make 200 threes in a single year.



Following his contract buyout Klay Thompson will join the Miami Heat to play alongside Bam Adebayo and Giannis Antetokounmpo. AP

There's also the winning pedigree that Thompson brings. He paired with Stephen Curry to be part of Golden State's famed "Splash Brothers" duo that helped lead the Warriors to four NBA championships. He's a five-time All-Star, holds the league record with 14 made threes in a game, has connected on at least 10 threes in a game nine times and will enter this season just 74 three-pointers behind Ray Allen — a former Heat guard — for third place on the league's all-time list.

It's the latest big move for the Heat this summer. It acquired Antetokounmpo and Bobby Portis from Milwaukee in a deal that saw it send Tyler Herro, Jaime Jaquez Jr, Kel'el Ware and Kasparas Jakucionis to the Bucks. It also signed another big-time three-point threat in Tim Hardaway Jr, who grew up in Miami while his father was playing for the Heat.

Thompson and the Dallas Mavericks agreed on a contract buyout that was executed Friday, the end of his two-year run there that didn't get anywhere close to what either side originally envisioned — especially after the shocking trade of Luka Doncic by the Mavs to the Los Angeles Lakers.

Thompson joined Dallas in a sign-and-trade with Golden State, giving the Mavericks one of the league's all-time great three-point shooters to complement Doncic and another high-scoring guard in Kyrie Irving.

But the high hopes for that threesome imploded after the Mavericks sent Doncic to the Lakers for Anthony Davis in a deal before the trade deadline in 2025. Irving tore the ACL in his left knee a month later and hasn't played since, while Davis was traded to the Washington Wizards just before the February trade deadline last season.

AP

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Coastal charm

Qingdao rides high on beer, beaches, buildings

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Pakistani envoy says US-Iran talks possible

TOP NEWS, PAGE 3



Green cooperation

APEC ties grow with new energy projects and stable supply chains

BUSINESS, PAGE 13

CHINA DAILY

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Chinese rescue personnel assemble at Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport on Thursday morning, preparing to depart for the disaster site in Gyirong, Xizang autonomous region. The deployment follows massive flash floods that struck on Wednesday near the China-Nepal land port, killing at least 157 people. XINHUA

Xi calls for all-out rescue efforts

Many missing after deadly mudslide hits border port in Xizang

By JI HAISHENG in Beijing and **PALDEN NYIMA** in Shigatse, Xizang

President Xi Jinping has ordered all-out rescue and relief efforts after a mudslide on Wednesday in Nepal caused heavy casualties and left many people missing at a border port in the Xizang autonomous region.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the instruction after the mudslide struck the Gyirong border port, a major land port linking China and Nepal, in Shigatse at around 10:30 am, according to Xinhua News Agency.

The death toll reached 157 on Wednesday night, while another 41 injured are in hospitals, Xinhua quoted local authorities as saying.

The president stressed that the top priority now is to make every possible effort to search for and rescue missing people, evacuate residents at risk and provide timely medical treatment to the injured. He also underlined efforts to strengthen monitoring and early warning, carry out rescue work in a scientific manner and prevent secondary disasters.

Noting that the country is at a critical stage of flood control, Xi emphasized that all local authorities and relevant departments should prepare for worst-case scenarios and extreme situations, and earnestly implement measures for flood and typhoon prevention. They must also step up efforts to identify and defuse potential risks and hazards, resolutely prevent serious and major disasters and accidents, and effectively protect people's lives and property, he said.



Satellite images of valleys near the China-Nepal border show the situation before and after the disaster. REUTERS

Inside

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Premier Li Qiang has urged prompt efforts to verify the number of people missing and affected, conduct all-out relief operations and evacuate people at risk. He urged the Foreign Ministry to strengthen communication and coordination with relevant countries to share information in a timely manner and work together to properly handle rescue and relief efforts.

Vice-Premier Zhang Guoqing has led a team to the site to guide rescue and response efforts.

Video footage released by China Central Television showed muddy water gushing, carrying tree branches and debris, and some buildings were buried as the mudslide struck. Meanwhile, the disaster has cut off roads, communication networks and power supply in the border area on the Chinese side, Xinhua reported.

In the wake of the disaster, China has activated a Level-II emergency response for disaster relief and a Level-II emergency response for geological disasters, the second-highest in the country's four-tier emergency response system. Governments at all levels have responded with immediate measures, making every effort to carry out disaster relief as well as search and rescue operations.

Three central government departments — the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Emergency Management and the National Development and Reform Commission — have altogether allocated 220 million yuan ($33 million) to support Xizang in carrying out emergency rescue and disaster relief work.

The Ministry of Emergency Management has deployed 249 personnel from the national comprehensive fire and rescue force, along with 325 engineering rescue personnel from China Anneng Construction Group, PowerChina and other State-owned enterprises. A total of 30,000 central relief items, including tents, quilts and moisture-proof mats, have been sent to support relief work.

At the local level, as of Wednesday afternoon, the Xizang Fire and Rescue Corps had deployed 72 vehicles and 431 fire and rescue personnel at the site, along with rescue dogs, life detectors and boats.

Five repair workers from the State Grid Xizang Electric Power Co — the first group of emergency power repair personnel to arrive at the site — rushed there with a medium-voltage power generator vehicle and two small emergency lamps, and started work to ensure basic power supply and lighting for nighttime rescue operations.

The local meteorological bureau has forecast continued rainfall across the county of Gyirong through Sunday, warning of possible floods, landslides and other secondary disasters.

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Xi to attend SCO summit, visit Kyrgyzstan and Egypt

By MO JINGXI
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President Xi Jinping will attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, and pay state visits to Kyrgyzstan and Egypt from Sunday to Sept 3.

During the summit, Xi will have in-depth exchanges of views with participating leaders on deepening SCO cooperation in various fields under the new circumstances and major international and regional issues of the times, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Wednesday.

The leaders will provide guidance for the SCO's high-quality development and participation in the reform and development of the global governance system, Lin told a regular news briefing in Beijing.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the SCO, which was founded in Shanghai in June 2001 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The organization has since expanded to 10 member states, with a combined population of more than 3.4 billion, and accounts for about one-fourth of global gross domestic product.

Lin said that over the past 25 years, SCO members have upheld the Shanghai Spirit, which features mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diverse civilizations and the pursuit of common development.

By expanding cooperation, the SCO has developed into a comprehensive regional organization with the world's widest geographical coverage, largest population and enormous development potential, he said.

The group has explored a new model of regional cooperation and set an example for a new type of international relations, Lin added.

The SCO summit held in Tianjin last year adopted a development strategy for 2026-35, setting out the organization's priorities for the coming decade and opening a new stage of high-quality development.

"If the Tianjin summit drew up the blueprint, the core task of the Bishkek summit is to put it into action," said Su Chang, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies.

Su said Xi's attendance is expected to help translate consensus into action by putting the four SCO centers inaugurated at the Tianjin summit into operation, advancing projects in energy, green industries and the digital economy, and improving coordination among its expanded membership while strengthening its role in global governance.

"China stands ready to work with various parties to build consensus and write a new chapter of cooperation in Bishkek, and contribute to the security, stability, development and revitalization of regional countries and the building of a community with a shared future for humanity," Lin said.

In Kyrgyzstan, Xi will have an in-depth exchange of views with Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov on bilateral relations, cooperation in priority areas and international and regional developments, and will attend various state events, according to the spokesman.

"China looks forward to working with Kyrgyzstan to take this visit as an opportunity to promote high-quality development of mutually beneficial cooperation on all fronts, add new dimensions to the China-Kyrgyzstan community with a shared future, and bring more benefits to the two peoples," Lin said.

China and Kyrgyzstan established diplomatic relations in 1992. Bilateral relations have developed rapidly in recent years, supported by stronger political trust, Belt and Road cooperation, expanding people-to-people exchanges and closer international coordination, the spokesman said.

*See **Visits,** page 3*

NIGHT REVEALS BEAUTY OF LONGMEN GROTTOES

Luoyang's heritage site leverages visa-free policy, immersive tours to draw visitors

By SHI BAOYIN in Zhengzhou and **QI XIN** in Luoyang, Henan

As darkness descends over the Yi River, the stone carvings of the Longmen Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Luoyang, Henan province, begin glowing softly in the light of hidden lamps, as if stirring to life.

For Russian visitor Ilya Demurin, 20, the awe-inspiring spectacle was enough to make him want to learn Chinese so that he might fully grasp the stories behind what he was seeing.

Among the many wonders at the grottoes, none is more recognizable than the Fengxian Temple, with its nine giant statues of Buddhist deities. The scale of the carvings is staggering, and the expressions on the stone faces are strikingly lifelike.

The largest figure, that of the Vairocana Buddha, gazes out over the river with an expression that has endured nearly 1,300 years of sun, rain and history.

Aleksandr Savchenko, another 20-year-old from Russia, found the grottoes breathtaking. "Every small cave and statue makes this place so wonderful," he said.

For those taking the night tour, the route feels less like a tourist trail and more like a slowly unfurling scroll painting. Each niche, carved 1,500 years ago, is subtly illuminated — just bright enough to reveal the ancient chisel marks.

"Nighttime sightseeing is an exercise in subtraction," said Ma Jialun, a docent at the Longmen Grottoes Academy. "Visitors stand facing the grottoes, shoulder to shoulder with the ancients, and experience a profound spiritual resonance."

He has also observed a universal thread. "Regardless of nationality, visitors share a common appreciation for beauty when standing before the Longmen Grottoes," he said.

*See **Grottoes,** page 3*

AI must serve people, not diminish human agency

WORLD WATCH
By Kenneth Morolong

Artificial intelligence is no longer waiting in the wings as a promising new technology. It is becoming part of the infrastructure through which modern economies produce knowledge, deliver services, communicate with citizens and compete in the global economy. Journalism is already being reshaped in profound ways, from reporting and translation to fact-checking, distribution and the way audiences discover information.

For South Africa, the important question is no longer whether AI will change society. It will. The real question is what kind of change.

We want an AI transition that expands opportunity rather than deepening inequality, that supports development rather than simply increasing efficiency and that remains accountable to people.

That is why South Africa increasingly sees AI as more than a technology issue. It is also a development, an industrial policy, a labour-market and a governance question. Perhaps most importantly, it is a question about the health of the information environment on which any democratic society depends.

Our starting point is our Constitution. Technology, ultimately, must serve human dignity, equality and freedom and contribute to better lives. That requires us to look beyond how quickly AI is being adopted. We also have to ask who is building these systems, who controls the data behind them, whose languages and knowledge are reflected, who benefits from the value they create and who is responsible when an automated system gets an important decision wrong.

These questions will determine what the AI economy looks like in countries such as South Africa.

For us, the first principle is that machines should expand human capability, not diminish human agency. AI can help people work faster and make better use of information, but there are decisions where responsibility cannot be handed over to an algorithm. A system can make recommendations, but it cannot bear democratic accountability.

The second principle is that AI must contribute to economic development. For developing countries, productivity is not enough. We should also be asking whether AI is helping small businesses grow, whether it is creating new industries, whether workers are gaining valuable skills and whether young people are finding new opportunities.

For South Africa, the ambition should go beyond consuming AI products to developing the capacity to produce and innovate with AI.

That requires governance as well as innovation. Regulation is sometimes portrayed as an obstacle to technological progress, but the opposite can also be true. Transparency, fairness, privacy, security and human oversight are not enemies of innovation. They are part of the foundation on which lasting innovation is built. People will trust powerful technologies only when they know there are rules around them.

*See **Technology,** page 3*



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INDEPTH



A drone operator of the food delivery giant Meituan pilots a food delivery drone in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on May 4. WANG WEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Low-altitude economy nears commercial horizon

Regulations, infrastructure and business models must keep pace with rapid tech advances, experts say

By **LI FUSHENG**
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China's low-altitude economy is entering a critical transition phase.

New regulations, breakthroughs in electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, expanding manufacturing capacity and growing market demand have pushed the emerging sector into the spotlight as a potential driver of new quality productive forces.

Yet behind the ambitious trillion-yuan market forecasts and frequent technological milestones lies a fundamental challenge: transforming industrial strength and technological breakthroughs into sustainable commercial operations.

China's revised Civil Aviation Law, which took effect on July 1, 2026, introduced a dedicated chapter on low-altitude economic development, providing a legal foundation for the sector's expansion.

The new framework establishes classified airspace management for low-altitude zones below 300 meters and replaces some case-by-case approval procedures with more streamlined filing mechanisms for qualified flights.

The regulatory shift is expected to help move the industry from scattered regional trials toward a more standardized development model.

Along with the evolving regulatory environment, China has made notable progress in manned eVTOL commercialization, although most applications remain at an early demonstration stage.

EHang's EH216-S — a pilotless passenger-carrying aerial vehicle — became the world's first eVTOL model to obtain type certification, air carrier certification and production certification from Chinese civil aviation authorities.

The aircraft began commercial trials in Hefei, Anhui province, in August, allowing public reservations and flight experiences within designated demonstration zones.

The milestone marked one of the earliest attempts globally to move autonomous passenger aircraft toward commercial operation.

However, such services are still limited to specific parks and tourism routes rather than serving as a widespread urban air-mobility solution for daily commuting.

Another example is Aridge, formerly known as Xpeng Aeroht, which highlights a different challenge facing the industry: strong manufacturing capabilities but incomplete commercialization conditions.

In August, Aridge's flying car manufacturing base in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, produced its 1,000th set of 800-volt high-voltage electric propulsion units, demonstrating China's growing ability to manufacture key eVTOL components at scale.

The company's modular Land Aircraft Carrier has completed a series of tests, including automatic separation, independent flight and docking between its ground vehicle and detachable aircraft cabin.

It has attracted more than 7,000 global preorders and purchase intentions from individual consumers, government and enterprise customers, as well as overseas markets.

However, the aircraft has not yet obtained the suitable certificate required for formal manned commercial operations and its planned mass deliveries remain dependent on the completion of airworthiness reviews.

Realistic applications

The situation reflects a broader challenge across the industry — technological readiness is advancing faster than regulatory approval and commercial deployment.

Industry forecasts nevertheless point to enormous growth potential.

According to CCID Consulting, China's low-altitude economy is expected to surpass 1 trillion yuan ($148.4 billion) in market scale in 2026, with the figure projected to reach 3.5 trillion yuan by 2035.

The consulting firm said there were more than 127,000 companies in China involved in low-altitude-related businesses by the end of June, covering areas ranging from aircraft manufacturing and airspace management to operations and technical services.

Industry participants, however, caution that the sector remains in an early development stage.

While China has identified promising growth areas, large-scale commercialization is still constrained by airspace management, digital supervision systems, infrastructure development and business model innovation, said participants at the 2026 China Entrepreneur Future Star Annual Forum held in Guangzhou in July.

Executives from aircraft manufacturers, intelligent solution providers and industrial service companies also discussed the opportunities and challenges facing the market at the annual event.

Compared with passenger eVTOL services, agricultural, logistics and industrial applications are expected to achieve commercialization sooner, they said.

"Agricultural drone operations currently account for the largest share of our civilian business, with mature and large-scale applications already established," said Meng Yuehua, director and deputy general manager of Gifore, a subsidiary of United Aircraft that specializes in drone R&D, production and service.

United Aircraft's products are also used in emergency rescue, low-altitude logistics and power industry services.

For logistics applications, United Aircraft has developed a product portfolio covering different payload capacities.

Lightweight drones carrying about 5 kilograms are mainly used for urban patrols and inspections, while 10-kg-class models can support short-distance delivery services in urban areas.

Meng said United Aircraft has also accumulated operational experience in medical supply delivery, including drone transportation of medical materials in Shenzhen, Guangdong, and county-level healthcare logistics services in cities such as Dongtai, Jiangsu province.

United Aircraft is cooperating with MT Aerospace, based in Suzhou, Jiangsu, to develop a nationwide drone-based medical distribution network, supporting the transportation of biological samples, emergency medicines and other supplies.

"Urban medical delivery scenarios with small payloads have strong practical demand and broad market potential," Meng said.

For larger payload applications, aircraft such as the TD550 and T1400 are designed to provide supplementary aerial logistics capacity for urban and suburban distribution networks.

Looking further ahead, the company's R6000 heavy-lift drone, with a maximum takeoff weight of 6 metric tons and a payload capacity of 2 tons, targets long-distance logistics routes in remote areas not covered by traditional aviation networks.

"Low-altitude logistics will become an important growth area in the next stage, creating opportunities for manufacturers with heavy-lift aerial vehicle technologies," Meng said.

Airspace resources

Beyond logistics, industrial inspection has emerged as one of the most commercially mature applications of low-altitude technology.

> "Developing airspace resources is similar to urban land development. It requires top-level planning and supporting infrastructure. ... Loose supervision may create safety risks, while overly rigid restrictions could limit innovation."
>
> **Hu Yongchao,** vice-president of Beidou Fuxi

Wang Haibin, chairman and CEO of Skysys, a company that focuses on drone products and services, said low-altitude applications can be divided into three categories: data collection, material transportation and passenger mobility.

At present, data-driven inspection services represent the most mature commercial scenario, while logistics applications are still expanding rapidly.

Inspection of power infrastructure has become a major driver of drone adoption, he said.

China's expanding wind and solar power facilities are creating growing demand for efficient maintenance and monitoring solutions.

Equipped with visible-light and infrared sensors, drones can quickly detect equipment faults, potential fire risks and abnormal operating conditions at distributed photovoltaic sites that generate electricity at or near where it will be used.

The technology is also being applied in industrial parks, municipal facilities and high-temperature equipment inspections, reducing reliance on traditional manual operations.

Skysys has developed an integrated system combining aerial inspection with ground-based robotic operations.

The company's drone-deployed robotic equipment can perform tasks including photovoltaic panel cleaning, dust removal, deicing and snow removal.

Such systems can carry out around 100 maintenance cycles annually and improve power generation efficiency by about 10 percent, according to Wang.

"The low-altitude economy is closely connected with embodied intelligence," Wang said.

Future competition, he added, will not depend only on aircraft hardware, but on integrated capabilities combining aerial sensing, autonomous decision-making and precise execution.

Hu Yongchao, vice-president of Beidou Fuxi, a technology company focusing on low-altitude traffic management and intelligent networking, said digital infrastructure will become a key foundation for the sector.

"The low-altitude economy cannot develop without a powerful background management system and digital brain," Hu said.

The company has developed low-altitude intelligent supervision platforms for nearly 30 major cities, providing digital management of flight applications, monitoring and traceability.

Hu pointed out that the rapid growth of drones has created new challenges for traditional aviation management systems.

While China has just over 7,000 traditional civil aviation and general aviation manned aircraft, the number of active drones in a major city can exceed 10,000.

To address this imbalance, Beidou Fuxi has developed a three-dimensional grid airspace management model, dividing urban low-altitude areas into standardized units and enabling more precise flight planning, monitoring and control.

"Developing airspace resources is similar to urban land development. It requires top-level planning and supporting infrastructure," Hu said.

He emphasized that safety supervision and industrial development should advance together.

"Loose supervision may create safety risks, while overly rigid restrictions could limit innovation," Hu said.

Streamlining deliveries

Shenzhen provides a glimpse of how low-altitude logistics could develop in large cities.

Hu said the city handles about 12.5 million express delivery orders every day, creating different levels of logistics demand.

While around 10 million routine low-value deliveries are better suited to traditional ground transportation, about 2.5 million time-sensitive orders, such as same-day and hourly deliveries, could potentially benefit from drone-based transportation.

These high-value logistics demands are concentrated in areas such as Shenzhen's Nanshan technology hub, Futian financial district and Luohu commercial center, offering potential opportunities for small and medium-sized logistics drones.

Hu said large-scale commercialization of low-altitude logistics would require three key foundations.

First, cities need intelligent networked management systems capable of monitoring and scheduling flights in real time.

Second, supporting infrastructure, including vertiports and takeoff and landing facilities, must be established across urban and suburban areas.

Third, communication, navigation and safety monitoring systems need to be widely deployed to ensure that flights remain traceable and controllable.

The shortage of such supporting infrastructure remains one of the biggest obstacles preventing the industry from reaching its full potential.

Shared challenges

From a global perspective, China's low-altitude economy has distinct advantages when dealing with challenges shared by the rest of the world.

European and US markets have deeper experience in general aviation and air traffic management, and are advancing eVTOL certification standards and urban air mobility pilot programs.

China's advantages lie in its complete manufacturing supply chain, strong policy coordination and ability to test emerging technologies through large-scale industrial applications.

At the same time, the global industry faces common hurdles, including high equipment and operating costs, concerns over noise and safety, and insufficient urban infrastructure.

So far, no country has achieved large-scale profitable commercial operations of manned eVTOL urban transportation. Advanced air mobility remains largely in the stage of pilot projects and scenario exploration worldwide.

For China, the gap between expectations and reality is becoming increasingly clear.

On the one hand, the country has established a regulatory foundation, developed strong manufacturing capabilities, attracted significant investment and created a large number of potential application scenarios.

On the other hand, many current projects remain limited to demonstration flights and localized pilot programs, with sustainable and replicable business models still under development.

Challenges including cross-regional airspace coordination, limited urban vertiport networks and strict safety requirements for heavy-lift operations continue to slow the transition from technological demonstration to commercial success.

Industry insiders believe the sector will develop in stages.

In the near term, industrial inspection, emergency rescue and high-value logistics are likely to become the first large-scale commercial applications, providing the foundation for future market expansion.

Passenger eVTOL services, while attracting significant attention, will require a longer period of testing, certification and infrastructure development before becoming a common mode of urban transportation.

The trillion-yuan market target represents a long-term vision rather than an immediate outcome, said analysts.

China's low-altitude economy has entered a new stage driven by technological progress, manufacturing expansion and scenario exploration.

But its next breakthrough will depend on whether regulation, infrastructure and business models can evolve at the same pace, they said.









Clockwise from top left: An EH216-S pilotless passenger aerial vehicle is seen in Changchun, Jilin province, on Sept 27. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY A student from Qingdao Pan American General Aviation Co undergoes helicopter pilot training in Qingdao, Shandong province, on April 4. LI ZIHENG / XINHUA Power company technicians use a drone for power line inspections over a tea plantation in Yingshan, Hubei province, on March 21. WANG JIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY Students of an aviation academy watch an eVTOL flight demonstration during a job fair for graduates in Meishan, Sichuan province, on May 20. WENG GUANGJIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

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TOP NEWS

Visits: Beijing eyes deeper ties, cooperation

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Noting that Xi and Japarov met three times in 2025, Lin said the two heads of state had guided China-Kyrgyzstan cooperation into a "golden period" of development.

Su, the researcher, said that "head-of-state diplomacy is the most important link in turning political consensus into projects on the ground". She said Xi's visit and the summit could give fresh impetus to the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway and other major projects, helping to translate political trust into tangible results.

Closer cultural and people-to-people exchanges between China and Kyrgyzstan, as well as between China and other Central Asian countries, would provide important support for political and economic cooperation, Su added.

Xi's visit to Egypt will be his first state visit to the country in 10 years and will coincide with the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Egypt.

Egypt became the first Arab and African country to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China on May 30, 1956. The two countries established a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2014.

During the visit, Xi will hold talks with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi on bilateral ties as well as international and regional issues of mutual interest, Lin said.

"Through the visit, China looks forward to working with Egypt to carry forward traditional friendship, render each other firm support, expand mutually beneficial cooperation and bolster each other's modernization," Lin said.

The visit is also expected to open a new chapter in China-Egypt relations and make positive contributions to peace and stability in the region and beyond, he added.



Robots of the Tianzhuo Team (left) compete with those of the Beijing Humanoid-HUST Joint Team in a heavyweight tug-of-war during the second World Humanoid Robot Games in Beijing on Tuesday.
ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Robots rapidly adapt to real-world tasks

By YANG CHENG and **HU QING**

The second World Humanoid Robot Games, which concluded in Beijing on Wednesday, demonstrated the rapid advances being made in the field of embodied artificial intelligence, with humanoid robots breaking records and completing increasingly complex real-world tasks.

Rather than just being a showcase for cutting-edge technology, the five-day event put robots to the test in demanding physical and practical scenarios, helping turn technological breakthroughs into solutions for everyday applications, experts said.

They said these breakthroughs were driven by advances in algorithms, hardware and reinforcement training, among other factors.

One of the highlights of the games was the tug-of-war competition between humanoid robots. Debuting as an official event, it tested the robots' balance, coordination and grip. Unlike humans, who have flexible toes and rich tactile senses, robots' feet usually only have two flat surfaces the size of a palm.

The tug-of-war adopted a two-on-two format, with each game lasting two minutes. The team that first pulled the red mark in the middle of the rope over its own boundary was the victor. The entire competition was completed autonomously through AI algorithms — the robots needed to sense changes in tension, adjust their posture and center of gravity, and coordinate with teammates — while staying upright and pulling forcefully.

Gong Xiao, a member of the games' organizing committee and deputy director of the China Software Testing Center, said that for humanoid robots, the tug-of-war tested far more than just strength. It tested their agility and intelligence. They had to remain stable under sustained pulling forces, keep both feet behind the line and continue exerting force with arms.

During the tug-of-war final on Tuesday, the Yobotics Team from Shandong province won the lightweight tug-of-war title for robots weighing no more than 40 kilograms.

Kong Deran, Yobotics' algorithm engineer, told local media that the team made the robots imitate the posture of humans during the tug-of-war to learn to perform autonomous tug-of-war, analyze opponents' strength and adjust posture.

She said that the robots' hands were programmed for maximum grip, adding that her team had an ingenious design: One hand was positioned palm-down and the other palm-up to reduce the risk of the rope slipping.

Kong said that, in the near future, these hands could be applied in real-life scenarios. If robots are expected to enter households and assist people with everyday tasks, they will need capable hands. The ability of robots to grip a rope in a tug-of-war match can facilitate their practical application.

Liu Weiliang, deputy director of the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Economy and Information Technology, said that this year's World Humanoid Robot Games featured 51 events, 21 of which were scenario-based competitions.

He said that these events recreated real-world tasks ranging from sorting medicines and cleaning homes to opening bottles, tightening screws with dexterous hands, assembling power tools, picking up beans with tweezers and connecting cables.

Robots were also required to cope with complex surfaces, changing lighting conditions and unexpected task changes, he added.

During the games, a new generation of young developers emerged as a driving force.

Beijing Information Science and Technology University sent 49 teams and took part in 119 categories. One of the university's teams reached the final of the super heavyweight free-style combat event this year, while its 5-versus-5 large-team soccer squad finished fourth globally.

Li Lianpeng, deputy dean of the university's College of Future Digitelligence Industry, said the university has used competitions to enhance learning, teaching and innovation.

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US-Iran talks still possible, says Pak envoy

United Nations' role in maintaining global peace and security stressed

By MINLU ZHANG in New York
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Despite the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Iran expiring last week, the window for further negotiations between Washington and Tehran toward a final deal "is not closed", Pakistan's envoy to the United Nations said.

Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Pakistan's permanent representative to the UN, said that Pakistan is "still very committed" to facilitating dialogue between the two sides.

"Our leadership is in touch with both sides. We are also working closely. We continue to work closely with the other friends," Ahmad told China Daily in an exclusive interview.

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He said the expired Islamabad MoU still provides a framework for the US and Iran "to engage and to hold further negotiations" toward "a conclusive and comprehensive settlement, or a final deal".

However, Ahmad said it remains unclear on how the conflict will eventually end and what impact it could have on the region.

"I think the overall situation is still in flux," he said. He noted that countries in the region are assessing "how this will evolve in the future and what kind of steps they need to take" to ensure long-term peace and stability, amid discussions over possible changes to regional security arrangements and political alignments.

On Tuesday, Pakistani Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that Pakistan and Iran made "significant progress" in talks seeking to end the US-Israeli operations against Iran and find a path to peace, according to a Reuters report.

Talks between the two sides focused on measures to prevent further escalation, reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and an expedited termination of the conflict, Reuters reported, citing a Pakistani military statement.

Given the prolonged uncertainty resulting from the US-Iran conflict, regional security arrangements are already beginning to shift. Earlier this month, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan signed the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement, under which an armed attack on one member is considered an attack on all three.

"Our objective is to ensure that we move forward in a way that will guarantee peace and stability for the longer term in the Middle East," Ahmad said.

> "Our objective is to ensure that we move forward in a way that will guarantee peace and stability for the longer term in the Middle East."
>
> **Asim Iftikhar Ahmad,** Permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations



UN 'not sidelined'

The diplomatic efforts surrounding the US-Iran crisis have also raised questions about the UN's role, as some of the most consequential negotiations over current international conflicts are increasingly taking place outside the UN and the Security Council.

Ahmad said that such diplomacy does not necessarily diminish the UN's role.

"If you look back in history, there are several situations in which the UN was not the primary actor," he said, adding that negotiations conducted elsewhere have often eventually been brought back to the UN. "It doesn't mean that the UN's role is sidelined or undermined," he said.

He cited the Gaza conflict as a recent example. Negotiations took place outside the UN Security Council before being brought back to the body to give it "the stamp of authority and credibility".

The UN Security Council in November voted and adopted a resolution endorsing US President Donald Trump's peace plan and establishing the Board of Peace as a transitional administration for Gaza.

According to Ahmad, the same principle would apply to a US-Iran agreement. Once a comprehensive and conclusive final deal is agreed, it would be brought to the UN Security Council for approval and for the establishment of a mechanism to oversee its implementation, he said.

"The role of the Security Council as the principal organ for maintaining international peace and security remains important," he said. Long-running conflicts around the world also continue to test the UN's ability to prevent and resolve crises.

Ahmad said that resolving these long-running conflicts requires "a comprehensive approach from conflict prevention to resolution", including UN peacekeeping.

There is a strong view among the wider UN membership that peace and security cannot be considered separately from development, he said.

For developing countries, Ahmad added, the UN should focus on prioritizing the concerns and interests of those countries.

"As part of the reform and improving efficiencies, we want to ensure that the UN will continue to prioritize the concerns and the interests of developing countries," he said. "That means both peace and security, addressing the conflicts and advancing the development objectives."

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Technology: Risk of reproducing inequality highlighted

From page 1

Data is central to this discussion. AI cannot function without vast amounts of it, which makes questions of privacy, ownership, security and access impossible to ignore. Developing countries need the capacity to protect their citizens' data while ensuring that data can also support research, innovation and economic development.

Then there is language. South Africa has 12 official languages, including South African Sign Language. Yet many AI systems work far better in languages that already have enormous digital datasets. That imbalance may look like a technical limitation, but it can become a social one. If a technology understands some people better than others, it risks reproducing inequality through a new medium.

The possibilities are also enormous. A community radio journalist could report an important public-interest story in an African language and use AI to translate it quickly for a much wider audience. Better speech recognition and translation could make information more accessible in education, healthcare, emergency response and public services. This is what an inclusive AI revolution should look like: technology helping people participate more fully in society without requiring them to give up their language or identity.

But the same tools can also make deception cheaper and faster.

Generative AI has made it possible to create convincing fake images, voices and videos at a scale that traditional verification systems were never built to handle. Imagine a fabricated video appearing days before an election in which a presidential candidate seems to make a racist remark. The campaign denies it. The public argues about it. The video spreads faster than anyone can verify it. By the time it is exposed as a deepfake, the damage may already have been done.

The challenge is therefore not to choose between innovation and oversight. It is to make innovation responsible. That means stronger cooperation on content authentication, deepfake detection, fact-checking, media literacy and the governance of synthetic media.

Journalism itself also needs protection. AI systems are gaining enormous value from news reports, books, films, photographs and other human-created works. African media organizations should not become unpaid suppliers of the raw material for a global AI economy while seeing little of the value created from it. Intellectual property must be respected, creators must receive fair compensation and societies must continue to have access to credible public-interest journalism.

This is an area where China-Africa cooperation could move from discussion to practical results.

The focus should be on building capacity together: developing high-quality African-language datasets with Chinese research institutions and technology companies; training people who can design, audit and govern AI rather than merely use it; improving access to computing power and digital infrastructure; working together on deepfake detection and media literacy; and supporting African companies in creating their own technologies and intellectual property.

Technology sovereignty does not mean isolation. Africa should seek interdependence without falling into dependency. We should be partners in building the technologies of the future, not simply consumers of technologies built elsewhere.

The standard by which we judge AI should therefore be broader than speed or productivity. Does it widen opportunities? Does it reduce inequality? Does it strengthen public trust? Does it respect language and culture? And does it give developing countries a genuine voice in shaping the technologies that will define their future?

South Africa is optimistic about AI, but optimism should not mean surrendering our judgment to technology. We should remain open to innovation while insisting on accountability, and open to international cooperation while protecting African agency.

This matters especially in journalism. AI can assist reporters, but it cannot take on the human responsibility at the heart of journalism: finding the truth, testing claims, exercising judgment and serving the public.

The next chapter of the digital revolution should not simply be written for Africa. Africa must help write it. Its languages, knowledge, people and innovators must be part of the story — not an afterthought.

The author is the deputy minister in the Presidency of South Africa. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Grottoes: In-depth cultural experience gains popularity

From page 1

The grottoes first launched night tours in 2007. But the real surge in foreign visitors began when China introduced its 240-hour visa-free transit policy, cementing Luoyang's status as a must-see destination.

"With the growing influx of foreign tourists, we've assembled a professional team of multilingual docents to bridge the cultural gap," said Zhang Zhimin, deputy director of the academy, adding that the night tours are a huge draw.

The Longmen Grottoes comprise more than 100,000 Buddhist statues carved into 2,345 caves and niches over a period of 400 years. UNESCO has called the sculptures "an outstanding manifestation of human artistic creativity".

"The beauty of the grottoes transcends borders and resonates deeply with people from diverse cultural backgrounds," Zhang said.

On social media, creators from around the world post videos from the famous stone steps.

Some visitors arrive in the late afternoon to see the carvings in daylight first, then linger for the evening spectacle. Others come dressed in traditional Chinese clothing, drifting past the illuminated niches like figures from the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

Wang Linsheng, 39, brought her 8-year-old son at dusk. She hoped the visit would inspire him to delve into the history behind the carvings, cultivate a sense of reverence for the past and foster a deeper appreciation of China's cultural heritage.

As the night settled, the last visitors made their way down the steps. The river mirrored the light in long, wavering lines and the lit-up stone faces maintained their silent vigil.

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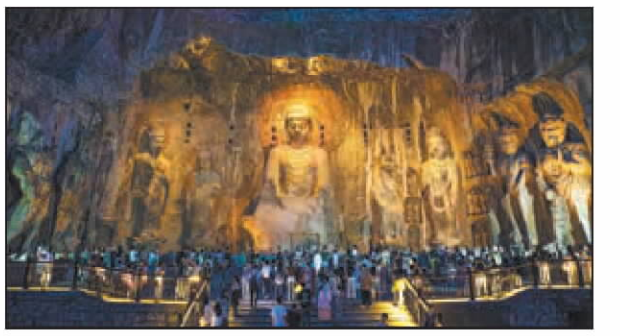

Tourists visit the Longmen Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Luoyang, Henan province, on June 4. ZHANG YIXI / FOR CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Editorials

EU needs to build stronger foundations beneath its economy not a wall around it

When Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico urged the European Union on Tuesday to treat China as a competitor in a friendly spirit rather than an enemy to be walled off, he highlighted a contradiction at the heart of Brussels' China policy: Europe wants the benefits of economic engagement with China while increasingly adopting a strategy designed to constrain the country.

China is not a marginal trading partner that the EU can simply replace. In 2025, EU goods exports to China reached €199.6 billion ($232.88 billion), 37 percent higher than a decade earlier. Machinery, vehicles, pharmaceuticals and precision instruments made up much of those exports, while the EU recorded a €21.3 billion surplus in its services trade with China. For many large EU companies, China is a major market, a supplier of essential raw materials, a production base, a source of corporate revenue and now an innovation hub.

Yet some in Brussels try to frame this mutually beneficial economic relationship through the vocabulary of "de-risking", punitive tariffs, investment screening and export controls, citing the EU's goods trade deficit with China. That risks confusing the symptoms of the EU's competitiveness problem with its causes.

The EU's industrial weakness did not begin with Chinese electric vehicles. It reflects high energy costs, fragmented capital markets, regulatory complexity, slow decision-making and an innovation culture that often rewards compliance more readily than risk-taking. Many EU policymakers are still living comfortably in the bubble of the old division of labor in which China provided manufacturing capacity and increasingly sophisticated products, Russia supplied cheap energy, while the United States provided security and much of the digital infrastructure.

That model no longer applies. Yet the bloc's response has been to protect itself from competition rather than build the capacity to compete.

Artificial intelligence makes this particularly obvious. The AI era rewards enormous computing capacity, abundant capital, entrepreneurial risk-taking and rapid commercialization. The EU instead remains weighed down by regulatory fragmentation and a tendency to debate the risks of technologies before securing a leading position in creating them.

That is why Chinese competition should be treated as a spur to the EU, not as a justification for protectionist policies and measures.

The EU won't gain from aligning its China policy with that of the US. The way the US has treated Canada in their latest trade negotiations should serve as a wake-up call for the EU.

Strategic autonomy means having enough economic strength to compete and policy independence to engage. This is where Fico's notion of constructive competition deserves attention. Competition does not require hostility. What it demands is respect for market rules — not the vague and politically convenient notion of "fairness" that some EU politicians narrowly reduce to a numerical trade balance.

EU companies remain competitive in pharmaceuticals, advanced machinery, environmental technologies, financial and professional services. But Brussels bans high-tech exports to China, which naturally expands the EU's trade deficit.

The China-EU trade and investment consultations launched in June provide a channel to settle these disputes before they escalate to a tariff war.

There is also a human dimension that the China debate in Brussels sometimes misses. In the first half of 2026, China recorded 22.9 million foreign entries, with European bookings surging 275 percent year-on-year amid China's visa-free policy. European travelers experiencing China firsthand encounter a safe and dynamic society. The "China threat" narrative dissipates when confronted with reality.

EU policymakers should also take note of a Pew Research Center survey published last month, which found that public opinion of China is more positive than that of the US in a number of major European nations.

China is not the cause of the EU's economic, trade or industrial challenges. The problems lie closer to home. The EU does not need a wall around its economy. It needs stronger foundations beneath it. The way to compete with China is to make the EU stronger, not to make China weaker.

As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said last month during a meeting with a cross-party delegation of the European Parliament in Beijing, the EU should stick to the overarching positioning of its ties with China as a partnership, refrain from politicizing economic and trade issues and overstretching the concept of security in exchanges, and work for an upward and dynamic balance of trade from a long-term perspective.

Words ring hollow till Tokyo mends its ways

Japanese Ambassador to China Kenji Kanasugi said, in a TV Asahi program aired on Tuesday, that he cannot be "optimistic" that strained China-Japan ties will improve at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in Shenzhen in November, adding that he hoped to "mobilize diplomatic resources to help relations stabilize even a little, making the most of this rare opportunity".

The ambassador is attempting to signal a "willingness" to talk as if it is China that hinders Japan's efforts to repair ties. But the actions of the Sanae Takaichi government clearly show that Tokyo remains unwilling to confront the underlying causes of the current difficulties in bilateral ties.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian urged the Japanese government to abide by the four political documents between the two countries, and create the conditions necessary for normal exchanges between China and Japan through concrete actions.

Yet Tokyo persists in its hostile posturing toward China. During his visit to Australia and India last week, Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi sought to build military alliances to counter what Japan baselessly perceives as "China's expansion" in the region.

In the technology sector, Japan has recently upgraded its high-tech restrictions against China, implementing export controls on advanced machine tools and related technologies, with the aim of hindering the development of China's high-tech industries. This undermines Sino-Japanese economic and trade cooperation.

Tokyo's reluctance to address historical issues is a blatant affront to its neighboring countries that suffered from Japan's invasion. On Aug 15, the 81st anniversary of Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allied Powers that marked the end of World War II, Takaichi made an offering to the notorious Yasukuni Shrine and paid tribute to it from a distance, while about 90 Japanese politicians visited the shrine in person. The shrine enshrines 14 convicted Class-A war criminals of WWII.

On Tuesday, China's Ministry of State Security published an article on its official WeChat account explaining why the Yasukuni Shrine should be referred to as the "shrine of war criminals", describing it as a symbol of Japanese militarism. A spokesman for China's Foreign Ministry said the true intentions of the Japanese politicians visiting the shrine are to change the verdict on the war criminals, cover up Japan's war crimes, distort historical facts, and pave the way for accelerating its remilitarization.

This was reinforced in Takaichi's speeches earlier this month marking the 81st anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where she avoided reaffirming Japan's commitment to its "Three Non-Nuclear Principles" — non-possession, non-production and non-introduction of nuclear weapons.

Japan's "readiness" to use the APEC meeting to improve relations with China and reap the benefits of engagement contrasts sharply with its unwillingness to abandon its policy of antagonizing China, and its consistent refusal to confront history and correct its mistakes. This "double-faced diplomacy" cannot bridge the trust deficit between the two countries that it has caused.

Unless Tokyo reflects on why its relations with Beijing have soured since Takaichi made erroneous and dangerous remarks on China's Taiwan region in November, addresses Japan's history of aggression, halts military expansion and removes its trade and technology barriers, its "hopes" of improving relations with China will remain a wishful thought.

If Japan genuinely wants to repair the relationship, it must take concrete actions rather than make empty statements. The Japanese government should wake up to this reality.

In fact, Japan's right-wing forces are conscious of the tricks they play. For decades, they have mastered the art of recasting Japan from aggressor to victim — whether over the atomic bombings or the current tensions with China that Japan itself has created. They may regard that as a "clever" way to evade responsibility. But such brazen hypocrisy only draws greater attention to the very truth they are trying to bury.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Volatility and hunger shouldn't be allowed to walk hand in hand

Food insecurity is a humanitarian problem, but it is also a symptom of the consequences of war, disrupted trade, blocked aid, weak development and climate shocks. That was the message of the United Nations Security Council's high-level open debate on conflict and food security on Tuesday.

Some 318 million people worldwide face acute hunger, with conflict-affected regions in Africa and the Middle East among the hardest-hit. The question is no longer simply whether the world produces enough food. It is whether food can be grown, moved and delivered to those who need it.

War is often the fastest route from food insecurity to famine. Fighting drives farmers from their land, destroys irrigation and storage facilities, disrupts transport and sends food prices soaring. Look at Gaza. Meanwhile, the Ukraine crisis has affected agricultural production and international flows of grain and fertilizer.

Chinese Ambassador to the UN Fu Cong said at the debate that hunger shouldn't become an instrument of war. International humanitarian law provides the baseline. Agricultural infrastructure should be protected, food aid needs unimpeded access, and the security of humanitarian workers must be guaranteed. Relief cannot function when it becomes hostage to war calculations.

The same logic applies beyond battlefields. Food security depends on logistics. A blockage in a major shipping route can quickly become a problem for farmers thousands of kilometers away, particularly when fertilizer and grain markets are already tight. The international community has a common interest in keeping land and sea corridors open and ensuring that essential commodities continue to move. China's support for a UN initiative to establish a time-bound operational mechanism for the Strait of Hormuz reflects this broader principle.

Artificial barriers, excessive protectionism and the abuse of unilateral sanctions can raise the cost of food and agricultural inputs, with the poorest countries carrying much of the burden. Food security becomes more fragile when commercial flows are subordinated to geopolitical rivalry.

Less-developed countries also need the productive capacity to feed themselves. That means investment in irrigation, farmland, storage, agricultural technology and resilient supply chains. It also means climate finance. Droughts, floods and other extreme weather events are increasingly capable of wiping out harvests and reversing development gains. Developed economies therefore have a particular role to play in providing development assistance and climate finance, helping vulnerable countries build resilience rather than remain permanently dependent on emergency relief.

China offers a notable case of what long-term food-security policy can achieve. The country feeds more than 1.4 billion people with less than 9 percent of the world's arable land and produces more than one-fifth of global grains. Its progress has rested on domestic production, institutional reform, investment in farmland and water conservation, technological innovation and grain reserves. The lesson is less about a single model than about the value of building productive capacity before a crisis arrives.

China has also shared its experience to strengthen the resilience of other countries. It has agricultural cooperation with more than 140 countries and regions, promoted more than 1,000 agricultural technologies in developing countries and trained more than 14,000 professionals in hybrid rice. Under the Food and Agriculture Organization's South-South cooperation framework, it has provided substantial funding, experts and projects.

Food security affects every country but the institutions governing food and agriculture do not always give developing economies commensurate representation and influence. The UN, FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development and World Food Programme can play a stronger coordinating role, while emerging markets and developing countries deserve a greater voice.

There is enough productive capacity in the world to make hunger far less common. What remains scarce is peace, resilience and reliable access. China's Global Development Initiative and Global Governance Initiative, centered on development, multilateralism and more balanced global governance, offer a framework for delivering those prerequisites.

The choice before governments is therefore practical rather than rhetorical: reduce conflicts, keep humanitarian and commercial corridors open, finance climate resilience and build a food-governance system in which developing countries have a meaningful stake. Food should be a foundation of stability. Turning it into another instrument of geopolitical competition only makes a hungry world more dangerous.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Greening computing infrastructure imperative

Editor's note: *Accelerating the transition to green and low-carbon computing infrastructure is crucial for supporting the rapid development of artificial intelligence. China Environment News spoke to Su Ming, a researcher at the Energy Research Institute of the National Development and Reform Commission, on the development of green computing. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The biggest challenge to developing green computing is matching computing loads with renewable power generation. Wind and solar power are inherently volatile, while AI inference workloads tend to fluctuate due to unpredictable user demand.

The second challenge is economic. Computing facilities are energy-intensive, and participating in green power trading or purchasing green power certificates entails a "green premium", which increases the cost of electricity to some extent.

Facilities opting for direct green power supply or integrated source-grid-load-storage models must invest in substantial new energy storage capacities. Additionally, maintaining operational safety requires a certain level of grid-connected capacity, which may not reduce the cost of using green electricity safely and reliably.

To achieve a green and low-carbon transformation of computing facilities, several strategic measures are necessary. First, emissions should be reduced at source by strengthening coordination between computing capacity and electricity supply. Computing facilities should maximize their use of renewable electricity. They should optimize their green energy supply models based on local conditions, participate in green power trading and purchase green power certificates.

New business models, such as direct green power supply, green microgrids and integrated source-grid-load-storage systems, should be encouraged. Additionally, exploring surplus cooling resources in surrounding areas can help meet the cooling demand of computing facilities.

Second, emissions should be reduced during operations by setting higher access standards and upgrading existing facilities. This aims to continuously lower the average power usage effectiveness, a core indicator of the energy efficiency of data centers that is calculated as the total facility energy divided by the IT equipment energy.

It is vital to deploy efficient cooling and heat-dissipation technologies, including liquid cooling, evaporative cooling, heat pipes and refrigerant pumps.

Enhancing the utilization of waste heat from computing facilities is also important, with facilities encouraged to develop heat-recovery systems for applications such as industrial-park heating, urban heating and agricultural facilities. Their intelligent operation and maintenance capabilities should be improved, alongside smarter management of energy consumption.

Finally, technological innovation must be strengthened to reduce the power consumption of computing itself.

AI models should be continuously optimized to improve computational efficiency, meeting the demands of inference, data storage and retrieval with lower power consumption rather than simply scaling up the number of computing cards, storage devices or model parameters. This will fundamentally improve energy efficiency and reduce power costs.

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VIEWS

Li Meng

Physical AI the biggest opportunity ahead

With the advent of superintelligent agents, there is a consensus that true intelligence goes beyond understanding static texts and requires grasping dynamic physical causality. This has given rise to physical artificial intelligence. It excels in multimodal environmental perception — seeing, listening, touching — and real-time interaction, bridging the gap between the digital and physical worlds.

Currently, AI development is converging toward physical AI, exploring it through multiple technological pathways.

By integrating LLMs with multimodal capabilities, physical AI provides intelligent brains for embodiment, bringing digital agents into the real world and heralding a new era of the intelligent economy.

Digital LLMs and intelligent agents are rapidly advancing toward self-iteration. The United States' models such as GPT-5.6, Claude Fable 5 and Grok 4.6, alongside Chinese open-source models from Zhipu AI, Moonshot AI and MiniMax, rank among the world's top performers. China's multimodal large models have closed the gap with the US, and in some areas even surpassed them. Seedance 2.0, for instance, has raised concerns in Hollywood.

From Manus to Openclaw, Harness and Hermes, disembodied agents are gaining autonomy and interconnectivity, emblematic of agentic AI.

In physical AI, advancements in vision-language-action alignment, world models and spatial intelligence are enhancing the sophistication of AI "brains", while lightweight visual and radar-based sensor navigation are boosting precise physical perception.

Humanoid robots, autonomous vehicles, and components such as dexterous hands, motors and advanced skins are rapidly enhancing agility. Currently, humanoid robots are the primary research focus, while autonomous vehicles are the most mature, with significant commercial potential.

The "jagged intelligence" in physical AI, highlighted by Moravec's paradox, means AI can surpass doctoral students in logic, math, and coding but still struggles with the perception, action, and emotional interaction skills of a toddler.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

While LLMs create limited new jobs and rapidly displace a wide range of jobs, causing anxiety among coders and clerks, the "jagged intelligence" of physical AI will slow its economic integration and job creation.

The 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference signaled a trend toward physical AI. China's high-performance, low-cost open-source models, especially multimodal large models, are bolstering this trend, enhancing the capabilities of physical AI and embodied agents.

This advancement is expected to significantly boost the efficiency and safety of China's manufacturing, services, and mining sectors while creating new demand and jobs.

The rise of physical AI is an opportunity to shift the economy from K-shaped divergence to K-shaped integration. By coordinating industries — from new growth drivers to traditional drivers — within the "scissor gap" of K-shaped divergence, this trend can drive sustainable economic growth and facilitate effective industrial upgrading.

One imperative measure is to launch a "physical AI+" initiative in the scissor gap to boost emerging industries and upgrade traditional sectors to prevent their collapse. By integrating traditional, emerging, and future industries and phasing out outdated capacities, such an initiative can give momentum to sustainable growth.

Enterprises, especially small and medium-sized ones, along with financial institutions, should embrace this trend. By adopting a long-term perspective, they can establish themselves within the embodied intelligence industry chain, similar to how today's "new trio" — electric vehicles, lithium batteries and solar products — were developed. This will prepare them for a pivotal moment in the AI industry.

The embodied intelligence industry, well-aligned with China's manufacturing strengths, offers a strategic opportunity for industrial upgrading.

Models are advancing, enhancing both the cognitive and behavioral layers of embodied intelligence. Rapid developments in body components include the shift from hydraulic to electric actuation, offering lightweight, fast-response and precise control.

Progress also spans the perceptual layer with sensors, radar, vision and tactile sensing, as well as components such as dexterous hand joints, batteries, motors, harmonic drives, servo systems, lead screws, materials, and thermal management systems.

"Physical AI+" has the potential to transform industries fundamentally by reshaping equipment, spatial layouts, and human-machine interactions, among others.

This transformation can lead to logical restructuring and systemic enhancement, creating significant opportunities. Importantly, not every sector needs the most advanced AI.

Often, integrating stronger AI technologies with weaker ones results in higher efficiency and greater benefits.

Also, the governance of physical AI can generate new demand and employment opportunities. Its ethical, safety, and social governance is complex and involves multiple disciplines and stakeholders.

This can lead to the creation of various sectors and roles, such as model safety auditing, data privacy review, data cleansing, system security assessment, ethical evaluation, and social impact assessment.

AI is designed to benefit humanity. Embracing embodiment is crucial to enhancing industries, expanding demand, and boosting employment.

The author is the chairman of the Chinese Society for Sustainable Development.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Virdika Rizky Utama

China-Indonesia 2+2 defines strategic autonomy

The Second Ministerial Meeting of China-Indonesia Joint Foreign and Defense Ministerial Dialogue (the 2+2 mechanism) in Jakarta last Friday marks an important change in bilateral ties.

The latest meeting suggests that this balance is shifting as political and defense cooperation becomes more institutionalized, giving Indonesia a chance to make strategic autonomy practical.

That opportunity should not be confused with alignment. What matters is whether they expand Indonesia's capacity to make independent choices. Strategic autonomy is not demonstrated by having many partners. It is demonstrated by having enough capability and leverage to prevent any one partner from determining Indonesia's options.

The 2+2 mechanism matters because it pushes Indonesia-China relations beyond episodic diplomacy. Beijing is attaching particular importance to the mechanism as it is its first ministerial-level 2+2 arrangement with another country. For Indonesia, the value lies in whether regular dialogue produces capabilities that Jakarta was struggling to build.

Defense cooperation offers the clearest test. Indonesian officials have discussed cooperation with China in ammunition production, missiles, rockets, and technology transfer. These areas matter for a country seeking to modernize its armed forces and reduce reliance on any single supplier.

China brings capabilities that few partners can match. Its manufacturing base, expanding defense industry, technological capacity, infrastructure experience, and ability to mobilize capital provide Indonesia with resources to support its modernization.

Buying from more countries is diversification. Being able to operate, maintain, adapt, and eventually produce critical technologies is a form of autonomy.

Global Lens

A diversified procurement portfolio may provide flexibility, but it can also create costly fragmentation.

Cooperation with China will have greater value if it helps Indonesian engineers acquire knowledge, strengthens domestic production, and enables local firms to move beyond low-value assembly. That is the difference between suppliers and capability.

Indonesia's challenge is straightforward. External partnerships create opportunities, but domestic institutions still have to convert them into national capability. Clear priorities, better implementation, and technological absorption matter more than diplomatic announcements.

Strategic autonomy is ultimately domestic before it is diplomatic.

More partnerships can generate more activity without producing more leverage. The contribution of the 2+2 mechanism will depend on whether Indonesia uses it to build domestic capabilities while expanding cooperation abroad.

Maritime cooperation provides another test. Indonesia and China do not approach every maritime issue from the same position, and a serious partnership should not require them to do so. Different interests and legal interpretations will remain. The question is whether both governments can manage those differences while protecting cooperation. Regular dialogue can reduce misperceptions, clarify sensitivities, and address problems before they become political crises.

If maritime cooperation expands into sensitive areas or joint development arrangements there will be greater clarity. Diplomatic flexibility can help governments manage difficult questions, but implementation works best when legal and operational boundaries are understood by both sides. Indonesia should not assume that broad political language will automatically translate into workable arrangements. China also has an interest in ensuring that cooperation is viewed in Indonesia as expanding national capability and policy space.

The consequences extend beyond bilateral ties. Indonesia and China are central to Southeast Asia's political and economic architecture, while developments in the South China Sea continue to affect regional confidence. More predictable communication between Jakarta and Beijing can reduce the risk of bilateral frictions leading to greater instability.

Practical cooperation on maritime security, cyber threats, transnational crime, and crisis management can also strengthen regional resilience when both sides maintain credible communication channels.

This regional dimension gives the 2+2 mechanism significance beyond another bilateral forum. Indonesia is ASEAN's largest country, while China is the region's largest trading partner and a major security actor. Better communication cannot resolve every regional dispute, but it can lower the risk of miscalculation and make cooperation more routine. That is a concrete contribution to regional peace and security.

Jakarta's deeper cooperation with China should not be interpreted as a decision to choose Beijing over other major powers. An autonomous Indonesia will cooperate with China where interests converge, seek alternatives where useful, and reject pressure from any partner when national interests diverge.

A stronger Indonesia may, in fact, be a more durable partner for China. Dependence can create short-term convenience, but it also produces political vulnerability and domestic resistance. Cooperation built on greater Indonesian capacity is likely to be more stable because Jakarta can defend the relationship as a strategic choice rather than a necessity.

China, likewise, benefits from dealing with a partner capable of implementing agreements, sustaining projects, and managing domestic concerns around sovereignty and national control.

A durable Indonesia-China partnership does not require Indonesia to become less autonomous. It should do the opposite. More meetings, mechanisms, agreements, and strategic labels can create the appearance of influence without changing what Indonesia is actually able to do. The 2+2 dialogue should be judged over time by its effect on defense capability, industrial capacity, maritime coordination, crisis management, and both sides' ability to manage disagreement.

If the 2+2 mechanism helps Indonesia build capabilities it can sustain, gives China a more capable and predictable partner, and allows both countries to manage differences without sacrificing cooperation, the relationship will gain something more valuable than diplomatic symbolism.

It will gain resilience, making mutual benefit more durable while contributing to a more stable regional order.

The author is the executive director of PARA Syndicate, a Jakarta-based independent think tank.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Zhang Yiwu

Hollywood's renewed interest signals country's cultural confidence

In a notable cultural shift this year, Hollywood has once again turned its attention toward the Chinese market.

Timothée Chalamet was seen sipping tea from a *gaiwan*, or lidded tea bowl, in a Chengdu teahouse in Sichuan province while promoting *Marty Supreme*. Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson interacted warmly with fans in Shanghai. Tom Holland, best known for his role in *Spider-Man*, went viral after being spotted shopping in the city. Christopher Nolan, meanwhile, visited Beijing, accompanied by the cast and crew of *The Odyssey* for promotional events.

Hollywood's renewed enthusiasm for China reflects a deeper shift in the global film industry.

If we look back at Hollywood's relationship with China, the changes are striking. In the 1990s, blockbusters such as *Titanic* and *Jurassic Park* entered China, leaving audiences in awe of Hollywood's cinematic sophistication.

However, during the early 2000s, Hollywood often viewed China from a position of superiority. China was largely regarded as another emerging market in Hollywood's global business map — a destination for its products rather than a genuine partner in cultural dialogue.

But that attitude gradually changed as China's film market expanded. Hollywood is no longer content with simply releasing films in China. It is increasingly eager to come here, engage with audiences and learn more about the country.

Chalamet played table tennis and sampled *gaiwan* tea in Chengdu, Johnson tried speaking Chinese in Shanghai while Nolan engaged seriously with Chinese moviegoers about filmmaking and creativity. Of course, such appearances are partly marketing exercises, but the shift in attitude behind them should not be overlooked. Hollywood is moving from telling Chinese audiences, "This is what we have for you," to asking, "What do you want to see?" It is transitioning from one-way cultural output toward two-way interaction.

Hollywood's renewed enthusiasm for China reflects a deeper shift in the global film industry.

The most immediate reason for this shift is the changing weight of the Chinese market. As a market grows large and important, what was once peripheral can move toward the center. China is already the world's second-largest film market, and no globally oriented film industry can afford to ignore a market of this scale. When a movie is released earlier in China, it is not out of generosity by the studio but a natural response to market realities.

At the same time, China's film market is also undergoing structural changes. The roaring success of domestic films has created a competitive "catfish effect", forcing Hollywood productions to compete directly with high-quality Chinese movies. Hollywood can no longer expect easy success in China. It must deliver genuinely good films to win audiences.

Chinese moviegoers also have far more choices than before. Spectacle and formulaic storytelling alone are no longer enough. Audiences increasingly expect compelling stories, emotional depth and distinctive cultural expression. Hollywood itself has faced considerable challenges in recent years, with relatively fewer outstanding films capable of generating broad public excitement. Winning over Chinese audiences has therefore become increasingly difficult, prompting Hollywood to treat the Chinese market with greater seriousness.

If market logic explains the surface-level reasons for Hollywood's renewed "China enthusiasm", a deeper explanation lies in changing cultural attitudes. For a long time, Hollywood films in China were more than entertainment products. They were cultural symbols. Hollywood represented ideas of being "advanced", "fashionable" and "international", and its films carried images of an imagined way of life. Watching a Hollywood movie meant something beyond the film itself.

That mindset is changing. As China's economy and society have developed, and as cultural confidence has grown, the way Chinese audiences view Hollywood has also changed. Hollywood films are no longer seen as synonymous with "superior", but simply another category of films available to viewers. Chinese audiences now go to see Hollywood blockbusters just as they go to see domestic films: primarily on the basis of their own interests and judgments, without attaching an additional layer of cultural prestige.

This ability to look at other cultures as equals is itself an expression of cultural confidence. A society sufficiently confident in its own culture no longer needs recognition from others to validate its own worth. Nor does it need to worship or fear other cultures.

Hollywood has its strengths, but also its limitations. Its good films deserve appreciation, but mediocre ones do not deserve special treatment. Such a rational, calm and self-assured cultural outlook is exactly what a mature society should possess.

Hollywood's renewed interest in China also reinforces this more equal relationship in cultural exchanges. When a leading filmmaker such as Nolan comes to China, or when Hollywood stars make an effort to speak Chinese and understand the country's culture, Chinese audiences see it as a form of cultural respect.

That, in turn, can further strengthen cultural confidence and audiences' independence in judging art, creating a positive cycle. It also pushes Hollywood to make greater efforts in localization, both in content and marketing, as it seeks to bridge cultural gaps and win over Chinese audiences.

Film is both a cultural product and a reflection of the spirit of its time. Hollywood's growing interest in China signals a changing global cultural landscape. Amid this broader trend, China should remain open to the world while staying grounded in its own cultural identity — engaging with others as equals and learning from one another with confidence.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

WANG SIDAN

Closing the taps

Establishing effective global governance on plastic pollution remains a difficult journey, due to the pervasive use of the material in modern life

According to the United Nations Environment Programme, the world produces over 430 million tons of new plastic every year. If that trend continues at the current pace, the production level will be approximately triple in 2060. Just a year ago, negotiators walked away from Geneva without a global plastics treaty. It was a setback, though an entirely predictable one. Addressing global environmental challenges usually requires a long-term journey across different steps including agenda-setting, raising policy discussions, negotiating solutions, establishing international law and implementing policies. While global policymakers and stakeholders have paid attention to plastic pollution issues, the evolution of global plastic pollution governance reflects the complicated global environmental politics.



Identifying a single, clear and concrete target remains difficult and complex in plastic pollution governance. Unlike other global environmental challenges, global actions on addressing plastic pollution have been locked in a range of different definitions and understandings of plastics-related issues and solutions. For instance, while climate change governance similarly has encountered various difficulties, it has a very clear and consistent goal of limiting the average global temperature rise to 1.5 C. This objective does not compromise itself simply because we have been witnessing heatwaves and extreme weather events across the planet.

In the context of global plastic pollution, however, the scope and definitions of plastics have been interpreted very differently by various state actors and stakeholders. It is difficult to filter the specific plastic materials to be controlled and restrained. According to a 2025 report by the OECD, packaging is a main sector consuming plastics, representing 32 percent of global plastics use followed by construction (15 percent) and transportation (12 percent). Plastic accounts for nearly 60 percent of clothing materials such as polyester, acrylic and nylon. They are daily-life products and important materials for supporting human life. In the negotiations, which types of plastics and to what extent actions are required remain ambiguous and contentious. This has led to deadlock in the plastics negotiations.

A variety of stakeholder roles — including producers, consumers, investors, exporters, importers and polluters — has further fragmented global plastic pollution governance and aggravated the dichotomy between developed and developing countries by redistributing the differences along value chains. The North-South gap persists in mapping global environmental governance and redistributing environmental responsibilities. Consequently, the criteria for responsibility distribution become harder to discern and demarcate.

For instance, while widely embedded in various environmental policies, the principle of the polluter pays has been inappropriate in the case of plastic pollution, as it unduly forces developing countries to undertake the main responsibility for addressing plastic pollution. The principle of Extended Producer Responsibility has instead been introduced in order to shift the responsible actors from the marine polluters to the plastic producers. But, plastic production has been closely linked to plastic manufacturers and producers of fossil fuels. The fundamental industrial structures of many developing countries matter here.

Developed countries should not shirk their responsibilities for leading actions on controlling plastic pollution by labeling developing countries as the producers and polluters. A very clear fact is that Western countries have long invested in plastics-related industries, achieved economic growth and industrialization, and enjoyed a modern plastic-based lifestyle. A range of leading global companies in plastic manufacturing are located in the United States and European countries. Particularly, many of the recycled plastic wastes are traded to developing countries in the name of the circular economy. For instance, Japan, Spain and Germany were the three largest exporters of plastic waste to Malaysia in 2023, accounting for 33 percent, 17 percent and 16 percent of its total imports respectively, according to 2025 Environment Working Papers of the OECD.

The emerging architecture of global plastic governance must therefore coordinate with the diverse array of existing international institutions already addressing plastic pollution. Functionally, any proposed global plastics treaty will have to engage with established instruments such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships and the Plastic Waste Amendments to the Basel Convention. These existing frameworks are primarily designed to control marine plastic pollution and regulate the global trade of plastic waste, rather than addressing plastic production and consumption at source. As a result, competing or conflicting functions may arise between the proposed treaty and these institutional arrangements.

Institutionally, the global governance structure requires a more coherent and coordinated model of cooperation. Horizontally, the institutional arrangements of global plastic governance require their coordination with a range of existing international environmental institutions such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS conventions). This alignment is essential because plastic pollution is intrinsically linked to other global environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and the management of chemicals and hazardous waste. Vertically, national and regional proactive measures — such as plastic bag fees and waste import bans — are increasingly being adopted, while subnational efforts concentrate on local priorities such as urban waste management. A consistent framework linking top-down guidance with bottom-up action remains significant for governance alignment.

China is making important contributions to plastic governance. It issued a restriction on importing solid waste including plastic waste in 2017. This policy led to a sharp decline in China's plastic waste, reshaping the global plastic waste trade. Domestically, China released the Action Plan for Plastic Pollution Control of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) in 2021. On Aug 15, China's Ecological and Environmental Code took effect. This code has clear rules banning and restricting the production, sales and use of single-use plastic products.

As an example of the globally recognized full-life-cycle approach for plastics, China launched the world's first 200,000 ton per year plastic recycling plant in Jieyang, Guangdong province, in July 2025. Various efforts to address plastic pollution have also been made across multi-level governance frameworks and different sectors.

The European Union has taken decisive action adopting the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy in 2018, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations issued its Regional Action Plan for Combating Marine Debris in 2021. These institutional efforts are positive measures to control plastic pollution, but they remain insufficient to establish effective global plastic pollution governance.

The metaphor of "mopping the floor while the tap is still on" has rightly captured the frustration at the heart of the plastics treaty talks. Yet the reality is even more complex. There is not one tap but many — production, consumption, markets, investments, waste and trade — and each is controlled by different actors and embedded in different governance systems. To shut them off one by one is not enough; what is needed is a coherent global framework that integrates upstream controls with downstream management, reconciles the North-South divide along the value chain and bridges existing institutional mandates with the new treaty's ambitions. Only by redesigning the system itself, rather than chasing each leak separately, can the world move from metaphor to mandate — and finally keep the floor dry.

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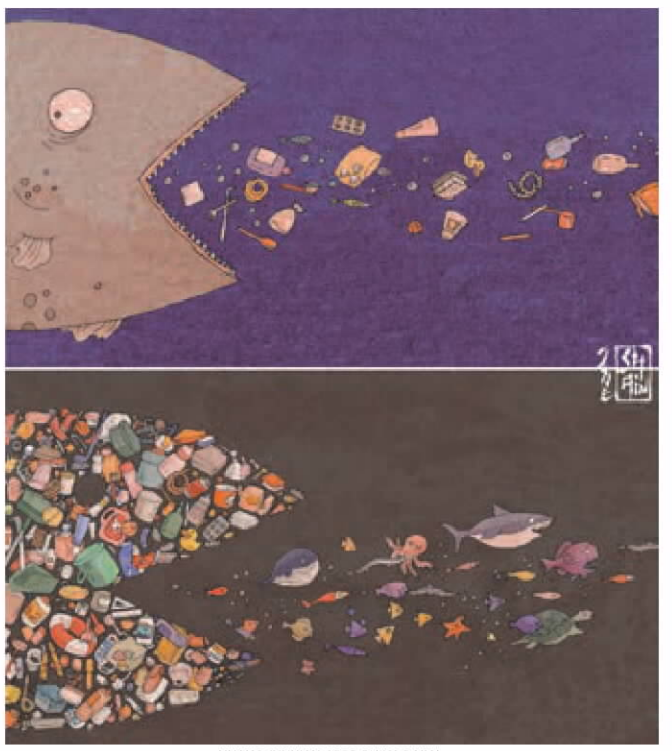

HUANG JUNXIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



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YU HONGYUAN AND HUANG XIA

Cleaning up

China's transition to low-carbon energy is a key contribution to advancing sustainable development

Over the past four decades, China has achieved extraordinary progress in economic and social development, emerging as the world's second-largest economy and contributing more than 30 percent to global economic growth. Meanwhile, resource constraints are growing increasingly tighter, and environmental carrying capacity is nearing its upper limit. An extensive, low-efficiency growth model that relies on low-cost factors can no longer be sustained, which means China must shift toward a high-quality energy transition and green development.



Yu Hongyuan



Huang Xia

Most recently, China has emerged as a global leader in clean technology and clean energy. In 2025, China's total electricity consumption reached 10.37 trillion kilowatt-hours. Non-fossil energy accounted for 61.7 percent of total installed power generation capacity, while non-fossil energy and renewable energy took up 42.9 percent and 38 percent of total power generation respectively, according to the China Electricity Council.

Wind, solar and biomass power generation contributed 97 percent to the growth in national electricity consumption, while power generation from renewable energy sources has led to an approximate reduction of 3 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions. In the first half of 2026, installed renewable energy capacity reached 2.455 billion kW, accounting for 60.7 percent of total installed capacity, while renewable energy power generation hit 1.96 trillion kWh, making up 41.2 percent of total national electricity generation. According to a report by Xinhua News Agency, China supplies around 70 percent of the world's wind power equipment and 80 percent of the world's photovoltaic panels, which has helped reduce the global average cost of wind and solar power by 60 percent and 80 percent respectively.

To realize the dual goals of peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060, China has advanced top-level design and institutional planning for green low-carbon development. It has strictly controlled coal-fired power projects while pushing for the high-quality development of wind and solar power. China has announced that it has strictly limited the growth of coal consumption from 2021 to 2025, and will gradually reduce coal consumption between 2026 and 2030. By 2030, China's CO2 emissions per unit of GDP will drop by more than 65 percent compared with 2005 level, the share of non-fossil energy in primary energy consumption will reach around 25 percent, and total installed wind and solar capacity will exceed 1.2 billion kW. China continues to promote institutional reform in the electric power industry, actively advance the development of the carbon emissions trading market, and devote particular effort to building a well-regulated energy market.

The National Development and Reform Commission and the National Energy Administration have leveraged policy tools to prioritize the development of renewable energy and guarantee the purchase of clean energy. By prioritizing clean renewable power generation and procurement, the market is enabled to play a decisive role in resource allocation, which guarantees the clean, low-carbon, safe and efficient operation of the power system. From 2021 to 2025, China's energy consumption per unit of GDP saw a cumulative drop of more than 16 percent, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. In 2025, the country's CO2 emissions per unit of GDP decreased by 5.0 percent compared with the previous year. China has intensified its efforts to curb the expansion of energy-intensive and high-emissions projects, shut down outdated production capacity, and strictly implemented market access standards for industries including steel and coking. From 2021 to 2025, energy consumption per unit of GDP decreased by more than 16 percent cumulatively; in 2025, non-fossil energy accounted for 21.7 percent of total national energy consumption.

As a responsible major country, China is actively advancing its energy transition and participating in the global response to climate change. China attaches equal importance to both its energy transition and energy supply stability. The power rationing that occurred in some Chinese regions in 2021 exposed the irrationality of the coal-dominated energy mix, strengthening China's resolve. The role of coal in the power system is shifting from the core energy source to a peak-shaving energy source.

China will develop green finance covering green credit, bonds, insurance and development funds, establish market-based green development funds, and refine the green credit guidance catalogue. The country is also introducing new financing models to drive independent innovation of enterprises in green low-carbon technologies. It can also focus on building digital energy systems, constructing a new-type electric power system, promoting multi-stakeholder participation in international energy transition and advancing the depoliticization of energy governance.

Accelerating China's domestic energy transition will promote greater coordination across the global energy system. Through supporting renewable energy growth, directing capital toward low-carbon sectors, driving technological innovation, and transforming consumption patterns, China can secure a competitive position in global green industrial, supply and value chains.

As President Xi Jinping has pointed out, the decision to create a new development pattern with the domestic economy as the mainstay, and the domestic economy and international engagement providing mutual reinforcement, is a strategic choice to reshape China's advantages in international cooperation and competition.

In recent years, overseas market growth has weakened while China's domestic demand has kept an upward trend. Low-carbon development has become a core benchmark of national competitiveness around the world.

In the context of global governance reform and economic recovery, China's transition to low-carbon energy serves as an important instrument for advancing sustainable development and building a clean world. China has integrated the carbon peak and neutrality goals into the overall master plan for ecological conservation. As the largest developing country and a responsible major nation, China can offer solutions to the current challenges in the global low-carbon transition through its own experience and international cooperation.

Looking ahead, China will drive the energy transition across the world by accelerating its domestic transition, coordinating major-country cooperation in the transition process, advancing global ecological conservation and the construction of a community with a shared future for humanity and establishing ecological civilization as the mainstream norm of global environmental governance.

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TALES & TRAILS

Editor's note:
China Daily reporters leverage local expertise to devise diverse itineraries that showcase a blend of historical landmarks and natural wonders in highly recommended cities and sites, offering practical guidance to experience the country.

RIDING THE TIDES

Qingdao, a former fishing settlement, now sails forward, balancing architectural memories with beer, beaches and blue-water pursuits, **Xing Wen** reports.

Located on the southern coast of the Shandong Peninsula, bordered by the Yellow Sea to the east and south, Qingdao in Shandong province serves as a vital gateway linking China's inland regions with the wider Asia-Pacific market. Endowed with rolling hills, winding shorelines and natural harbors, the city has a distinctive landscape where hills, sea and urban fabric intertwine.

Once a quiet fishing settlement and coastal defense outpost, Qingdao was occupied by Germany from 1897 to 1914. This period left a visible architectural legacy, particularly in the old town, where German-influenced buildings now stand alongside Chinese urban structures. Together, they reflect the city's complex history and layered cultural character.

Among its best-known heritage areas are Badaguan, a historical residential quarter dotted with European-style villas under sprawling plane-tree canopies, and Dabaodao, home to distinctive *liyuan* courtyards that blend Chinese and Western architectural traditions.

Today, Qingdao is a popular tourist destination celebrated for seafood, such as spicy clams, and its iconic Tsingtao Beer. First brewed in 1903, Tsingtao Beer has become a global emblem of the city, while the Qingdao International Beer Festival showcases its exuberant summer carnival culture.

What distinguishes Qingdao most is its reputation as China's "sailing city". After hosting the sailing events of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the city developed a thriving outdoor urban culture centered on its coastline.

Visitors can take part in a range of active experiences, from sailing and surfing to coastal cycling and speedboat trips, reinforcing Qingdao's status as one of northern China's leading destinations for coastal sports tourism.

Contact the writer at xingwen@chinadaily.com.cn

See more, *pages 8-10*

At the iconic Zhanqiao Pier in Qingdao, Shandong province, hundreds of seagulls gracefully dance in the air, attracting local residents and tourists alike. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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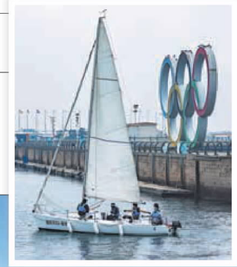
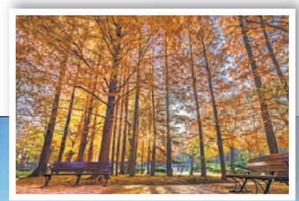
Below: Qingdao's picturesque coastline glistens under blue skies. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A sweeping view of the historical Zhongshan Road district in Qingdao. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Tourists enjoy a sailing experience at the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Towering trees create a golden spectacle in autumn. ZHANG XIAOTIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



A pavilion at Xiaoyushan Park offers panoramic views of Qingdao's coastline. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Xiaoqingdao Park is an ideal spot for a leisurely stroll. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Since watching a Clipper yacht leave his hometown's harbor at age 10, professional sailor now races internationally and inspires youth to see sailing as a career, **Xing Wen** reports.



QINGDAO'S SHORES MAKE DREAMS COME TRUE

Few cities in China allow you to sail straight from the heart of downtown. From the docks of the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center, you can cast off and ride the wind across Fushan Bay, with the CBD's high-rises looming behind you — a geographical quirk that sets it apart from nearly all other coastal destinations.

Built for the 2008 Beijing Olympics sailing competition, the center is a source of pride for Qingdao native Zheng Yi, whose dream also set sail there.

In the spring of 2006, the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race fleet made its first-ever stop in China, docking in Qingdao, Shandong province.

A grand send-off ceremony packed with crowds and the beat of drums and gongs was held near the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center.

It was there that 10-year-old Zheng, on a family spring outing, happened to witness the scene, watching the big boat bearing the name *Qingdao*, the first Clipper yacht ever named after a Chinese city, sail out of the harbor.

Aiming the crew was Guo Chuan, the first Qingdao native to compete in the Clipper race.

"That moment planted a seed in my heart: I want to become a sailor, too, representing my hometown and sailing across the oceans," Zheng recalls.

Fortunately, the following year, while in the fifth grade, Zheng was selected, simply because he could swim, for a 10-day summer camp organized by the city's "Sailing into Schools" initiative.

During the camp, he lived and trained with other elementary school students from across the city, learning to sail OP dinghies every day.

"There seemed to be hundreds of sailboats sailing on the water at the same time. It was a spectacular scene," he recalls.

"Qingdao's sailing atmosphere at the time gave ordinary kids like us the chance to get involved in this sport."

When the 2008 Beijing Olympics torch relay reached the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center, Zheng joined other young sailors in a flotilla of small dinghies, serving as a backdrop fleet as they witnessed the torch being passed through the harbor.

"That was the first time I realized how big the stage for sailing really is; it can take you far," Zheng says.

And he went far.



The Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center's role as a tourist destination has expanded significantly, receiving over 130,000 sailing tourists each year.

In the 2017/18 Clipper Round the World Yacht Race, Zheng was selected as an ambassador crew member aboard *Qingdao*, competing in the first leg of the season — a journey from Liverpool, the United Kingdom, to Punta del Este, Uruguay.

In 2019, as the youngest Chinese sailor in the fleet, he took part in the 2019/20 Clipper Race, racing all eight legs of the global circuit for the first time.

"Circumnavigating the globe taught me little by little how to communicate, collaborate and connect with sailors from different countries. It not only improved my language skills but also helped me stay emotionally steady in the face of uncertainty," he says.

Now racing for China One Ningbo, Zheng has come a long way — from a wide-eyed 10-year-old staring up at sailboats from the dock to a professional sailor competing regularly on the international stage.

Since the "Sailing into Schools" program's initiation in 2006, the city has trained approximately 45,000 young sailors, according to the Qingdao Sports Development Center.

Zheng observes that, for the most part, children in Qingdao have no fear of the sea.

"Growing up alongside the sea, eating seafood, and spending days by the shore give Qingdao kids a natural bond with the ocean," he says.

"There's no barrier, no fear. It's in our bones: we love the water, and we're not afraid to take risks."

Today, while preparing for various M32 sailing competitions, Zheng continues to manage his social media accounts, hoping more people will learn about his sailing journeys.

"What I really want to do is inspire more Qingdao children to dream of sailing," he says.

"Many local kids love it, but not all of them know it can be a career, a path that leads to the world. I hope my story will show young people in Qingdao, just like the boy I once was, that sailing isn't just a fun activity. It's a road that can take you anywhere, a path to realizing who you are."

Xin Kejiang, deputy director of the water sports development and promotion department at the Qingdao Sports Development Center, notes that the public sailing experience events hosted at the center are always well received. In a recent release of 500 spots, all were fully booked overnight.

He adds that while the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center continues to serve as a training ground for primary and secondary school students, as well as local university sailing clubs, its tourism function has grown significantly in recent years, offering catamaran and monohull sailing experiences for both adults and children.

The center now receives more than 130,000 sailing tourists annually.

Xin himself prefers monohull sailboats. "The greatest thrill comes from battling the wind and waves — especially in strong winds, when the boat can heel at a 45-degree angle, and waves wash over the deck. It's highly athletic, intensely stimulating, and a real test of skill," he says.

For Xu Xiaoxiao, a visitor from Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, opting for the more stable catamaran experience during her trip in early August turned out to be a highlight of her visit to Qingdao.

"Lying on the deck of the sailboat at dusk, watching the sunset glow over the skyscrapers onshore as the boat gently rocks with the swell, not too rough, just the right amount, is incredibly therapeutic," she says.

"Next time, I'd like to try the more thrilling monohull."

Nearly two decades after the Olympic flame left Qingdao, the sailing center remains a place of beginnings. For Zheng, it's where a childhood dream took wing. Today, it offers the same wind to anyone who steps aboard, whether chasing a trophy, a sunset or a future they haven't yet imagined.

Contact the writer at xingwen@chinadaily.com.cn







Top: Zheng Yi from Qingdao regularly competes in international races. **Center:** He sails with friends. **Above:** Enthusiasts take part in a training session.

If you go

Getting there: Over 20 high-speed trains depart daily from Beijing South Railway Station, serving Qingdao Station and Qingdao North Station. The fastest journey takes just over three hours. Located in the old-town area, Qingdao Station is the preferred stop for tourists. Upon arrival, take Metro Line 3 to Wusi (May Fourth) Square Station. From there, it's about a 20-minute walk to reach the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center.

Sailing experience: Various sailing experiences for adults and children can be purchased in advance on online platforms such as Dazhong Dianping and Douyin, with prices ranging from 50 to 200 yuan ($7.4-29.6). Popular options include luxury catamaran tickets and two-person monohull sports sailing tickets. Chartering a seven-passenger sailboat costs over 600 yuan.



An iconic installation at May Fourth Square.

Online Scan for a Wow! China experience.

Coasting along the seaside on foot

By XING WEN

If you can only spend one day in Qingdao, Shandong province, explore it on foot.

The city's old town, with its seaside views, red-roofed churches and cafe-lined lanes, is a place best discovered not by map, but by wandering.

A widely recommended classic route for your first day in Qingdao is a laid-back walk through the old town, which combines coastal scenery, German-style buildings, highly photogenic streets lined with eclectic cafes, and authentic local street life.

Once you arrive at Qingdao Railway Station, a 10-minute walk will take you to Zhanqiao Pier. Built in 1892 and stretching 440 meters into the sea, it is the city's oldest surviving modern pier and its number-one landmark, always bustling with visitors. In winter, it also attracts large flocks of seagulls that migrate from Siberia, circling and hovering over the waters.

After leaving the pier, stroll along the century-old commercial street, where there are both time-honored local shops and trendy new boutiques.

After walking about 600 meters, you will reach an intersection. Turn right and follow a gentle uphill slope to St. Michael's Cathedral. Completed in 1934 and built with granite, its Gothic spires and red-tiled roof dominate the old town's skyline.

Standing before its heavy stone walls is like viewing the city's layered past, etched in stone with solemn gravity.

A bird's-eye view, perhaps, might soften the overwhelming presence of such grand architecture. Continue the climb to the nearby Xinhaoshan (Signal Hill) Park. Its summit, barely 100 meters high, is crowned with a red mushroom-shaped revolving pavilion.

Encased in floor-to-ceiling glass, the pavilion rotates a full circle every 20 minutes or so, allowing you to soak in the 360-degree panorama without leaving your seat.

After winding your way down from the hill, it's just another 10-minute stroll to the neighborhoods that young travelers tend to fall in love with: Daxue Road, with its plane trees and old German-style villas, and Longjiang Road, where a long wall covered in Hayao Miyazaki-inspired murals has become something of an open-air gallery.

The streets are stuffed with little shops peddling handicrafts, quirky cultural creations and vinyl records — the kind of places you didn't know you needed until you walked in.

Cafes pop up on almost every corner. You can order something frothy while staring dreamily at the dappled sunlight playing tricks on the yellow walls. If you're lucky, a shop cat might wander over and demand your attention.

Frankly, this is where your city walk could, and probably should, come to a gentle, purring halt. Because once you've started petting a cat, leaving becomes a serious moral dilemma. You could easily lose an entire afternoon here, and honestly, that's perfectly fine.

When the light starts to soften and the day begins to wind down, you can reluctantly peel yourself away and drift over to Qinyu Road.

By then, the sunset will be doing its thing, painting the red-rock coastline in shades of tangerine, casting a golden glow over the winding S-curve of the seaside path, and lighting up the white lighthouse like a postcard come to life. It's the kind of view that doesn't just beg for a photo; it practically insists on one.

Of course, if you have more days to spare in the city, you'll find that there's another, more active way to experience this coastal destination from land, sea and air.

For a gentle introduction on two wheels, try the 20-kilometer cycling route along the West Ring Road of Xuejia Island. The path is mostly flat, hugging the shoreline all the way, with hardly any steep climbs, minimal traffic, and a sunset view that'll make you want to keep pedaling to chase the light a little longer.

If you prefer to be on the water rather than beside it, a half-hour sailing experience at the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center will take you across Fushan Bay, where you can admire the city's skyline of glassy skyscrapers from a whole new angle — one that comes with a gentle rocking motion and a nice sea breeze.

If you're feeling brave, tandem skydiving is an option worth considering.

You'll climb to 3,000 meters in a small aircraft, take a deep breath, and leap out. The moment the parachute opens, the air catches you like a giant invisible hand, and suddenly you're floating above it all, taking in the lush green mountains and the serpentine coastline stretching into the distance.

Whether you have one day or several, Qingdao is a city that rewards those who show up with open eyes and comfortable shoes. Walk it, cycle it, sail it, or fall through it — however you choose to meet this city by the sea, it will meet you back.



Stand-up paddle enthusiasts ride the waves along Qingdao's coastline. WEI WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY







Top: A visitor poses with a map for a city walk. **Center and above:** Locals enjoy morning workouts including tai chi and running. PHOTOS BY ZHANG XIAOTIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



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TALES & TRAILS



From drone shows to historical streets, beer festival offers a unique blend of modern attractions and cultural heritage, and, of course, a pint, **Xing Wen** reports.

This year's Qingdao International Beer Festival, running from July 17 to Aug 15, draws 7.18 million visits and sees the consumption of about 3.1 million liters of beer. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A toast to tradition and innovation

Zoom in on any beer tent at Qingdao's Golden Beach during this summer's Qingdao International Beer Festival, which ran from July 17 to Aug 15, and you would have found the city's summer pulse racing at full throttle.

On stage, a live band whipped the crowd into a rhythmic frenzy; below, thousands of revelers swayed to the beat with tipsy enthusiasm, clutching hefty glass mugs that clanged together in deep, resonant thuds, whether with friends or strangers.

This was the everyday scene of the festival.

The monthlong carnival drew 7.18 million visits and saw the consumption of about 3.1 million liters of beer. Three separate venues, each with its own character, catered to a broad spectrum of visitors.

"I really liked the atmosphere of the festival: fun, joy, and the kindness of the locals. I was impressed by the fireworks, the drone show and the parade of musicians," says Alena Maior from Moscow, Russia.

She and her mother recently chose Qingdao as their first destination in China and stayed for seven days. Back in Moscow, whenever she dined at Asian restaurants, she would order Tsingtao Beer.

"My favorite is wheat beer. I was pleased to visit the city and try the original taste right from the place of production," she says.

"I would advise all my friends to visit Qingdao in August to enjoy the sea, the sun and the beer festival. I'm sure the city is no less beautiful in autumn and spring. But we Russians love to swim and sunbathe, so the brighter the sun, the better."

The main venue at Golden Beach offered a family-friendly atmosphere that appealed to all age groups. Night skies were illuminated by 1,500 drones in synchronized flight, blooming fireworks and a 3D light show, their radiance flickering across the waterfront.

Nine large beer tents housed both globally renowned brands and local craft brews. A new highlight this year was the futuristic beer tent, where smart food-making services and interactive performances were offered by robots. The integration of multiple intelligent robots added a cutting-edge, tech-driven dimension to the venue experience.

The square area featured a packed schedule of events such as drinking contests, street basketball tournaments, balloon volleyball matches and street dance battles.

The sub-venue in Laoshan district, on the other hand, created an amusement-park-like vibe that appealed to young crowds. Over a dozen beer-themed games were offered, allowing visitors who completed challenges to earn festival "coins" that could be used for purchases throughout the venue. Trendy music gigs, stand-up comedy and other performances added to its appeal.

Another sub-venue in Dabaodao, located in the city's old town, took a different approach by integrating highly interactive activities into the historical neighborhood. It featured city music corners, street art performances and role-playing tours, enabling visitors to enjoy an immersive experience. This sub-venue received approximately 3.98 million visits during the festival, a year-on-year increase of 1.5 percent, with a single-day peak of 195,000 visitors.

Bi Wenmeng, brand manager of a local beer-themed homestay, says the property was nearly fully booked throughout the festival.

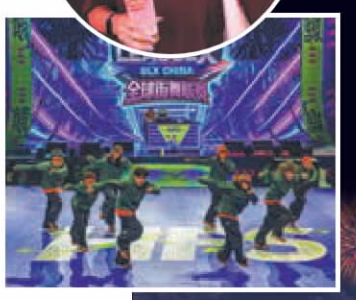
"We served fresh beer directly from the Tsingtao Brewery, decorated the property with beer-themed elements, and offered hop soap DIY workshops alongside Tsingtao Beer Museum souvenirs, all of which were popular gift choices," Bi adds.



Local residents gather at the beer festival to enjoy the summer evenings.







For future visits

The main venue of the Qingdao International Beer Festival is Golden Beach Beer City on the West Coast, usually open from mid-July to mid-August. Entry to the venue is free, while fees apply for beer, food, tent seating and special performances.

Public transport is strongly recommended. Take Metro Line 1 to Tianmushan Road Station and transfer to the festival shuttle bus. Metro services are usually extended during the festival, but visitors should check the latest schedule. Driving is not advised, as heavy traffic and limited parking are common on weekends and evenings.

Arrive after 4 pm to avoid strong daytime sun and enjoy the sunset plus evening drone light shows. Weekdays are less crowded and may offer better discounts on beer, whereas weekends are much busier with almost no promotions.

Food prices inside beer tents are relatively high; better-priced snacks are available on the outer food street. Bring a light jacket, as it gets cool by the sea at night. Drink responsibly, especially when eating seafood.

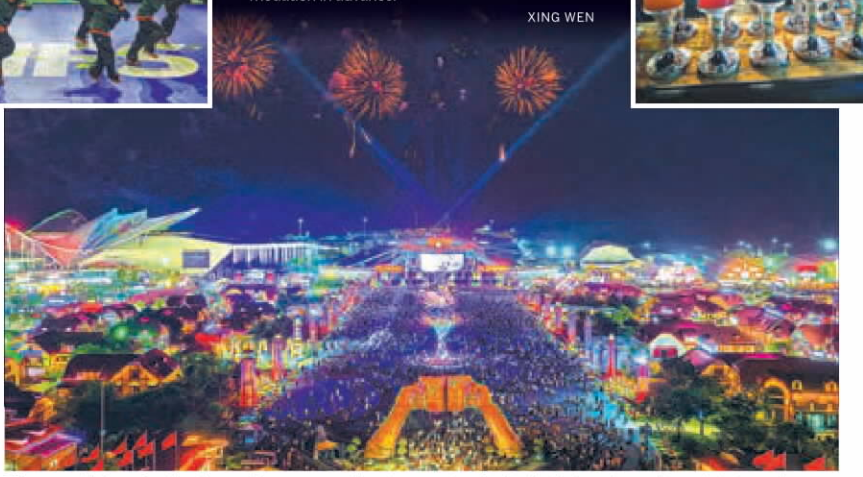
Hotel prices rise sharply during the festival, especially on Fridays and Saturdays. Book accommodation in advance.

XING WEN









The monthlong festival provides an excellent opportunity for both locals and tourists to enjoy beer and food together. Featuring over 2,300 beers from more than 50 countries and regions, the festival also attracts visitors with a variety of events, including street dance competitions, performances, street basketball games and fireworks displays.

The festival brought together over 2,300 beers from more than 50 countries and regions, alongside a sprawling food street highlighting local seafood, delivering an authentic taste of the coast.

Qiu Yi, from Zunyi, Guizhou province, organized a beer festival trip for her parents and their friends.

"In Guizhou, when we gather, we enjoy having a few drinks, sharing some food, and having a good time. The lively atmosphere of the beer festival provided the perfect setting for our parents to socialize and enjoy themselves," she says.

In 2023, she visited Oktoberfest in Germany, the famous folk beer festival held annually in Munich, Bavaria. She says that by comparison, the Qingdao International Beer Festival offered a wider variety of food, more diverse performances and more amusement facilities, though she feels it lacked some of the cultural distinctiveness that gives Oktoberfest its strong sense of identity.

According to Wang Defang, a former worker at Tsingtao Brewery, the inspiration for launching the Qingdao International Beer Festival came from the brewery's technical staff members who were sent to Germany in the 1980s to study brewing techniques and experience the grandeur of Oktoberfest firsthand.

On June 23, 1991, the first Qingdao International Beer Festival kicked off in Zhongshan Park. Drinking contests, fashion shows and float parades were staged one after another, drawing more than 300,000 visitors over eight days.

"At that time, there were only about 40 to 50 domestic beer varieties and a few international ones, but it still excited the local residents and visitors alike," Wang recalls.

"Back then, there weren't many entertainment options. In summer, people would gather there, whether they knew each other or not, and they'd clink glasses, chat, sing and dance. It was a particularly carefree time," says Xi Wei, a Qingdao native who has witnessed the festival grow in scale and attract more out-of-town visitors.

Many of her childhood summer memories are tied to beer.

"When summer arrived, small shops in the alleys would put out tables on the street. Five or six people would crowd around each one, and every restaurant's doorstep was packed with diners. Every eatery had a draft beer dispenser. I often took plastic bags or other containers to fetch beer for my dad from those machines," she recalls.

Today, her home is just a 10-minute walk from Golden Beach, and she often takes a stroll to the beach during the festival.

In her view, everyone can find something to enjoy at the festival.

Those who love a lively atmosphere can watch performances and clink glasses with friends inside the beer tents; those who prefer quieter moments can watch the festive fireworks from the nearby beach.

"When the fireworks go off, I can smell the sea breeze mixed with the scent of gunpowder. At moments like that, whether the people around me are friends or strangers, we all look up and cheer together, and that doubles the joy," Xi says.

When the final firework fades, and the last mug is emptied, the city's summer lingers on — in shared cheers, in the froth of beer, in the salt on the breeze, and in the promise of next year, when the tents rise again.

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WORLD

Monks in motion



Monks travel by boat near a temple in Kratie Province, Cambodia, on Monday. Severe flooding has affected the Mekong River basin in four northern provinces since last Friday in the aftermath of Typhoon Saudel, according to the National Committee for Disaster Management. SOVANNARA / XINHUA

Floods in Nepal kill nearly 160 people

KATHMANDU — An avalanche of ice and rocks triggered massive flash floods in northern Nepal on Wednesday, killing nearly 160 people and leaving hundreds of others missing while causing widespread damage to villages and infrastructure, Agence France-Presse reported.

Abi Narayan Kafle, spokesperson for Nepal Police, confirmed the death toll on Wednesday, adding that some 28 police personnel were also missing, AFP said.

Rescue teams in Nepal had recovered 95 bodies so far, police told Reuters. Local media reported 65 people were being treated in different hospitals.

The massive flash flood swept through areas along the Bhote Koshi River at 9 am, affecting three districts — Rasuwa, Nuwakot and Dhading, officials said.

Nepal's tourism ministry said some 403 tourists — 341 of them foreigners — were missing from the region, including more than 100 Indians, three US citizens and 12 British nationals.

Sunil Sharma, spokesperson at the Nepal Tourism Board, said the missing tourists also included Australians, Dutch, Malaysians and South Africans, among others. Dozens of local people were also missing.

Widespread damage

The worst damage has been reported in Rasuwa, where the flood swept away several houses, damaging markets, hydropower projects, roads and other infrastructure.

Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah called an emergency cabinet meeting to discuss rescue and relief measures and urged the nation to stand united.

"Please be patient. The government takes full responsibility for your rescue, treatment, food and shelter. In times of such a disaster, we all need to stand together," Shah said in a statement posted on social media on Wednesday.

The Nepali Army, backed by other security forces, has intensified search and rescue operations.

Initial reports suggested an earthquake in the area could have triggered an avalanche and caused the floods, Nepal's Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal told the country's parliament on Wednesday, local media reported.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

Kenya faces maize harvest shortfall

By **EDITH MUTETHYA**
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Kenya is facing growing concerns over food shortages after a prolonged dry spell severely affected crops in the country's North Rift grain basket, particularly in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu counties.

The North Rift is one of Kenya's major maize-producing regions, but inadequate rainfall during the March-to-May long rains season — the main wet period across most parts of the country — left crops severely stressed, with extensive crop losses reported in some fields.

The concerns come amid forecasts of a strengthening El Nino weather event later this year, which could further disrupt agricultural production. Recent international forecasts indicate that the developing 2026-27 El Nino could become exceptionally strong.

Jonathan Bii, governor of Uasin Gishu County, said the county could record a 60 percent drop in food production, particularly maize, due to the inadequate rains.

In Trans Nzoia, county officials said about 20,000 hectares of maize were destroyed by hot, dry weather, representing 20 percent of the county's total maize production.

Meanwhile, the national government has moved to secure additional maize supplies. Mutahi Kagwe, cabinet secretary for agriculture and livestock development, said last week that the government had made arrangements to facilitate the import of up to 25 million 90-kilogram bags of maize to bridge the anticipated supply deficit.

Deputy President Kithure Kindiki issued similar assurances on Monday, saying the government had put measures in place to cushion the country against hunger and famine, as well as the potential impacts of the projected El Nino-related rains.

"The ministry of agriculture is engaged and the National Treasury has been very supportive," he said. "We need to put everything in place to make sure that our country does not struggle."

Intensify preparations

Kindiki urged the national and county governments to intensify preparations for the anticipated October-to-December rains amid forecasts of a possible El Nino event.

Kindiki said the two levels of government were coordinating efforts to prepare for possible flooding and other rain-related emergencies.

"We are prepared in pre-positioning food and nonfood relief supplies at the nearest points possible in the counties before the rains start," he said.

Against the backdrop of increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, the government has also called for greater investment in irrigation to reduce the country's dependence on rain-fed agriculture.

One of the government's major food security projects is the Galana-Kulalu Food Security Project in Kilifi and Tana River counties. The project covers about 700,000 hectares in the Galana-Kulalu area, with the National Irrigation Authority playing a central role in its development.

The government is also advancing the Athi-Galana Dam project, which China Communications Construction Company is constructing. The dam is intended to provide irrigation water in the Galana-Kulalu area, strengthen agricultural production and enhance food security.



Children walk across an open field carrying water amid a prolonged drought in Nadunga Village, Turkana County, Kenya, on Feb 6. PATRICK NGUGI / AP

Briefly

SYRIA

Kurdish forces disband under integration deal

The leader of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, Mazloum Abdi, announced Tuesday that the group had been dissolved as an independent military force after its fighters were integrated into brigades of the Syrian army. The SDF, which spearheaded the fight against Islamic State in Syria, had about 100,000 fighters at its peak. The move followed a deal reached with the Syrian government earlier this year after January clashes saw government troops take control of large parts of territory previously held by the Kurdish forces.

RUSSIA

Moscow, Kyiv discuss major prisoner swap

Russia and Ukraine are discussing a new "quite big" swap of prisoners of war, Russian news agency TASS cited Human Rights Commissioner Yana Lantratova as saying on Wednesday. Thousands of prisoners have been exchanged in the Russia-Ukraine conflict since February 2022. An agreement in May to swap a further 1,000 captives each was one of the main tangible results of recent negotiations between Russia and Ukraine.

Fire at gas complex kills 7, including 6 Chinese

A fire at the Amur Gas Chemical Complex in Russia's Far East killed seven people, including six Chinese nationals, and injured 152 others, the project officials said Wednesday. Nine Chinese nationals remain missing, while 36 of the injured were hospitalized. The fire has been extinguished, and search and rescue operations are underway. Preliminary information showed the project's main equipment was not damaged, while experts are investigating the cause. A working group from the Chinese Consulate General in Khabarovsk has arrived at the site to handle follow-up matters.

UNITED STATES

SpaceX plans $100b rocket launch site

Elon Musk's SpaceX plans to spend $100 billion to build a massive new rocket launch site on Louisiana's southern coast, state officials and the company announced Tuesday. The roughly 50,600-hectare spaceport would be SpaceX's fourth and largest launch site and support its reusable Starship system. Construction is expected to begin in 2027, with the first launch targeted for as early as 2029.

AGENCIES — XINHUA

East Africa eyes role of medical tourism hub

Experts call for stronger links, shared standards and easier patient movement

By **SHARON NAKOLA**
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East African countries are seeking to position the region as a medical tourism destination by linking their healthcare systems, sharing specialized expertise and creating common standards that could give patients greater confidence in seeking treatment within the region.

Health leaders and private sector representatives speaking at a side event of the 13th East Africa Healthcare Federation Conference and International Exhibition in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, over the past weekend, said the region already has important pieces of a medical tourism market, but needs stronger cooperation, investment and easier cross-border movement to turn them into a regional proposition.

The discussions highlighted the need for East African countries to work together rather than develop isolated centers of excellence, with speakers saying individual countries may struggle to provide and sustain every specialized medical service on their own.

Kanyenje Gakombe, chairman of the Kenya Healthcare Federation, said that medical travel presents an opportunity for East Africa's health sector, particularly the private sector, but the region needs to understand why patients continue to seek care outside their countries.

He identified gaps in specialized care, affordability and privacy among factors driving patients abroad, while noting that individual countries often lack the population base needed to sustain expensive centers of excellence.

"Together we are 500 million people. Together we can deliver economies of scope and scale," Gakombe said, arguing that regional cooperation could help countries mobilize the technology, capital and expertise required for specialized care.

Gakombe said the COVID-19 pandemic offered another lesson for the region, demonstrating the risks of depending on overseas destinations for specialized treatment when international borders can suddenly close.

He argued that building regional capacity would therefore serve both medical tourism and health system resilience. "Borders can be closed, and therefore resilience and the capacity to provide care must be built here," he said.

Medical tourism is already emerging in East Africa, although it remains relatively small and fragmented. Globally, about 14 million people travel internationally for medical treatment each year, according to an estimate by the Global Medical Tourism Association, reflecting growing demand for care that may be unavailable or unaffordable in patients' home countries.

East Africa is also seeing patients cross borders for treatment. Tanzania's former health minister Jenista Mhagama told the parliament in June last year that the number of international patients seeking treatment in the country had more than doubled, from 5,705 in 2021 to 12,180 between January and March 2025. Most of the patients came from African countries, including South Africa, Ethiopia and Kenya, she said.

Kenya, which boasts several advanced medical institutions, is similarly attracting patients from across the region. Data from Kenya's Tourism Sector Performance Report 2024 showed that about 7,944 people from the East African Community traveled to Kenya for medical reasons that year.

For Ethiopia, medical tourism is increasingly being viewed as more than a health sector issue. Endegena Abebe, Ethiopia's state minister for tourism, described it as a "new form of high-value tourism market" and said the country has developed a 10-year medical tourism and wellness model.

He said Ethiopia's approach includes improving hospital accreditation and quality assurance while creating incentives to attract investment into the sector.

Regional connectivity

A key priority, Abebe said, is to create a seamless patient journey that connects medical facilities with visa services, airports, accommodation and support for accompanying family members. "We need to integrate that one with different regions, with different sectors," he said, stressing the need to connect the different stages of a patient's journey.

He said Ethiopia is also considering changes to medical visa arrangements, including longer-term and multiple-entry options, as part of the efforts to make the country more accessible to medical travelers.

Egina Francis Makwabe, president of the Association of Private Health Facilities in Tanzania, said East Africa needs a stronger "Made in Africa" approach to medical tourism. He said the region must first build confidence among its own populations by ensuring that local facilities offer quality care at competitive prices.

He also called for a regional platform that would allow patients to identify hospitals, specialties and treatments available in different countries.

Makwabe said some advanced services already exist in East Africa but remain poorly known outside the countries where they are offered.

Edgar Kalimba, board chairman of Africa Health Sciences University in Rwanda, said East Africa's challenge is not necessarily a shortage of medical talent, but the creation of an environment that encourages highly trained African specialists working abroad to return and practice in the region.

He also called for easier movement across borders, including fewer visa restrictions, arguing that existing air links provided by Ethiopian Airlines, Kenya Airways and RwandAir could support greater regional medical travel.

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WORLD

Shooting probe

Authorities investigate a crime scene on Tuesday where a man is said to have killed eight of his relatives, including four children, as they gathered for Sunday dinner at home in Billings, Montana, United States, before the house went up in flames. A family member told The Associated Press that the tragedy unfolded weeks after the man's parents asked him to move out.
MATTHEW BROWN / AP



Economy in 'tug-of-war': IMF chief

WASHINGTON — The International Monetary Fund chief on Tuesday compared the global economy to a "storm-tossed vessel", caught between high inflation, debt and trade wars while being driven by tailwinds from the AI revolution.

Kristalina Georgieva told journalists in Washington that the global economy had so far "weathered the energy shock caused by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz better than we feared".

Worldwide energy prices have skyrocketed since the United States and Israel launched their war on Iran, engulfing the Middle East in violence as Tehran's retaliatory action targeted US allies and blocked the vital Strait of Hormuz.

In July, the IMF cut its global growth projection for the second time this year, flagging "uncertainty and risks" related to the conflict in the Middle East.

Global economic growth is estimated at 3.0 percent this year, the IMF said in its update to its World Economic Outlook at the time, down from 3.1 percent in its April forecast.

Georgieva on Tuesday said the impact of the conflict had been "asymmetric", based on countries' exposure to Gulf oil imports and their overall macroeconomic stability.

Global inflation — driven by high energy prices — was also being pushed in a "tug-of-war" by the "positive demand shock from AI", she said, referring to an increase in economic demand due to massive investments in the new technology.

"Risks to the outlook are more balanced than they were around our Spring Meetings (in April), but still tilted to the downside, and uncertainty remains high," she said.

Georgieva warned that with winter approaching in the Northern Hemisphere, energy demand would only increase, possibly pushing a renewed rise in prices.

"This means the energy shock is not over. A renewed rise in oil prices could fuel inflation, forcing central banks to retain a restrictive policy stance with knock-on implications on debt service costs and on economic activity."

She was, however, optimistic about the broad impact of AI on the world economy, and said positive effects were being seen in more countries than just the United States.

Georgieva warned that there were "significant unknowns" when it came to AI, and that the risk of falling behind was "most profound" in developing countries.

Despite the global economy showing more resilience than feared to the shock of the Iran conflict, there was "no room for complacency", she said. She called on countries to address fiscal imbalances — especially with regard to debt — and for central banks to be "laser-focused" on inflation.

The IMF chief joined the media roundtable weeks before the 2026 Annual Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank Group, scheduled to take place in Bangkok, Thailand, in October.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Hormuz remains shut despite promising talks

De-escalation signals emerge as IRGC says deal reached on revenue sharing

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

While Iran and Oman have floated proposals for a temporary transit corridor and joint mine-clearing operations for the Strait of Hormuz, Tehran warned on Wednesday that the critical waterway would stay shut unless the United States brings an end to the nearly six-month-old conflict.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said that agreements were reached on the share of the Strait of Hormuz's waters allocated to Iran and Oman, as well as their respective shares of revenues generated by the waterway, during talks between the two countries, Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday.

The development came as Washington has rolled out what it calls the "toughest economic sanctions" designed to further isolate Iran, with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent threatening the country with "economic asphyxiation".

In Tehran, foreign ministers from Iran and Oman discussed a "phased framework" that included setting up a "joint temporary navigational corridor through the Strait of Hormuz and an agreement to implement a joint project to clear the Strait of mines", according to a statement.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi told state television the two sides had reached an understanding on a temporary route. Vessels sailing into the Persian Gulf from the Gulf of Oman would travel entirely through Iranian waters, while outbound traffic would travel through both countries' waters. He added Iran and Oman would then hold negotiations over 30 to 60 days to "reach an understanding on a new permanent and sustainable route".

Showing commitment

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that the proposed framework is "a case in point", demonstrating his country's "commitment to peace and stability matched by steadfast diplomacy with our neighbors".

Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi said on Tuesday that he hoped Iran and Oman would "soon announce" the temporary corridor. "Future management of the strait and a permanent solution will follow in due course," he wrote on social media.

It remains unclear whether the US will endorse the emerging deal. US President Donald Trump threatened last week to bomb Oman should it "get in the way" of Washington's push to reopen the strait.

Nearly six months after the US-Israeli military campaign against Iran began, shipping traffic across the Strait of Hormuz remains largely paralyzed, roiling global oil markets.

Trump previously said on social media, citing the US Navy, that "all mines have been removed and/or detonated from within the international waters of the Strait of Hormuz".

But Gharibabadi warned on Wednesday that no military vessel would be allowed to pass through the strait. "We closed the Strait of Hormuz before the US imposed an economic blockade because the US failed to fulfill its commitments under the memorandum of understanding," he told state news agency IRNA.

Meanwhile, the US has begun returning diplomatic staff members to some Middle East missions that were evacuated or downsized during the conflict, two people familiar with the matter told Reuters, suggesting Washington sees a lower risk of the conflict with Iran escalating in the near term.

The New York Times earlier reported the return of diplomats and the easing of emergency measures, saying embassies in Jordan, Oman, Kuwait and Qatar were also expected to restore higher personnel levels, citing an internal document.

US embassies in Israel, Jordan and Oman would ultimately return to full staffing, while missions in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Lebanon would initially be capped at 85 percent staffing.

Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported on Tuesday that the US and Iran had reached a ceasefire agreement, including free navigation in the strait, citing Pakistani military and Iranian security sources.

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Agencies contributed to this story.



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (right) meets with Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi in Tehran on Tuesday. VIA REUTERS

Moldova eyes expanding cooperation with China

By **LIU JIANQIAO**
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This year marks the 35th anniversary of the Republic of Moldova's independence, offering an opportunity to reflect on the steady development of Moldova-China relations over the past three and a half decades and to look ahead with confidence to the next stage of the bilateral partnership, said the Moldovan ambassador to China.

Looking back on 35 years of independence, one of Moldova's major achievements has been its transformation from a predominantly agricultural economy into a more diversified and competitive one, Petru Frunze told China Daily.

Moldova is renowned for its wines, agricultural products and rich cultural heritage. Today, Moldovan wine is exported to more than 70 countries worldwide, with around 60 percent of exports destined for European markets. The wine industry accounts for about 3 percent of GDP and nearly 8 percent of the country's total exports, according to the National Office for Vine and Wine of the country.

"When people think about Moldova, one of the first things that comes to mind is our wine. Wine is an important part of our identity and culture, and Moldovan wines are already appreciated by many Chinese consumers and wine lovers. Our wine routes and underground wine cellars offer visitors a unique experience that combines tradition, history and hospitality," Frunze said.

"Agriculture remains one of our strongest advantages. Moldova is among the top 20 global exporters of plums, walnuts, cherries, apricots, rapeseed, apples and grapes. We are also among the top 20 wine exporters worldwide, and our country is home to the world's largest wine collection by the number of bottles, recognized by Guinness World Records," he said.

At the same time, through reforms, active economic diplomacy and mutually beneficial partnerships, Moldova has developed new strategic sectors, including automotive, electronics, agri-food processing, construction materials and textiles. "Today, Moldova is increasingly integrated into regional and global supply chains," he said.

Frunze said the country has been dedicated to enhancing international economic connectivity in recent years.

"Although Moldova has a population of only 3 million people, our free trade agreements provide access to a market of over 870 million consumers, including through agreements with the European Union's EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries," he said.

Frunze took up his post in Beijing in March as Moldova's new ambassador to China. He said his arrival in China and firsthand experience of the country's rapid development had given him new perspectives and a deeper understanding of the nation.

"I greatly appreciate the way China combines modernization with the preservation of its rich historical and cultural heritage. For me, China represents a valuable example of how technology, cultural heritage and people-oriented development can come together to build modern, sustainable and livable cities," he said.

He noted that Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mihai Popsoi's visit to Beijing in May marked an important milestone in the development of bilateral relations, during which the two sides held comprehensive discussions on expanding cooperation across a broad range of areas.



Petru Frunze

"The visit reaffirmed our shared commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and translated that commitment into a practical agenda for future cooperation," Frunze said.

It strengthened institutional dialogue, identified new areas for collaboration and created favorable conditions for further expanding economic ties, he added.

"Over the past three decades, our relationship has been built on mutual respect, friendship and constructive dialogue. Today, we have the opportunity to open a new chapter: one that is more dynamic, more practical and more result-oriented," he said.

"Nowadays, China is Moldova's second-largest trading partner, and we are confident that the complementarity between our two economies offers substantial opportunities to increase trade, attract new investment, and develop mutually beneficial projects in the years ahead," he said.

Moldova is pursuing closer integration with Europe, Frunze said, adding that the process could help strengthen cooperation and dialogue between China and the European Union.

"We believe that China and Europe are two major economic partners whose cooperation is important not only for their own development, but also for global stability and prosperity," he said.

European path

Frunze said that, as Moldova advances on its European path, closer integration with the EU and constructive relations with China are not contradictory. Moldova has consistently supported balanced, open and mutually beneficial cooperation with all its partners.

"Our role can be that of a bridge: promoting dialogue, economic cooperation and people-to-people connections. With our geographic position, European perspective and experience of cooperation with different regions, Moldova can contribute to creating more opportunities for understanding and practical partnerships between China and Europe," he said.

He is confident that the future of Moldova-China relations is very promising. The objective of both countries is to build a partnership that is practical, forward-looking and mutually beneficial.

"As ambassador, I will work actively to bring our institutions, businesses and peoples closer together and to help transform opportunities into concrete projects that create value for both Moldova and China," Frunze said.

Dai Yan contributed to this story.

Israel criticized over raid on UN compound

RAMALLAH/JERUSALEM/UNITED NATIONS — Israeli forces took control of a vocational training center run by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees in an East Jerusalem suburb on Tuesday, in its latest move targeting the beleaguered organization.

The center was established in 1952 and offers vocational training to around 340 Palestinians from the West Bank every year, according to UNRWA.

The raid has drawn condemnation from the UN.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday condemned the Israeli takeover of a training center of the world body in East Jerusalem, said Stephane Dujarric, chief spokesman for Guterres.

"The secretary-general condemns in the strongest terms today's actions by the Israeli authorities, including security forces, to unlawfully enter and remain on the UNRWA Kalandia Training Centre in occupied East Jerusalem and carry out unauthorized works in those premises," said Dujarric.

UNRWA is the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

"The secretary-general is greatly alarmed at this development, as it will deprive young people of the vocational education they were receiving," said the spokesman.

"For over 70 years, the center has supported thousands of Palestine refugees through vocational education and pathways to work."

About 20 UNRWA staff members who were at the center at the time of the unauthorized entry were allowed to leave, Dujarric said.

Dujarric said the secretary-general urged the Israeli government to immediately cease interference with UNRWA premises, vacate and return all affected premises to the United Nations without delay, and protect those premises from further interference or damage.

Also in the West Bank, Israeli settlers set fire to an aluminum factory in the Palestinian village of Ein Siniya, causing extensive damage to the structure, stored materials and nearby farmland, said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

"Civilians must be protected and perpetrators must be held to account," it said.

Meanwhile, the US-led board supervising a Gaza peace plan on Tuesday warned Hamas against flying kites, after Israel threatened retaliatory strikes.

"All militant activity in Gaza must stop, including the flying of kites. We have conveyed this message directly through the established mechanism," an official on the "Board of Peace" said on condition of anonymity.

"Israel, too, must comply with the ceasefire. Military action cannot extend beyond responding to genuine and imminent threats," the official said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday warned Hamas that Israel would step up operations in Gaza if Hamas launches kites, drones or balloons.

XINHUA—AGENCIES



A man rides a motorcycle past the entrance of UN's vocational training center in Kafr Aqab, a neighborhood in East Jerusalem, on Tuesday. ZAIN JAAFAR / AFP

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BUSINESS

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Services seen having bigger role in GDP

Efforts intensified to steer economy to more consumption-led growth model

By **ZHANG CHENXU** and **LI JIAYING**

Services consumption is poised to assume a more important role in driving China's economic growth this year, officials and experts said, pointing to a structural shift in domestic demand, with services accounting for a growing share of household spending.

As external uncertainties continue to escalate, policymakers are doubling down on efforts to build on the shift and steer the economy toward a more consumption-led growth model, they added.

"Consumers tend to spend more frequently on services, and such spending generates strong spillover effects. Expanding services consumption will therefore remain a major engine of overall consumption growth," Wang Guanhua, spokesperson for the National Bureau of Statistics, said at a news conference earlier this month.

Service retail sales rose 5 percent year-on-year in the first seven months, 3.9 percentage points faster than retail sales of goods, NBS data showed.

Luo Zhiheng, chief economist at Yuekai Securities, said the figures point to a continued upgrade in China's consumption mix, with services becoming an increasingly important source of growth.

Unlike goods, services are less constrained by diminishing marginal utility and therefore offer greater room for spending growth, Luo said.

Tourism has stood out, with retail sales of tourism-related consulting and rental services rising 11 percent year-on-year in the first seven months, the NBS said.

Morgan Stanley expects China's tourism revenue to reach 12 trillion yuan ($1.78 trillion) by 2030. Tourism's share of GDP is projected to rise to about 6.7 percent by then, from 4.8 percent in 2024.

Yuan Haixia, dean of the research institute at China Chengxin International Credit Rating, said the experience of developed economies shows that consumption typically becomes the main engine of growth once a country enters the ranks of high-income economies.

Echoing this view, Xiong Yuan, chief economist at Guosheng Securities, said the shift toward services still had considerable growth potential, with the share of per capita spending on services in total consumption expenditure rising 0.2 percentage point year-on-year in the first half.

A high-level meeting convened by China's top leadership in late July placed a high premium on efforts to expand the supply of quality goods and services, and tap the potential of services consumption. The meeting held by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee also called for improving fiscal-financial coordination to bolster domestic demand.

Further measures are in the pipeline. "We are working on additional fiscal-financial coordination measures, which will be rolled out in the second half," Liao Min, vice-minister of finance, said at a separate news conference on Friday.

Alongside efforts to improve the supply of services, faster growth in household disposable incomes will be key to sustaining the expansion in services consumption, experts said.

"Income elasticity for many services exceeds one, meaning spending on services tends to rise more than proportionately as household incomes grow," Luo said.

On July 13, the State Council approved the plan for expanding consumption during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, which calls for "steadily raising minimum wages".

Guangdong province will raise the monthly minimum wage to 2,680 yuan in Guangzhou and 2,700 yuan in Shenzhen, effective Sept 1, up 7.2 percent and 7.1 percent, respectively, according to the provincial government. Shanxi province and the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region will follow suit on Oct 1, raising their monthly minimum wage rates to 2,350 yuan and 2,270 yuan, respectively, according to separate official notices.

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Sunfish facility



Staffers from State Grid Yangzhou erect a 51-meter-high steel tower supporting the 280,000-kilowatt Hengya fishery-photovoltaic complementary project in Gaoyou, Jiangsu province, to help expedite new energy transmission. The project features "power generation above, aquaculture below", with solar panels installed above the water generating clean energy, and the waters below utilized for aquaculture. LIN HUAPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Turning tech edges into growth engines

By **LI JIAYING**
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China will turn frontier technologies into new growth engines by putting emerging and future industries, artificial intelligence-enabled manufacturing and next-generation communications at the center of its 2026-30 industrial agenda, the country's industry regulator said on Wednesday.

The approach is designed to turn technological breakthroughs into large-scale industrial applications and build an innovation-led modern industrial system during the country's 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), said Xin Guobin, vice-minister of industry and information technology, at a news conference in Beijing.

According to Xin's ministry, integrated circuits, aerospace, biomedicine, the low-altitude economy, new energy storage and intelligent robots will be developed into emerging pillar industries. China will also foster future growth points including quantum technology, biomanufacturing, hydrogen and nuclear fusion energy, brain-computer interfaces, embodied intelligence and 6G.

AI is expected to be a central link between frontier research and industrial upgrading. On the technological supply side, the ministry will support the research and development of key technologies such as high-end training chips and multimodal algorithms, and pursue breakthroughs in frontier technologies including brain-inspired intelligence and world models, Xin said.

On the ecosystem front, high-standard AI open-source communities will be leveraged as key platforms to develop a group of high-quality open-source projects for AI-facilitated manufacturing, the senior official added.

As new information and communications infrastructure provides another foundation for emerging industries, the country is also looking to push forward the development of next-generation communications and computing networks, and expand the industrial use of 5G and the industrial internet, according to the ministry.

"6G will be a top priority during the 15th Five-Year Plan period," said Liu Yulin, head of the ministry's information and communications development department. The ministry will accelerate research on core 6G technologies, continue technical trials and standards development, and promote the maturation of the 6G industry and development of its ecosystem to lay the groundwork for commercialization, Liu added.

Smaller firms will also be integral to the new-growth agenda. "Small and medium-sized enterprises are closely linked to technological innovation and industrial-chain resilience, as well as employment and people's livelihoods," Xin said.

In this regard, the ministry will improve its tiered system for cultivating high-quality companies, foster specialized and innovative small and medium-sized enterprises, and develop more "little giant" firms and single-product champions in manufacturing. It will also provide greater support in digital services, talent, financing and data, while strengthening protections for intellectual property and mechanisms to prevent overdue payments.

"A national plan promoting high-quality SME development will be released soon," Xin said, adding that the ministry will also establish the second phase of the national SME development fund, strengthen inclusive financing and listing support, and improve a nationwide service network for smaller businesses.

The future-facing agenda is anchored in a manufacturing base that continued to expand during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25). China's manufacturing value-added rose from 26.5 trillion yuan in 2020 to 34.7 trillion yuan during the period, while its share of GDP remained about 25 percent, data showed.

Energy partnership sees notable progress

By **ZHENG XIN**
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Energy cooperation between China and other Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation economies has made significant strides across traditional energy, renewable power and infrastructure, playing an increasingly crucial role in stabilizing regional supply chains and driving sustainable growth, according to a recently released think tank report.

The report, released by the Economics and Technology Research Institute under China National Petroleum Corp, notes that a comprehensive energy partnership has taken root across the region, characterized by complementary supply and demand, green investments and stable infrastructure connectivity.

Energy security remains a paramount concern for APEC member economies, particularly as many face mounting pressures to decarbonize and restructure their domestic power grids, said the report.

Amid geopolitical volatility — including recent conflicts in the Middle East that underscored Asia's vulnerability to external supply disruptions — building a resilient Asia-Pacific energy security framework has become a shared priority, it said.

According to Lu Ruquan, president of the CNPC Economics and Technology Research Institute, energy cooperation has consistently served as an area where APEC economies can forge the broadest consensus.

Traditional energy remains a foundational pillar of this collaboration, as more than 30 percent of China's imported crude oil and nearly 60 percent of its imported natural gas originate from fellow APEC economies, with trade volumes maintaining steady growth, he said.

Concurrently, Chinese energy enterprises have actively invested in upstream oil and gas exploration and liquefied natural gas infrastructure across economies including Australia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Peru, he said.

At the same time, shared climate targets are accelerating bilateral and multilateral green collaboration. This shift is creating immense opportunities for joint research into renewable technologies, cross-border green investment and the alignment of low-carbon standards, Lu added.

Landmark green infrastructure projects highlight this momentum. In Indonesia, the Jatigede Hydropower Station — constructed by Chinese contractors — has delivered a dependable supply of clean electricity to support local economic development.

Meanwhile, in Malaysia, Chinese enterprises helped develop the country's largest single floating photovoltaic facility. Adopting an innovative "PV plus abandoned mine" model, the project serves as a blueprint for integrating renewable energy generation with ecological rehabilitation in tropical regions.

The report emphasizes that APEC has developed deeply intertwined regional supply chains, where reliable energy circulation safeguards regional economic integration.

Protecting energy security is intrinsically linked to safeguarding these supply chains — a core mutual interest that forms the bedrock of regional cooperation, it said.

"Infrastructure connectivity is a vital aspect of energy cooperation between China and other APEC economies, spanning oil and gas pipelines, LNG shipping routes and ultra-high voltage power transmission networks," Lu said. "This physical connectivity is backed by deeper, multidimensional partnerships in investment, trade and regulatory policy."

China is stepping up efforts to work with other APEC economies to better align customs rules to improve regional connectivity and trade facilitation.

According to customs data, China's total goods trade with other APEC economies reached 18.03 trillion yuan ($2.68 trillion) in the first seven months of 2026, up 21 percent year-on-year and outpacing the country's overall trade growth during the same period.

Briefly

EV charging facilities expand

China's electric vehicle charging infrastructure has continued to expand swiftly, with the total number of charging points reaching 23.68 million by end-July, up 41.9 percent year-on-year, the National Energy Administration said. Of this total, public charging facilities numbered 5.099 million, an increase of 21.3 percent. Private charging facilities totaled 18.58 million units by the end of last month, surging 48.8 percent.

Better care lifts rail staffers' well-being

Amid the country's urge to improve people's livelihoods, Chinese rail operators are working to better the well-being of rail staffers. To answer the call, Houma North Locomotive Depot joined local enterprises and public institutions to organize networking events in Linfen, Shanxi province. It established a studio in June 2023 to help expand young single employees' social circles. With surveyed information files, it helped young employees engage in get-togethers, building friendships through games and other interactions. So far, the studio has helped over 200 employees find life partners.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Huawei, HP agree to patent cross-licensing deal

By **CHENG YU** and **MA SI**

Huawei Technologies signed a multiyear global patent cross-licensing agreement with United States' computer maker HP Inc on Wednesday, highlighting a broader shift as foreign companies increasingly pay for access to Chinese technologies even as Washington maintains restrictions on some of China's biggest tech firms.

The agreement — including a license for HP to use certain Huawei Wi-Fi patents — is a strong testament to the Chinese firm's persistent independent innovation in cutting-edge fields in information and communications technology, said Alan Fan, Huawei's chief intellectual property officer.

"Through patent licensing, Huawei shares its innovation with the industry, particularly in the area of standardized technologies, which brings leading technological experiences to consumers worldwide," Fan said.

In fact, Huawei has emerged as a major holder of standard-essential patents, or SEPs — patents covering tech that manufacturers must use to make products compliant with widely adopted technical standards. The company is one of the world's largest holders of declared SEPs for Wi-Fi 7.

By end-2025, Huawei held about 165,000 active granted patents globally and had signed more than 260 patent licensing and cross-licensing agreements with major patent holders.



View of Huawei's booth during an expo in Xi'an, Shaanxi province in June. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Companies including Amazon, Ericsson, Nokia, Samsung Electronics, Oppo, Xiaomi as well as major European automakers including Mercedes-Benz, Audi, BMW and Porsche, have inked patent agreements with Huawei.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said: "The shift is beginning to rewrite a decades-old narrative around China's role in global industry. US companies are finding it increasingly difficult to bypass Huawei's own technology while the US government is still trying to restrict Huawei's access to US technology. Washington can restrict the physical flow of certain US chips and equipment, but it cannot reverse the broader trend of global technological cooperation."

Across industries, Chinese companies are moving beyond exporting finished goods and increasingly supplying the technology, engineering and intellectual property.

Ford Motor's lithium iron phosphate battery plant in Michigan, for example, uses technology licensed from Chinese battery giant Contemporary Amperex Technology Co Ltd.

CATL has in recent years promoted its license royalty service (LRS) model, under which it provides overseas partners with battery manufacturing technology, production processes and operational expertise in return for licensing royalties and service fees.

Volkswagen has also worked with Chinese electric vehicle maker Xpeng on a China Electronic Architecture for locally produced vehicles. Volkswagen said the architecture could cut development time by as much as 30 percent and costs by up to 40 percent compared with its older platform, and it plans to use the architecture in the majority of its made-in-China vehicles by 2030.

The China National Intellectual Property Administration said China's imports and exports of IP royalties reached 425.35 billion yuan ($63.29 billion) in 2025, up 6.7 percent year-on-year, with exports rising 26.3 percent.

Li Huiying, director of the intellectual property institute at the National Industrial Information Security Development Research Center, said: "Chinese companies are increasingly shifting from treating overseas intellectual property protection as a defensive necessity to using it as a competitive tool. More and more companies are leveraging their IP portfolios to build global technological advantages and move from followers to industry leaders."

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CHINA

Field trip



South African experts and scholars sample agricultural products, including fruit lotus, at the China-Africa agricultural sci-tech innovation park in Jinhua, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday. The visit was part of field trips preceding the 2026 China-South Africa Seminar on Human Rights, scheduled in Zhejiang's provincial capital Hangzhou on Thursday, aimed at exploring agricultural technology exchange and cooperation between Jinhua and African nations.
HU XIAOFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

DPP slammed for ignoring public will

Tourism, business sectors in Taiwan push for easier cross-Strait exchanges

By **LI SHANGYI**
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As the Democratic Progressive Party authorities in Taiwan tightened restrictions on cross-Strait exchanges, the Chinese mainland condemned them for going against public opinion and continuing to engage in political manipulation.

At a regular news conference on Wednesday, Zhang Han, a spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, urged the DPP authorities to heed calls from the island's business and industrial communities, promptly remove unreasonable restrictions that obstruct cross-Strait exchanges and facilitate cross-Strait integrated development.

On Monday, Taiwan's federation of industries, the island's largest business organization, issued a white paper calling on the DPP authorities to simplify the screening process for mainland professionals traveling to Taiwan.

Regarding calls from Taiwan's business and industrial communities for smoother cross-Strait exchanges, Zhang said they reflect the will of the people and the broader trend, adding that the mainland has been taking measures to facilitate travel and exchanges between people on both sides.

The tourism sector in Taiwan has also called for greater exchanges with the mainland. The tourism association of Penghu county recently urged Taiwan's "mainland affairs council" to resume the "mini three links" connecting Penghu with mainland coastal cities. The DPP authorities responded that there are currently no plans to resume the links, citing so-called security concerns.

The "mini three links" refer to direct passenger, postal and trade links between coastal areas of Fujian province and Jinmen and Matsu, which serve as major channels for personnel exchanges between Fujian and Taiwan.

As the mainland has promoted the resumption of travel by residents of Shanghai and Fujian to Jinmen and Matsu, about 350,000 trips have been made by residents of the two mainland regions to Jinmen and Matsu via the passenger routes of the "mini three links" since August 2024, Zhang said.

Zhang accused the DPP authorities of disregarding public opinion and engaging in political manipulation, saying their actions have lost public support.

"The DPP authorities are the biggest obstacle to cross-Strait exchanges," she said.

Taiwan's education authorities recently said the "registration platform", which requires schools on the island to submit information when taking part in exchange activities on the mainland, has been further improved. Schools that provide false information could face reductions in future subsidies for exchange activities.

"The DPP authorities have resorted to every possible means to disrupt normal educational exchanges and interactions between young people and students on both sides of the Taiwan Strait," Zhang said, adding that the move exposed the authorities' ulterior motive of obstructing personnel exchanges and escalating confrontation and hostility across the Strait.

She also criticized the DPP authorities for fabricating data to justify banning mainland social media platforms. Taiwan's "interior affairs department" recently claimed that the number of fraud cases had declined after RedNote, or Xiaohongshu, was banned on the island in December last year, and said the app could face another one-year ban.

Describing the DPP's moves as depriving Taiwan people of their right to know and their freedom to use social media platforms, Zhang said such misguided actions cannot dampen Taiwan people's enthusiasm for communicating through mainland social media platforms, nor can they stop the growing public desire on both sides of the Strait to strengthen ties and draw closer to each other.

NPC amending Water Law to align with eco code

By **HOU LIQIANG**
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China is revising its Water Law to better align it with the Ecological and Environmental Code, as a draft amendment was submitted for second reading to the ongoing session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the country's top legislature.

"Some members of the NPC Standing Committee, NPC deputies, national government bodies and local governments suggested that ... in coordination with relevant provisions of the Ecological and Environmental Code, the draft should further improve the overall requirements for the protection, development and utilization of water resources," Cong Bin, a senior legislator of NPC's Constitution and Law Committee, told the session when reporting on the amendment work.

The Constitution and Law Committee proposed adding provisions to the second reading draft to strengthen coordinated governance of water resources, the water environment, water ecology and water-related disasters, Cong said.

It also suggested adding language that calls for a modern industrial system compatible with water resource carrying capacity, as well as a stronger commitment to water conservation.

Under the draft, China would keep in place its rigid water resource constraints and continue to follow the principle of ensuring that the availability of water resources is taken into account in urban development, land use, population growth and industrial planning.

The amendment would also reaffirm the country's water-saving priority policy, advance the national water conservation campaign and strengthen water-saving efforts in agriculture, industry and urban areas, while building a water-saving society.

Taking effect on Aug 15, which coincided with National Ecological Day, China's landmark Ecological and Environmental Code marks the country's second formal statutory code after the Civil Code.

Adopted by the NPC Standing Committee in March, the legislation comprises 1,242 articles across five chapters, addressing pollution control, ecological protection, and green and low-carbon development, among other areas.

The code brings together more than 30 existing laws, over 100 administrative regulations and more than 1,000 local laws and regulations.

The Constitution and Law Committee also proposed adding a clause to prioritize the construction of a national water network, with a focus on improving water resource allocation, basin-level flood control and disaster reduction as well as water ecological protection and governance, Cong said.

The second reading draft calls for enhanced synergy between water allocation and flood mitigation. Under strict safety conditions, it would allow for repurposing floodwaters and capturing wet-season runoff for dry periods — ultimately boosting available water supplies.

Additionally, the draft introduces targeted measures for the rehabilitation of ecologically degraded rivers and lakes. Governments at the county level and above would be required to intensify restoration efforts by employing ecological water replenishment, biological purification, ecological dredging and river-lake connectivity projects.

The revision further proposes the unified allocation of unconventional water resources, including harvested rainwater, both raw and desalinated seawater, mine water and brackish water.

Local governments at or above the county level would be obligated to promote the use of reclaimed water that meets quality standards, prioritizing its application in urban greening, road cleaning, vehicle washing, construction and ecological landscaping.

China reports poverty fight gains, income growth

By **ZHAO YIMENG**
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Rural residents in counties lifted out of poverty saw their per capita disposable income rise to 18,627 yuan ($2,772) in 2025, up from 12,588 yuan in 2020, as China consolidates gains in its fight against poverty, according to a State Council report.

The report on consolidating poverty alleviation achievements and advancing rural vitalization was submitted for deliberation at the ongoing session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, which opened on Tuesday.

Delivered by Maierdan Mugaiti, vice-minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the report details that these counties have seen an average annual growth rate of 8.2 percent.

Development-oriented assistance has been highlighted in the report, with industries and employment playing a key role in driving growth.

More than 60 percent of central government funds earmarked to support rural vitalization have been used for industrial development. All 832 counties that were lifted out of poverty have developed two to three distinctive industries with local advantages, generating a combined annual output of more than 2 trillion yuan, according to the report.

Nearly three-quarters of people lifted out of poverty have established mechanisms linking their interests with new types of agricultural businesses, helping them share in the benefits of industrial development.

Employment among people lifted out of poverty has also remained stable. Their employment numbers have stayed above 30 million for five consecutive years, supported by expanded employment policies and labor-service programs.

More than 130,000 rural craftspeople have been trained, while more than 4 million people lifted out of poverty have found work through public welfare positions, the report said.

Regional cooperation has further strengthened support for rural development. Eight eastern provinces have paired with 10 western provinces to promote complementary industries, personnel exchanges and technology sharing.

During the transition period, eastern provinces provided more than 110 billion yuan in fiscal assistance to their western counterparts, while companies invested more than 750 billion yuan in those regions.

Despite these achievements, the report warned that the risk of people falling back into poverty will persist and that less-developed areas still face weak foundations for growth.

Rural depopulation and population aging have become more pronounced. Problems such as low utilization of age-friendly facilities and insufficient supplies of elderly care services have emerged.

In some areas, rural residents have limited access to cultural and recreational activities, while some households lack sufficient motivation for self-development. More efforts are also needed to address difficulties in promoting changes in outdated customs and practices in rural areas, the report said.

Looking ahead, China will incorporate regular assistance into its rural vitalization strategy, focusing on households at risk of falling back into poverty and less-developed areas after the transition period ends.

The government will promote development-oriented assistance to strengthen local capacity for self-sustaining growth while improving social security systems to safeguard basic livelihoods, the report said.

It called for longer-term policy support, more standardized assistance measures and more efficient management to consolidate poverty alleviation gains and steadily advance rural vitalization.

Artifacts return



Workers check a gold mask at the Jinsha Site Museum in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Wednesday. A total of 108 artifacts from the museum, showcased at an exhibition at the National Museum of China in Beijing, have returned to Chengdu. ZHANG LANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Capillaries can form coronary collateral arteries

By **WANG XIN** in Shanghai
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Chinese researchers recently revealed that capillary vessels could give rise to coronary collateral arteries, which are expected to serve as a natural bypass system and inspire a gentler and more effective new treatment for ischemic heart disease.

The findings were published in the journal Science on Friday. The study was conducted by a research team led by Zhou Bin from the Center for Excellence in Molecular Cell Science at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in collaboration with Kathy Lui from the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Coronary artery disease remains a leading cause of mortality and disability worldwide. Following coronary artery blockage, insufficient blood supply usually results in myocardial ischemia and infarction. Although clinical interventions, such as coronary stent implantation and coronary artery bypass surgery, can restore blood flow, these approaches are invasive and may cause complications.

On the other hand, coronary collateral arteries, which are naturally present in some people's hearts, can function as a natural bypass system. They can supply blood to ischemic regions and can generate better clinical outcomes.

The researchers compared the entire vascular network to a transportation system, where arteries are like wide highways and capillaries are like narrow, intricate paths. They discovered that when a highway is interrupted, these narrow paths rapidly initiate an "upgrade and renovation project", continuously widening and strengthening themselves to acquire the structure and function of arteries. Eventually, they develop into new "highways" connecting the two main arteries, restoring the supply of blood and nutrients to the damaged heart muscle.

Researchers have been making efforts for years to find the origins of de novo coronary collateral arteries. Traditionally, collateral artery formation has been attributed to the migration and reassembly of preexisting arteries. But traditional genetic models have some limitations, raising a fundamental question regarding the real cellular origin of collateral arteries.

To address the question, the research team developed a series of advanced genetic lineage-tracing tools to trace arterial endothelial cells and capillary endothelial cells, and investigate the origins of newly formed coronary collateral arteries after myocardial infarction.

The team disclosed that they established multiple high-precision lineage-tracing strategies, including their globally acclaimed dual recombinase-based systems and a synNotch-based genetic recording system that precisely identifies endothelial cells associated with mature arterial structures.

With these approaches, they discovered that de novo coronary collateral arteries arise predominantly from capillary endothelial cells, with a modest contribution of preexisting arterial endothelial cells. It offers a new understanding of coronary collateral artery formation after cardiac injury, and such capillary-to-collateral conversion is seen to be functionally crucial for cardiac repair.

The researchers also found that transient activation of vascular endothelial growth factor A using modified mRNA can promote the formation of functional collateral arteries and improve cardiac repair. Based on the discovery, the study further revealed a regulatory pathway that drives capillary-to-artery transition, providing fresh insights into vascular regeneration and potential therapeutic strategies for ischemic heart disease.

"We see the findings as very meaningful. For those who were not luckily born with coronary collateral arteries, we could potentially use the capillaries to regenerate the arteries. Moreover, the solid approaches used in the study, especially the dual recombinase-based system, can be effectively applied in other research as well, such as lung and liver repair and regeneration. Over 1,000 labs across the globe are using it in various fields, and we hope the system can benefit a wider world in the future," said Zhou.

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POLICY REVIEW

‘Fitness for all’ taking strides ahead

Five-year plan aims to build nation of regular exercisers

By **JI HAISHENG** in Beijing and **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

China’s national push for “fitness for all” is reshaping everyday life across the country, driven by high-level government policy, ambitious infrastructure goals and a surging public appetite for sports.

The strategy takes shape under the State Council’s latest five-year plan for public fitness released in July, which outlines key targets, including increasing per capita sports venue space to about 4 square meters, supplying 3.3 social sports instructors per 1,000 people, and raising the proportion of regular exercisers to roughly 40 percent.

Increasing the number of people who regularly exercise is expected to reduce cases of long-term hospitalization and chronic disease management costs, as well as maintain mobility among China’s aging population, and reduce health issues caused by sedentary lifestyles among young people.

Recent data from the General Administration of Sport highlights rapid expansion. By the end of 2025, the country boasted over 5 million sports venues totaling 4.37 billion square meters, largely establishing a “15-minute fitness circle” in urban and rural communities. Physical fitness monitoring shows 84.9 percent of survey respondents met basic fitness criteria — up 0.8 percentage points from 2020.

Policy experts point out that this momentum is the product of sustained top-down planning. China designated Aug 8 as National Fitness Day in 2009, a nod to the date of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games held in 2008. Fitness for all was elevated to a national strategy in 2014, and four consecutive five-year plans have been rolled out since 2011.

The national fitness plan acts as preventive infrastructure, shifting public health policy from reactive treatment to proactive wellness.

Ma Liang, a professor at Peking University’s School of Government, said, “High-level emphasis on public fitness, reinforced by specific targets written into successive five-year plans, has mobilized coordinated efforts and full support from government departments at all levels, creating a favorable environment and strong momentum for the cause.”

Chen Yuanxin, dean of Wuhan Sports University’s Economy and Management School, said, “China’s national fitness initiative has entered a new development phase — shifting from a focus on ensuring the supply of basic, safety-net public fitness services toward a more sustainable, high-quality model that values both universal access and targeted services, while balancing scale with quality and efficiency.”

Steps taken in line with these goals will “expand access to public fitness services, improve the quality of professional fitness guidance, diversify service offerings and standardize industry operations”, he said in an article for China Sports Daily published in July. “This will in turn raise the public’s sense of fulfillment and overall well-being.”

To meet evolving demand, the newest plan emphasizes repurposing underused spaces, such as industrial plants, warehouses, commercial rooftops and space under overpasses, to construct accessible sports facilities. Other priorities include leveraging artificial intelligence, providing scientific guidance and expanding public-service systems into rural regions.

He Zhonghui, director of the Center for Sports and Health Research at Peking University, emphasized the necessity of differentiated fitness services that cater to people across all stages of life. This endeavor would build physical literacy in early childhood, support youth sports, deliver workplace fitness programs, and roll out wellness interventions for the elderly.

Rather than grouping people merely by occupation, she said in an interview with China Education Television that services should adopt finer-grained segmentation based on life cycles, gender, family units and new-form employment groups.

Feng Qiang, deputy director of the China Institute of Sport Science’s National Physical Fitness and Scientific Exercise Research Center, said that in recent years, he has witnessed “growing public enthusiasm for sporting events and fitness activities, as people seek to improve physical fitness, refresh their minds and enhance their health through exercise”.

To reach the 2030 targets, Feng explained that boosting policy support and promotional campaigns will help raise people’s awareness of fitness. “The key is to change their lifestyles and habits and enable people to take the initiative to embrace exercise as a way of life,” he said.

He also underscored the value of scientific guidance over unvetted online rumors, using technology to map activity zones, and ensuring equal resource access for remote areas. This macro-level policy structure directly reflects how sports are integrated into daily routines nationwide. Across China, public participation is evident in overflowing weekend hiking trails, packed gyms during lunch breaks, dawn and dusk square dancing, urban marathon crazes, the Northeast Super League soccer competition, and the wildly popular “Village BA” basketball tournaments.

Regional sporting events are increasingly building their rosters around ordinary people. The 16th Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Games showcased this transition by featuring 11 mass participation sports, including soccer, basketball, volleyball, table tennis, tennis and badminton.

It is on these local courts that the human impact of China’s national fitness strategy is felt most clearly.

Wu Kun, a 41-year-old Baotou native and longtime tennis enthusiast, signed up for the regional games’ mass participation division. Some 20 years earlier, he had competed in the 11th games, in an era that, as he recalled, was all about winning medals.

“Getting good results matters less now. What stays with me is the process and the simple joy of sports, as a way to stay fit,” Wu said.

During the recent games, Wu was paired purely by age with a physical education teacher in the men’s doubles 35–45 bracket. In the round of 16, they were knocked out by a public security bureau team — fellow Baotou locals Wu frequently plays alongside in his free time.

“The popularity of mass participation events in the games shows that sport isn’t just for professionals anymore,” Wu said. “It brings sport back into the lives of ordinary people.”

Today, Wu continues playing tennis three times a week, passing his passion for staying active down to the next generation. “Every Friday afternoon, I coach my 10-year-old son. I’ve also taught him how to swim. I hope that he will grow to love sports from an early age,” he said.

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Lesser-known sports in China gain traction

By **JI HAISHENG**

Once confined to professional arenas or little known to the general public in China, a growing number of niche sports are finding their way into the daily lives of ordinary Chinese, adding fresh choices to the nation’s fitness landscape.

For people across the country, nowhere is this shift more visible than in ice and snow sports, as the successful hosting of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics has left a lasting legacy.

According to the General Administration of Sport, ski resorts nationwide recorded 118 million visits between November 2025 and January 2026.

As the national campaign to engage 300 million people in ice and snow sports has deepened public appreciation for winter activities, ice and snow sports have become a key engine for deepening the national fitness campaign, said Zhu Yongguo, dean of the School of Winter Sport at the Capital University of Physical Education and Sports.

Zhu, also president of the Beijing Curling Association, highlighted curling as a prime example. He cited public access to the Ice Cube — the iconic Winter Olympics venue — for curling experiences, and a curling tournament that attracted more than 300 competitors from over 20 cities, as evidence that “curling is evolving into a vehicle for mass participation”.

Unlike speed skating, skiing or ice hockey — which emphasize speed and power — curling features a steady rhythm and minimal body contact. “It delivers clear fitness benefits while being gentle on the body, making it suitable for people of varying fitness levels and of all age groups,” Zhu said.

Innovations such as floor curling and tabletop curling further reduce the need for professional ice surfaces and seasonal conditions, allowing for year-round practice, he added.

Zhu suggested promoting senior-friendly adaptations like tabletop curling, integrating into the sport’s outreach the concept of “primary prevention” to help prevent diseases among elderly people before they develop.

Beyond winter sports, other once-uncommon activities are also gaining traction. Wei Zihan, a former champion of the Beijing Collegiate Cricket Tournament, founded the Bird’s Nest Youth Fitness Club in 2024 after her graduation, aiming to leverage the reputation of the Olympic venue to promote cricket as a tool for physical training and youth fitness.

Cricket is arguably one of the most popular sports in terms of global fan base, Wei said. “But in China, most people still see it as a new sport.

“That gap is exactly what we aim to fill — introducing a fresh option to enrich the choices available in the national fitness movement,” she said.

With cricket added to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics and the Chinese women’s team securing its Asian Games berth at a qualifying tournament in May, attention on this sport is growing, she said.

During this year’s National Fitness Day, which fell on Aug 8, Wei’s club, with support from the General Administration of Sport’s Multiball Games Administrative Center, hosted a series of events to promote cricket: free beginner sessions, exhibition matches between university teams, and a youth training camp.

As her club is dedicated to youth fitness, Wei said that cricket training serves as a supplement to physical education classes for schoolchildren. “Sports are not a burden for students — they add value to their development,” she said.

She noted that parents’ attitudes toward sports have shifted significantly. “Parents no longer see sports only as a path to a professional athletic career. They want their children to have strong, healthy bodies,” she said.

Beyond actual competitions, Wei said her club also introduces cricket’s global status, its Olympic future and the policy support behind the sport.

“When parents understand these things, they get interested. Once kids try it, they fall in love with it,” she added.

Policy Digest

Community-level posts optimized for graduates

China has issued a circular on optimizing community-level posts in both urban and rural areas to recruit college graduates, aiming to provide a solid talent pool to support the modernization of grassroots governance and capacity.

The circular was issued by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, the Social Work Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

It outlines policy measures to broaden grassroots employment channels for college graduates, create new positions, and strengthen support and guarantees.

The circular calls for expanded hiring of college graduates majoring in sociology, social work, psychology, and law, with a focus on emergency response, services for the elderly and children, care and assistance for special groups, and psychological counseling.

In principle, all new positions are open to college graduates, and local authorities are encouraged to set aside a significant number of posts for targeted recruitment of graduates, it said.

Safety of agricultural irrigation water bolstered

China has rolled out targeted measures to protect agricultural irrigation water safety and prevent pollution risks stemming from industrial and livestock breeding wastewater, according to a recent notice.

Issued by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the document identified four key priority areas: spatial planning, sewage treatment, water quality monitoring, and regulatory oversight.

The notice calls for upgrading centralized sewage treatment facilities in industrial parks surrounding farmland, and carrying out investigations to cope with water-related violations from industrial operations and livestock breeding.

It urges local authorities to draw up agricultural irrigation water quality monitoring plans tailored to local realities, and set clear requirements for information notification, data sharing and emergency response.

The document also mandates strengthened on-site law-enforcement efforts, focusing on cracking down on illegal discharges of industrial wastewater and livestock manure via karst caves, seepage pits and rock fissures.

Guidelines to advance service-oriented social aid

The Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Finance have issued guidelines on developing service-oriented social assistance — the first supporting policy document since the Social Assistance Law took effect on July 1.

The guidelines seek to shift social assistance from mere material aid toward an integrated model combining both material support and services, so as to secure people’s basic livelihoods, forestall social risks and foster development for vulnerable groups, the two ministries said in a policy document.

Priority beneficiaries of service-oriented assistance include people living in extreme poverty, particularly those who remain in their own homes instead of welfare institutions, and households receiving the basic subsistence allowance, the document said.

Local authorities shall draw up supply lists for service-oriented social assistance, taking into account local economic and social development levels, government fiscal capacity, demands of beneficiaries and availability of resources, and deliver targeted services, it said.

The guidelines also encourage elderly care institutions, disability service organizations, social work agencies, volunteer groups, as well as professional social workers and public welfare volunteers, to engage in service-oriented social assistance.

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SPORTS

CRICKET

Curbing boozy antics has England stumped

Skipper Root says he's 'hacked off' by latest incident







Below: England's T20 captain Harry Brook got in trouble on a night out in New Zealand in October. **Right:** Ben Duckett was filmed drunk and disoriented while on tour in Australia in December. **Bottom right:** Fast bowler Brydon Carse is the latest England cricketer to find himself in hot water after being handcuffed outside an Irish bar in Derby, England, by police on Sunday. AP

It was a telling remark, especially when revisited two months later.

"I probably won't be real happy and smiley," then-England cricket captain Ben Stokes told reporters after beating New Zealand in a hard-fought test match at Lord's in June, "until I get up there and share a proper beer with the boys."

After all, having a post-match drink with teammates, and sometimes rivals, in the dressing room is a cricketing tradition as old as time.

But is English cricket taking it to the extreme?

The off-field conduct and drinking habits of England's men's squad are back under scrutiny this week after another after-hours incident involving one of its players.

This time it was Brydon Carse, a 31-year-old fast bowler and one of the team's success stories in recent years. The images of him outside a bar in the early hours of Sunday in handcuffs and surrounded by police officers were hard to ignore, especially as the saga came days after a plea by newly appointed England captain Joe Root.

"Ultimately you're grown adults," said Root, speaking after England's leadership opted to scrap a midnight curfew that had been imposed on the men's team following a string of controversial late-night incidents.

"You know what it takes to play for England, you know what your responsibilities are off the field, and we need to make sure we don't find ourselves with any little situations off the field."

Seems the message didn't get across to his players.

"If I'm being brutally honest, I'm really hacked off. I'm really disappointed," Root said in a news conference on Tuesday.

"It's not the isolated incident itself," Root added. "It's the fact we continually keep making stupid mistakes away from the game and it's detracting from what we're doing on the field."

And so, with England's Cricket Regulator getting down to work investigating another off-the-field issue, it's back to square one.

Is it time for a cultural reset? In this age of sports science and ultra-professionalism, there are wider questions over whether cricketers should have a beer after a match. Or do players just need to be a bit smarter?

"Just have some kind of brain cells amongst you, seeing what's just gone on," former England captain Alastair Cook said on the *Stick to Cricket* podcast on Tuesday.

"Surely someone says either don't go to that place. Or, at 12 am or 1 am, say: 'Let's go and find ourselves somewhere quieter if we want to carry on'."

Here's a look at the late-night incidents that have brought shame on English cricket:

Brook struck by a bouncer

Before going to Australia for what proved a humiliating Ashes series in December, England traveled to New Zealand in October for a white-ball tour (a series of limited-overs internationals).

A day before the third and final one-day match, team captain Harry Brook was hit by a doorman after being denied entry to a club in Wellington. Teammates Jacob Bethell and Josh Tongue were also present on the night out.

Brook was fined about 30,000 pounds ($40,300) at the time and given a final warning about his future conduct — sanctions not made public until months after England's 4-1 Ashes series loss.

"I want to apologize for my actions," Brook said.

"I fully accept that my behavior was wrong and brought embarrassment to both myself and the England team."

Duckett's night in Noosa

Between the second and third tests in that Ashes series, England visited the resort town of Noosa on the Sunshine Coast for some downtime in the midst of its long tour.

While there, footage was taken of England opening batter Ben Duckett looking disorientated as he talked to a group of people on a night out and saying he was unable to remember how to get back to his hotel.

"I am sorry for that incident, it was not professional and shouldn't have happened," Duckett later said. "There is no hiding away from it."

Rob Key, England managing director of men's cricket, said he would investigate the drinking habits of the England team.

Post-Lord's revelry

Chastened by the Ashes hammering in the winter, England began its so-called "reset" with a home series against New Zealand in June.

After winning the first test, Stokes and fast bowler Gus Atkinson continued their post-match celebrations at Lord's by going on a night out in London, during which a member of England's security staff was reportedly struck by a player from English rugby club Saracens.

The fallout was huge: Stokes and Atkinson were left out of the second test amid an investigation that ultimately found that no "regulatory breach" had occurred. Stokes then returned for the third match, only to announce his retirement from international cricket midway through it, saying the past few months had "taken its toll".

Brendon McCullum then was fired as test coach, while Key said the England and Wales Cricket Board was considering imposing an alcohol ban on the team.

Carse hits sticky wicket

Strictly speaking, Carse's night out wasn't while he was on England duty.

It came after his club side Durham had completed a big win over Derbyshire in the domestic County Championship on Saturday.

Carse was among the players selected in the England squad for the first test against Pakistan last week, but wasn't picked to play in the match and was released to feature for Durham.

Ahead of his ill-fated night out, Carse had been retained in England's squad for the second test starting Thursday.

He was dropped on Monday because an investigation was ongoing into the incident, which saw Carse held in handcuffs by police after, according to Britain's Press Association, being briefly arrested.

England bowler Matthew Potts was with Carse on the night out, while footage that circulated on social media showed Stokes watching on as Carse was in handcuffs.

With Carse yet to comment on the incident, it was left to Root to say that his teammate is "very upset, has been very apologetic, and understands his actions".

"I don't think it has been a very good look, the recent past, if I'm being brutally honest," Root said. "At all."

AP

ICC sees mountains of potential in Nepal's rapid rise

For years, Nepal has been one of cricket's great stories-in-waiting: a country of extraordinary public passion, flashes of on-field promise and crowds that treat every international as a national event.

Now, even the game's global governing body believes the Himalayan nation of 30 million could be the next Associate member of the International Cricket Council to take its place at the sport's top table.

"They could be tomorrow's Afghanistan, or tomorrow's New Zealand for that matter," ICC chief executive Sanjog Gupta told reporters.

"They have developed an elite player pool, which is consistently breaking through the ICC pathways and not only featuring at our marquee events, but proving that they belong on the global stage."

The Afghanistan comparison is hard to escape.

From its Associate beginnings, a war-torn Afghanistan fell in love with cricket, impressed in shorter formats and eventually earned test status in 2017.

Like Afghanistan, Nepal may not bring the game huge riches but will be a welcome expansion of the sport, which remains popular in certain pockets and is played by a dozen teams at the elite level.

"Nepal represents enormous potential and opportunity for cricket," explained Gupta.

"Not because the country is a significant commercial market, but because of their rapidly improving standards of performance and the scale of fandom the sport enjoys in the country."

Passionate fan base

The ICC has pumped nearly $5 million into Nepal's cricket development in the last two years and has awarded the country co-hosting rights for next year's under-19 Women's World Cup.

"Nepal benefits from the biggest endowment any sport can wish for — a large, deeply passionate fan base," said Gupta, adding, "fans today are also the players of tomorrow.

"One of my personal highlights from the Twenty20 World Cup 2026 was the sea of red at the Wankhede (Stadium in Mumbai) that turned up to support Nepal against Scotland."

Nepal beat Scotland by seven wickets to claim its first T20 World Cup victory since 2014, although both teams had already been eliminated.

Qualifying for the T20 World Cup for the first time in 2014 was the turning point for Nepal.

In a region dominated by cricketing heavyweights India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, Nepal had long watched others, and, suddenly, it had a team of its own.



A boy plays cricket on an empty street in Lalitpur, Nepal, during the general election in March. REUTERS

> "Nepal represents enormous potential and opportunity for cricket. Not because the country is a significant commercial market, but because of their rapidly improving standards of performance and the scale of fandom the sport enjoys in the country."
>
> **Sanjog Gupta,** ICC chief executive

Achieving one-day international status in 2018 helped cricket overtake soccer as the country's favorite sport.

"It really skyrocketed this sport into Nepali households," former captain and secretary of the Cricket Association of Nepal Paras Khadka told reporters.

"Qualification meant people started to have faith in the team. All of a sudden, it brought out national sentiments, and a sense of pride in Nepalis."

'Festival of Himalayas'

Two seasons of the Nepal Premier League have added significant revenue to sustain the game's growth.

"If we are to grow as a cricketing nation, the NPL will be a pivotal part of the growth," Khadka said of the T20 league, underlining the commercial and entertainment value of the "Festival of Himalayas".

"Whatever money NPL generated has been used in cricket itself. It's a strong commercial avenue for us now.

"If this keeps growing, we'll create that cushion for us to start development programs and build infrastructure, which requires a lot of financial stability."

The country's cricket fervor rivals that of India, but Khadka, who captained Nepal for over a decade before stepping down in 2019, said sustained performance remains non-negotiable.

"You could have everything around you, but if you don't play good cricket, people don't follow you," he said.

Nepal showed it can compete in the 20-overs format, nearly pulling off upsets against England and South Africa at the World Cup in India earlier this year.

"You only become a better cricketer when you play against better cricketers, and you become a better team when you play against better teams," said Khadka.

That need for exposure anchors Nepal's next phase, with the board planning bilateral cricket against test-playing nations.

"We are in conversations, and hopefully this materializes very soon," Khadka said.

Nepal has also rolled out player contracts for men and women, introduced red-ball cricket and is expanding infrastructure.

For Khadka, Afghanistan's rise is a model worth emulating.

"There's a blueprint for sure," he said. "We definitely would like to follow the same journey."

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CHINA DAILY
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Rescue, relief efforts intensify in Xizang

Teams, equipment, supplies rushed to mudslide-hit area

By **PALDEN NYIMA** in Shigatse, Xizang, and **CAO YIN** in Beijing

Rescue efforts were ramped up on Thursday at the Gyirong border port in Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region, after a massive mudslide in Nepal caused extensive damage to the port area on Wednesday.

As of press time on Thursday, three people had been reported killed, 558 others remained missing, and two local villagers had been rescued. Among the missing were 260 foreign nationals.

After the mudslide struck Gyirong, a major land port linking China and Nepal, at around 10:30 am on Wednesday, Chinese authorities activated emergency response mechanisms and scaled up the deployment of rescue teams, equipment and relief supplies to assist those who have been affected.

Entrusted by President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang led a group of senior officials from relevant departments to guide and oversee relief operations after arriving in the mudslide-hit area on Thursday afternoon. They also visited affected residents and rescue workers.

On Thursday, a guidance team of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Western Theater Command arrived at a high-altitude airport in Xizang aboard a Y-20 transport aircraft to join local rescue efforts, with more than 500 personnel, four helicopters and multiple drones deployed, according to China Central Television.

An elite fire and rescue team, sent by the Ministry of Emergency Management and the National Fire and Rescue Administration, brought more than 500 sets of equipment for detection, lifesaving, demolition, communications and medical support, along with four search-and-rescue dogs, to the area hit worst by the disaster.

Rescue forces from China Anneng Construction Group, a State-owned enterprise specializing in engineering and emergency response, have dispatched 310 technical experts and rescuers, including geologists and engineers, from cities including Beijing, Chengdu in Sichuan province, Chongqing and Lhasa, the capital of Xizang, to the port. Their mission is to assist with on-the-ground relief operations, focusing on restoring damaged roads, communications and power supplies.

As of 6 pm on Thursday, about 800 meters of the 3-kilometer section of road leading to the Gyirong port had been cleared. To navigate the remaining section, Xizang's transportation department dispatched four emergency buses and three trucks for transporting personnel and rescue materials.

The China Anneng rescue team rushed to the hardest-hit area, bringing 120 sets of advanced equipment, including multifunctional survey drones, 3D laser scanners, life-detection devices, large excavators and loaders.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Thursday that China and Nepal are in close communication and coordinating efforts for search and rescue operations.

Police authorities in Nepal said that as of 5 pm on Thursday, the death toll from flash floods there reached 359, with hundreds more people still missing.

Lin said that nearly 100 Chinese nationals remained missing on the Nepalese side of the border after the mudslide, adding that the Chinese embassy is seeking further verification from the Nepalese authorities.

Beijing is ready to provide emergency assistance based on the needs of Kathmandu, said the ministry spokesman.

According to China's Ministry of Natural Resources, the disaster began with a high-altitude glacier collapse in Nepal. The falling ice and rock traveled rapidly down a mountain slope, collecting loose glacial debris along its path and developing into a debris flow before becoming a mudslide.

"The flow then struck facilities at the Gyirong port and areas beyond the border, continuing downstream and causing heavy casualties on both sides," said Guo Zhaocheng, an expert associated with the ministry who is in charge of geological disaster monitoring.

The debris flow generated by the glacier collapse traveled at about 50 meters per second, which left virtually no time for warning, and its impact stretched over 20 kilometers, resulting in devastating losses, Guo added.

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Top: Workers use heavy machinery on Thursday to clear and repair a damaged road leading to the Gyirong border port in Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region, following a deadly mudslide on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Above left:** A member of the auxiliary police force distributes food on Thursday at a shelter in Gyirong county. VIA XINHUA **Above right:** An image from a video footage shows a Y-20 transport aircraft of the People's Liberation Army arriving on Thursday in Xizang to support rescue and relief efforts in Gyirong. GU KUOYE / XINHUA

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AI adoption powering industrial profit rise

By **ZHOU LANXU**
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China's industrial profits maintained double-digit growth in the first seven months of the year, as the broader application of artificial intelligence supported earnings expansion and underscored the sector's accelerating upgrade.

However, profit growth moderated in July for the third consecutive month as sectoral divergence continued, highlighting the need to expand domestic demand more proactively to ensure a smooth transition between old and new growth drivers, analysts said.

Profits at key industrial enterprises reached 4.58 trillion yuan ($682 billion) in the January to July period, up 17.6 percent year-on-year, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Thursday. The growth stayed robust, even though it eased from 18.7 percent in the first half. The electronics sector was a major contributor, with its profits surging 110 percent year-on-year. Profits in the integrated circuit industry, including computing and memory chips, jumped 18.5 times year-on-year.

Yu Weining, chief statistician at the NBS' department of industrial statistics, attributed the growth to the accelerating AI applications and sustained increase in computing-power demand.

The broader industrial upgrade also continued as profits at major high-tech manufacturers rose 50.1 percent. Meanwhile, nonferrous metal producers saw 91.8 percent profit growth. Analysts attribute this in part to the AI boom, which has driven sustained demand for key mineral resources and kept their prices elevated. However, some traditional industries and those in the midstream and downstream segments of industrial chains remained under pressure.

The NBS data showed that profits in electrical machinery and equipment manufacturing fell 7.6 percent in the first seven months, while automobile manufacturers registered a 20.4 percent decline. Earnings in ferrous metal smelting and processing, which is closely linked to the property sector, plunged 51.2 percent.

In July, profits at major industrial enterprises rose 11.2 percent year-on-year, slowing from 15.1 percent in June as both industrial production and producer-price growth moderated.

Overall, Yu said, industrial profits are maintaining rapid growth, but warned that the international environment remains complex and challenging, while the domestic imbalance between strong supply and weak demand remains prominent, requiring coordinated efforts to facilitate a smooth transition between growth drivers.

Analysts said the divergence and moderation in industrial profit growth reflect the challenges of China's economic transition. New growth drivers have yet to generate income on a sufficient scale, constraining the recovery in domestic demand and, consequently, weakening demand for industrial output and the sustainability of profit growth.

Su Jian, director of Peking University's National Center for Economic Research, said new drivers now account for over 40 percent of economic growth, but remain less capable of creating jobs than traditional drivers such as property and infrastructure.

Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank, said that industrial profits still have room to recover in the coming months, although cumulative growth may gradually ease.

Children, society benefit from inclusive education

WORLD WATCH
By Amakobe Sande

Next week, children across China will return to school. They will be packing their bags, putting on new uniforms and looking forward to seeing their friends and teachers again. It is a moment that reflects the importance that families and communities across China place on education and the opportunities it creates for every child. It is also an opportunity to reflect on how schools can become even more welcoming and supportive for children with different learning and developmental needs, including children with disabilities.

Around the world, nearly 240 million children live with disabilities. In China, there are at least 5 million. They are part of our families, schools, communities and workplaces. Like all children, they have hopes for the future, talents to develop and valuable contributions to make to society.

Inclusive education is one of the most effective ways to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn, participate and thrive. It means children learning together in the same schools and classrooms while receiving the support they need to succeed. It recognizes that children learn in different ways and that education systems work best when they respond to the diverse needs of all learners.

Importantly, inclusive education benefits not only children with disabilities, but also strengthens the learning environment for everyone. When children learn alongside classmates with different backgrounds, abilities and experiences, they develop empathy, respect and collaboration skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Inclusive schools help create more inclusive societies.

Globally, UNICEF's experience shows that successful inclusive education requires action at multiple levels. Schools need teachers who are equipped with inclusive teaching approaches, accessible learning materials and supportive learning environments.

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ROBOT CHEFS BRING INTUITION TO THE MIX

Next-generation cooking aids are machines that can watch the wok, not the clock

By **LI JING**
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Midway through cooking a batch of mapo tofu at an exhibition during the 2026 World Robot Conference in Beijing last week, a demonstrator poured about 100 milliliters of water directly into the sizzling wok. Instead of blindly following its preset timer, a cooking robot analyzed and adjusted the heat and preparation time until the sauce reached its ideal glossy consistency.

The moment illustrated what researchers said is a genuine shift in culinary automation: machines that respond to what they observe, not just what they're told.

For years, cooking machines have operated on fixed programs. But cooking is rarely so orderly. Meat isn't always fully thawed, vegetables carry more moisture after a humid week and sugar can go from caramelized to scorched in seconds.

"Real kitchens are not standardized laboratories," said Yang Jiancheng, founder and chairman of the Beijing-based Xianglu Robotics, a company that works on sensor-equipped cooking systems. "I don't care whether the chili peppers have been in the wok for exactly five minutes. What matters is whether their skins have properly blistered," he said.

Yang's company has developed a cooking robot equipped with three industrial cameras and additional sensors that capture visual data at 30 frames per second.

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Online
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INDEPTH



Feng Ruochen, co-founder and director of the Peking Insect Museum, showcases preserved specimens of dragonflies in Beijing on Aug 12. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Top: A dragonfly stands on a lotus flower at Lianhuachi Park in Beijing on June 23. LI WENMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Above: Dragonflies rest on an aquatic plant at a riverside park in Daxing, Beijing, on July 27. WANG XIBAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Healthy ecosystems buzz with dragonflies

Insect's reemergence in Beijing an indication of positive changes

By **CHEN NAN**
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For Zhang Shuren, 78, who took his 10-year-old grandson to the Peking Insect Museum recently, dragonflies are inseparable from his memories of old Beijing.

Growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, he spent summer afternoons near ponds, canals and patches of open land, chasing dragonflies with other children.

"Back then, you didn't go somewhere specifically to look for them," he said. "They were just there."

The children sometimes used insect nets, but catching a dragonfly with their bare hands was more difficult. "You had to wait for it to land and move slowly," Zhang recalled. "If you rushed, it was gone."

Over the decades, however, he began seeing fewer dragonflies as Beijing's cityscape changed and natural spaces disappeared.

"That was when I realized that some things you take for granted can disappear," he said.

Now, when Zhang spots a dragonfly above a park pond, he always stops to watch.

"For children today, it may just be a beautiful insect," he said. "For me, it brings back an entire summer."

The museum in Fengtai district, which opened in April, has more than 20,000 insect specimens as well as living insects and hands-on activities for visitors.

Feng Ruochen, a 36-year-old Beijing native and co-founder and director of the museum, remembers when catching insects was simply what children did for fun.

Growing up in Beijing, Feng spent summer afternoons along the North Moat in Andingmen subdistrict, where dragonflies seemed to be everywhere. Children waited for them to land or swung insect nets through the air, competing with each other to catch one.

As Beijing expanded, natural spaces gave way to roads, buildings and other urban infrastructure. Waterways deteriorated, while pesticides used in landscaping affected insects both in the water and on land.

The dragonflies of Feng's childhood became harder to find, but in recent years — in places like the Liangshui River in southern Beijing — healthy populations of the insect now abound.

For years it was notorious for being heavily polluted, but following water treatment and environmental restoration, the river and its surrounding landscape have been transformed.

Green space now runs alongside parts of the waterway. And with the return of suitable habitats, wildlife has begun to reappear. "Dragonflies have come back in large numbers," Feng said, adding fish, frogs, beetles and birds have also become more common.

"When you restore the environment, it is not just one species that comes back," he said. "The whole ecosystem begins to recover."

Nature's barometer

Huang Yue is an ecological restoration designer who has spent years rebuilding wetlands and urban water systems. She believes a dragonfly tells a more complicated story than simply whether a river looks clean.

In the summer of 2017, Huang was working on the restoration of a small 2,000-square-meter wetland on the outskirts of Beijing. It once contained a small pond, but changes to the surrounding river system and Beijing's low groundwater levels had caused it to leach away.

Huang and her colleagues restored the wetland. To keep the water from leaching again, an impermeable liner was put down on the ground surface.

"We then reintroduced native aquatic animals and planted submerged vegetation. As the ecosystem recovered, more dragonflies returned," she said.

"I remember one blade of grass with five dragonflies on it," Huang said, adding she was impressed by the sight.

In that small patch of wetland, she and her team identified between 20 and 30 species of dragonflies.

For Huang, who studied landscape architecture and urban biodiversity at Tsinghua University, the dragonfly is a useful way of reading an ecosystem.

But to thrive, a dragonfly needs more than just clean water. It requires aquatic vegetation for shelter, hunting and reproduction. It also needs suitable places along the shoreline to emerge from the water, and a food chain capable of supporting both predators and prey.

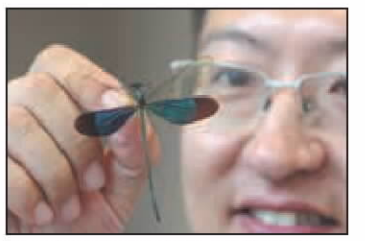
"To understand why dragonflies disappear — or why they return — you have to look at the whole ecosystem," Huang said.

Dragonfly larvae spend their early lives underwater, hiding among aquatic plants and ambushing prey such as mosquito larvae, tadpoles and small fish. Different species also use plants in different ways for reproduction. Some insert their eggs into the stems of aquatic vegetation, while others lay their eggs near aquatic plants.

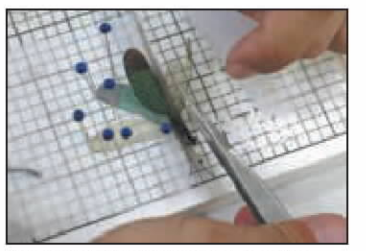
When the larvae are ready to become adults, they climb out of the water and attach themselves to plants or other surfaces. The adult dragonfly slowly emerges, then unfolds and dries its wings before taking flight.

Rich diversity

China is one of the world's most important homes of dragonfly diversity, with more than 980 known species. Yet most people are familiar with only the handful that occasionally flash past their eyes on a summer afternoon.



Feng shows a dragonfly specimen he prepared for display. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY



Feng carefully works on a dragonfly specimen. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Zhang Haomiao, a researcher at the Kunming Institute of Zoology, published *The Illustrated Guide to Dragonflies of China* in 2019, a two-volume work that documents 820 dragonfly species found in the country.

The book runs to 1,460 pages and includes more than 3,500 color photographs. It represents one of the most comprehensive attempts to document China's dragonfly diversity. Zhang's guide is, in part, an attempt to make that diversity visible.

A dragonfly hovering over a pond may belong to a species of the insect that has its own habitat requirements and ecological role. The more closely entomologists look, the more complicated the picture becomes.

That complexity is why Huang believes that improving water quality, while essential, is only the beginning.

For years, urban water management focused primarily on pollution. Was the water black and foul-smelling? Did it meet the required environmental standard?

Those questions remain important. But Huang believes people's understanding of a healthy water system is becoming broader.

The question is increasingly not just whether the water is clean, but whether it can support life.

When a restored river has clean water but little wildlife, Huang asks a simple question: What is missing?

Perhaps there are too few aquatic plants. Perhaps there are not enough small organisms to support larger animals. Perhaps the shoreline provides nowhere for wildlife to hide, feed or reproduce.

The answer is not simply to release more fish into the water. "A healthy ecosystem needs different levels of life," Huang said.

She said ecological restoration is not only about creating a finished landscape, but also setting a process in motion.

One major challenge is that cities often prefer nature to look neat. Old reeds are cut down, dead vegetation is removed, riverbanks are straightened and shorelines are covered in stone or concrete. But what looks tidy to humans may offer little to wildlife.

Huang recalled observing a rare dragonfly in Beijing that to the untrained eye is easy to miss. Brownish in color, it blends into dry, yellow reeds.

Its breeding habitat includes reed beds in early spring, before the landscape has turned green. But old reeds are often removed as part of routine maintenance or fire prevention work. "When the yellow reeds are all removed, the breeding habitat becomes very limited," Huang said.

She and other nature enthusiasts have encouraged park managers to leave more vegetation standing where possible.

The benefits extend beyond dragonflies. Old reeds can also provide habitats for birds during winter.

Urban disconnect

For Huang, the issue reflects a disconnect between ecological health and ideas about what a city should look like.

A healthy wetland may contain withered plant stems that are dormant during the winter, and the aboveground vegetation can appear dry or decaying.

Riverbanks pose a similar challenge. A gently sloping shoreline with vegetation is generally more welcoming to wildlife than a vertical concrete wall. Plants create shelter and the gradual transition between land and water allows birds and small animals to move between the two environments.

The soil itself is also important, Huang added. Gently sloping soil banks provide bottom-dwelling species with both food and habitats.

However, Huang is also pragmatic about the realities of urban infrastructure designs that need to coexist with ecological systems. She accepts that urban rivers need to carry floodwater, that space is limited, and that soft riverbanks can erode.

The challenge is not to eliminate infrastructure, but to make it more hospitable to wildlife, Huang said.

She cited examples of sensitive design ideas such as stone embankments with gaps and irregular surfaces to provide shelter for wildlife. Sloping gabion banks are more wildlife-friendly than stepped ones and provide a gentler transition between land and water and better habitats for wetland species, she said.

Ecological restoration, Huang said, is ultimately about finding the best possible balance within the limitations of a particular site.

As for dragonflies, she believes their worth in balancing an ecosystem goes beyond preying on mosquitoes. They are both hunters and a food source for animals such as frogs and birds. "If one part of the chain disappears, the system changes," Huang said.

She said one of the most important contributions city residents can make to helping maintain this balance is simply acting as observers of nature.

The return of dragonflies to parts of Beijing does not mean the work of restoring urban ecosystems is finished. Clean water alone is not enough, and a healthy ecosystem cannot be rebuilt overnight.

On Friday evenings, Feng and his team take children to the Liangshui River for outdoor insect observation activities. There, participants encounter creatures they might otherwise never notice.

For Feng, this reflects a broader shift in the way people see nature in urban settings.

A river is not simply infrastructure carrying water through a city. A park is not just a landscaped space filled with trees and lawns.

With the right conditions, both can become habitats. And dragonflies, he believes, are among the most visible signs of whether those conditions exist.



Residents fish along a lake at Cuihu National Urban Wetland Park in suburban Beijing on June 10. The city has been working on rebuilding wetlands and urban water systems to restore its ecology in recent years. GUO YUE / FOR CHINA DAILY

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TOP NEWS

US urged to fix hurdles, aid exchanges

FM meets with envoy, stresses building constructive, strategically stable relations

By **CAO DESHENG**
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Foreign Minister Wang Yi has urged Washington to remove disruptions and overcome obstacles to high-level exchanges between China and the United States, saying that both countries should earnestly implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state.

Wang, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks on Wednesday during a meeting in Beijing with David Perdue, the US ambassador to China, according to a statement released by the Foreign Ministry on Thursday.

Under the guidance of the two heads of state, China and the US are working to build a constructive relationship of strategic stability, Wang said.

He said facts show that improving bilateral relations, coexisting peacefully on the basis of mutual respect and achieving win-win cooperation serve the fundamental interests of the two peoples and meet the common expectations of the international community.

Noting that the China-US relationship still faces various risks and challenges, Wang emphasized the need for both sides to focus on a constructive agenda and properly manage differences to promote stable, healthy and sustainable development of bilateral ties.

Perdue said the two heads of state have provided important strategic guidance for advancing bilateral ties, noting that US President Donald Trump's visit to China in May was a success.

The US is willing to strengthen communication with China, advance cooperation, make preparations for the next stage of important high-level interactions, and build a constructive relationship of strategic stability on the basis of respect and reciprocity, the ambassador added.

On behalf of the US, Perdue expressed condolences over the casualties caused by a deadly mudslide that struck the Gyirong land port along the China-Nepal border in Southwest China's Xizang autonomous region.

Later, Perdue said in a post on social media that he had productive meetings with Chinese Foreign Ministry officials.

During his trip to China in May, Trump invited President Xi Jinping to visit the US in the autumn.

At a regular news conference on Thursday in Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said that China and the US are maintaining communication on the arrangement of interactions between the two heads of state within the year.

Tariff threat

Wang's meeting with Perdue came amid the US reportedly planning to impose a 7.5 percent tariff on Chinese goods on the pretext of excess manufacturing capacity.

Huang Ling, a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Commerce, said on Thursday that the US, citing "overcapacity", has initiated an investigation against 16 economies, including China, under Section 301 of its Trade Act of 1974, which politicizes economic and trade issues.

The US-China Business Council released its annual member survey report in June, indicating that 95 percent of respondents considered China to be "somewhat" to "very important" for maintaining global competitiveness. The survey also found that US tariffs continue to increase costs for its own citizens, while the country's export controls unnecessarily undermine US businesses.

Around half of the affected US companies are losing sales to Chinese or international competitors, leading to lost market share in many cases, the report said, adding that the curbs failed to achieve their purported goal of denying China access to key technologies.

Craig Allen, former president of the US-China Business Council and a nonresident senior fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute's Center for China Analysis, said Chinese investors in the US play a very important role in local economic stability.

"In my view, the largest growth areas are probably in the services industries, also probably any industry touched by AI (artificial intelligence). But I think that there's room for growth across the board," Allen said in a recent interview with Chinese media. "We want to see more enthusiastic trade and investment going both ways across the Pacific Ocean."

Feast for gamers



Gaming enthusiasts crowd around the exhibition booth of *Arknights: Endfield*, an action role-playing game developed by Chinese company Hypergryph, at Gamescom 2026, the world's largest gaming expo, in Cologne, Germany, on Wednesday. A total of 60 Chinese companies, which is a record high, are participating in this year's Gamescom. CHRIS EMIL JANSSEN / AP

Inclusion: Society grows stronger by learning together

From page 1

Families need confidence that their children will be welcomed and supported. Communities need greater understanding of the benefits of inclusion. And education systems need policies, resources and data that help ensure every child can participate and learn.

China has already made important progress in expanding educational opportunities for children with disabilities. Continued investments in education, combined with policies and programs supporting children with diverse learning needs, have helped more children access learning opportunities closer to their communities. The next opportunity is to build on this progress by ensuring that even more schools are equipped to support all learners and that children receive the individualized support they need to participate meaningfully in school life.

This matters because inclusive education is not only about what happens in the classroom today. It is also about preparing children for the future. Global evidence shows that children with disabilities are more likely to flourish when they grow up in supportive family and community environments and learn alongside their peers. Inclusive education helps children develop confidence, social connections and skills that support participation in society and the workforce later in life.

It also contributes to broader social and economic goals. As China continues to advance high-quality development and create greater opportunities for people with disabilities, ensuring that children can participate fully in education from an early age will help lay the foundations for lifelong learning, employment and meaningful inclusion.

To support this goal, UNICEF and the Chinese Ministry of Education are working together to strengthen inclusive education in around 2,000 schools and kindergartens across China. In these schools, teachers are being better equipped to respond to diverse learning needs, learning environments are becoming more accessible and supportive, and children are learning together in ways that help every student succeed.

Earlier this year, UNICEF visited Jitian Primary School in Tianfu New Area, Chengdu, Sichuan province, where we met children with disabilities and their families. One of them was 10-year-old Manman. Her mother, Chen Lili, described enrolling Manman in a mainstream school as "the best decision I ever made".

"By the end of first grade, I could already feel a remarkable change in Manman," Lili told us. "Now she smiles much more. She's able to express herself more confidently. Her every little growth is a wonderful surprise for me. I'm truly happy."

Stories like Manman's remind us that inclusion is ultimately about children, families and opportunities. When barriers are reduced and support is available, children can participate more fully, build friendships and realize their potential.

To help bring these opportunities to more children, UNICEF is also working with partners through the public advocacy campaign "Childhood, Without Barriers". The campaign seeks to increase understanding of children with disabilities, promote more inclusive attitudes and encourage practical action by schools, families and communities. It also supports efforts to strengthen inclusive education systems, improve data and evidence, and expand access to quality services for children with disabilities.

Lasting progress requires both strong systems and supportive social attitudes. Policies, investments and professional expertise all matter. So does our willingness to recognize the strengths and potential of every child.

Children with disabilities do not want a different future from other children. They want what all children want: opportunities to learn, develop their talents, build friendships and pursue their dreams.

As a new school year begins, let us continue working together to create learning environments where every child feels valued, supported and able to participate. By investing in inclusive education, we are not only supporting children with disabilities. We are helping build stronger schools, stronger communities and a more inclusive society that benefits everyone.

When every child belongs, every child can thrive. And when every child can thrive, society as a whole moves forward.

The author is UNICEF representative to China. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Rescue: Barrier lake formed in severely hit area

From page 1

Local resident Karma Dondrub, who routinely monitors border activity, was on duty and patrolling Lapher village when the mudslide struck. "Suddenly, the house began to shake and the trees were swaying," he said. "I thought it was an earthquake, so I rushed out of my post to see what was happening around me.

"Within seconds, floodwater came rushing down from the mountain above me into the river below," he added. He then made his way from the village to the nearby safe haven of Saleg township.

The Red Cross Society of China has sent a working group and relief supplies to regions affected by the disaster, along with a total of 2,500 relief items, including tents, family kits, hygiene packs, quilts, folding beds and winter jackets.

Search and rescue operations were progressing but faced challenges due to the complex terrain and hydrological conditions in the affected area.

A barrier lake that was created after the mudslide near a river confluence in the severely hit area had collected an estimated 2 million cubic meters of water and was already in overflow condition, the Ministry of Water Resources said.

Another 3 million cubic meters of water could flow into the lake over the next three days, posing a high risk of a breach.

To support emergency rescue and relief work, the Ministry of Natural Resources is closely monitoring the lake's development and conducting calculations and analysis regarding the risk of an outburst flood.

Hu Jiaojiao, a glacier expert, said in an interview with CCTV that it remained unclear whether further ice-rock avalanches or mudslides might occur, given that the stability of the area where the avalanche originated was not known, upstream conditions were uncertain, and the terrain is narrow and marked by dramatic changes in elevation.

"The unstable natural environment is a major challenge for rescue efforts, and the local high altitude poses physical difficulties for rescuers," said Hu.

Contact the writers at caoyin@chinadaily.com.cn

Robot chefs: Automation making way for creativity

From page 1



Staff members of the Chinese cooking-robot maker Xianglu Robotics introduce the 3K Vision AI cooking robot at the 2026 World Robot Conference in Beijing on Sunday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The robot's software, named CookingMuse, adjusts heat, duration, stirring speed and liquid seasoning in response to what the cameras observe. The technology, however, is still navigating the nuances of culinary physics.

Yang noted that while the model achieves over 99 percent accuracy on well-trained signature dishes, precision can slip to roughly 77 percent when unfamiliar ingredients are thrown into the mix. A neural network adept at reducing tofu sauce still requires substantial retraining to judge the glaze on braised pork belly.

As the catering sector looks to cushion rising labor costs and standardize quality across restaurant chains, developers of artificial intelligence are racing to move kitchen hardware from basic automation to sensory-driven "embodied AI". The commercial incentive is vast. China's catering sector generated nearly 5.8 trillion yuan ($863 billion) last year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

However, penetration of automated cooking systems remains below 2 percent domestically and even lower abroad.

To expand its reach, Xianglu has rolled out RobotCook, an all-in-one mobile container kitchen that handles ingredient refrigeration, cooking, plating and self-cleaning. For an outlet serving 100 meals daily, Yang estimated that the unit costs roughly the equivalent of one kitchen worker's annual salary, offering a return on investment within 12 to 15 months.

The rise of culinary automation is reshaping kitchen labor rather than simply replacing it, industry insiders said. "Robots can take on the heavy and repetitive physical strain, liberating chefs to focus on menu development and creative research and development," said Wu Xianming, a recognized master chef of Jiangxi cuisine.

The next step is an ecosystem where seasoned culinary masters license their digitized recipes to global franchise chains and automated kiosks, earning royalties per dish cooked. The primary growth areas outside the domestic market lie in Western and Southeast Asian markets, where skilled Chinese chefs are in critically short supply and kitchen wages run high.

"Embodied AI does not need to look like or mimic a human; its form factor must adapt to the functional demands of real-world scenarios," said Liu Xingliang, president of the Data Center of China Internet's Internet Research Institute.

Actions key to China-India consensus

By **ZHANG YUNBI**
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India should faithfully implement the latest eight-point consensus it reached with China on the boundary question to ensure that liaison mechanisms function properly and help avoid friction, observers said.

On Wednesday evening, the Chinese Foreign Ministry released a statement regarding the eight-point consensus reached during the 25th Round of Talks Between the Special Representatives of China and India on the Boundary Question, which took place in Beijing on Tuesday.

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A major highlight of the consensus was the founding of the Expert Group on Boundary Delimitation and Working Group on Border Management under the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on China-India Border Affairs.

According to the Foreign Ministry statement, the two groups will "respectively advance discussions on an Early and Substantial Harvest of boundary delimitation and Border Management", and their first task would be to agree on their respective Terms of Reference.

Another highlight was the two sides agreeing to establish an additional two meeting points for holding the General Level Mechanism/Senior Highest Military Commander meeting. Also, two additional channels of border military hotline in the Eastern and Middle Sectors were agreed upon.

The two sides underlined their commitment to "advancing negotiations on a framework for the settlement of the boundary question", and agreed that "any situation on the ground would be addressed promptly through existing diplomatic and military channels", the statement said.

According to the Foreign Ministry, the special representatives' talks is the main channel for negotiations between China and India on the boundary question, as well as an important platform for communication on issues of mutual interest.

Lin Minwang, a professor of South Asian studies and vice-dean at Fudan University's Institute of International Studies in Shanghai, said the eight-point consensus introduces "a slew of fresh, significant institutional arrangements to improve management and control of the border situation and resolve the boundary issue", such as the formation of the expert group on boundary delimitation.

"Both sides are trying to arrive at more substantial outcomes in tackling these issues," he said.

While reviewing the progress made on trans-border cooperation in the consensus, the Indian side appreciated the efforts made by the Chinese side to increase the number of Indian official pilgrimage groups to Mount Gang Rinpoche and Lake Mapam Yumco, the sacred mountain and lake in China's Xizang autonomous region.

Both sides appreciated the reopening of the three designated border trading points. The two sides agreed to strengthen exchanges and cooperation in border trade, pilgrimage and other areas, with a view to working together to create an atmosphere featuring dialogue, peace, consultation and cooperation in the border areas, the statement said.

In terms of setting new items on the calendar for further official talks, the two sides agreed to hold the 26th round of the special representative talks in India next year.

Beijing and New Delhi also agreed to hold the next meeting of the China-India Expert-Level Mechanism on Trans-border Rivers in September and maintain communication on issues including hydrological data sharing.

Lin, the Fudan University professor, said that Beijing and New Delhi should "sustain the benign, positive interactions between the two sides under these mechanisms".

President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met in Russia's Kazan and China's Tianjin, in 2024 and 2025, respectively, reaching a series of important consensuses on the development of China-India relations.

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WORLD

Homeland return



Syrian refugees gather as they prepare to return home, in Beirut, Lebanon, on Thursday. The Lebanese General Security Directorate said around 120 Syrian refugees had left Beirut for their homeland. As of July 31, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has directly assisted 83,880 Syrians to return from Lebanon, according to the agency.
WAEL HAMZEH / EPA

Tariffs may hit both US, Canada

Levies to deepen economic pain as countries to bear costs, analysts say

By YANG GAO in Toronto
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Canada's new retaliatory tariffs will deepen the economic pain from its trade fight with the United States, with experts saying both countries will bear the costs.

Canada announced on Tuesday that it would impose retaliatory tariffs on about C$27.6 billion ($20 billion) worth of US goods, matching the value of Canadian products targeted by Washington's new 50 percent tariffs.

The measures, which will take effect on Sept 8, cover about 700 US products, with tariffs ranging from 15 percent to 50 percent.

"The new tariffs in both countries are going to hit both, though the larger American economy will suffer less," Ronald Stagg, a history professor at Toronto Metropolitan University, told China Daily.

In the United States, particular industries and states that trade heavily with Canada are likely to feel the effects more acutely, Stagg said.

"This includes the American alcohol producers who already are feeling the pinch from the removal of American wine, beer and spirits from sale by eight of the 10 provincial governments, which control alcohol sales," he said.

For Canada, however, the consequences could be more severe.

"In Canada, the automotive industry will be devastated if the American tariffs continue, and small-scale exporters may be driven out of business," Stagg said.

The Canadian government is taking steps to cushion the economic impact, he added, but "it cannot prevent all damage to the economy".

Mesbah Fathy Sharaf, an economics professor at the University of Alberta, said the US tariffs would put significant pressure on Canadian exporters. "The first impact will be on Canadian companies that sell heavily into the US market," Sharaf told China Daily.

The tariffs will affect industries ranging from steel and dairy to wood and paper products, furniture, appliances, electronics, agricultural equipment, wine and clothing, he said.

"A 50 percent tariff is huge," Sharaf said. "Some Canadian products may simply become too expensive for US buyers."

If the tariffs remain in place, "I would expect exports to fall, profits to shrink and some of the affected industries to start worrying about jobs", he said.

But Sharaf said the United States would not be insulated from the consequences.

"The US importer pays the tariff when the Canadian product enters the country," he said. While businesses may absorb some of the additional costs, "part of it will likely end up in higher prices for consumers".

US companies that rely on Canadian materials and parts could also face higher costs, he said.

"So this is not something that hurts Canada and leaves the United States untouched," Sharaf said. "Both countries will end up paying a price for this."

The effectiveness of Canada's retaliation, however, will depend on how Ottawa uses the measures, Sharaf said.

'Targeted measures'

"Canada can put pressure on the US, but we have to be smart about how we do it," he said. "I would rather see targeted measures than tariffs simply for the sake of retaliation, because Canadians can also end up paying more."

Sharaf also pointed to Canada's energy exports as a potential source of leverage.

The US Commerce Department's Wednesday report showed prices rose 3.7 percent in July compared with a year earlier.

"The US relies heavily on Canadian oil, gas and electricity," he said. "I am not saying Canada should cut off supplies. But that dependence gives Canada some leverage, and we should not forget that when we sit down with Washington."

Stagg, however, offered a more cautious assessment of how much leverage Canada actually has.

"Unless Canada responds further by limiting or canceling trade in oil, hydropower and potash, steps which would cause their own problems ... the amount of leverage that Canada has is limited," he said.

Stagg said Canada's response was driven not only by economic considerations but also by growing frustration over repeated US demands during the negotiations.

"The Canadian response to the new American tariffs is driven by two things," he said, citing the Canadian government's belief that the US administration would continue to demand more from Ottawa and growing anger among Canadians over the repeated demands.

"However, it is clear now that every time Canada gives a little, the United States makes new demands," Stagg said.

He said tension over sharing toll revenue generated by the newly opened Gordie Howe International Bridge and the "endless list of demands" has intensified nationalist sentiment and put additional pressure on the Canadian government to take a stronger position.

For Canada, the row could also accelerate a long-discussed effort to diversify trade away from the United States, Sharaf said.

"Canada has talked about diversifying its trade for a long time, but this dispute gives us a much stronger reason to actually do it," he said.

That means looking more seriously toward Europe and Asia while also reducing barriers to trade between Canadian provinces, he said.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney will address the European Parliament next month, said a statement from Carney's office on Wednesday.

Still, Sharaf said Canada should not expect to quickly replace the US market. "The point is not to turn away from the US. It is to make sure that next time there is a serious dispute, Canada has more choices than it has today," he said.

Sharaf also agreed with Carney that the tariff dispute represents a fundamental change in the bilateral relationship.

"I don't see this as just another trade disagreement," he said. "Even if the tariffs are eventually removed, I don't think the relationship will simply go back to where it was before."

Agencies contributed to this story.



Customers browse paper products at a store in Miami, Florida, on Wednesday. JOE RAEDLE / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

African experts call for investment in bioeconomy

By EDITH MUTETHYA
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African policymakers and experts have called for greater coordination, investment and commercialization of the continent's biological resources to unlock the potential of the bioeconomy.

Speaking at the Africa Bioeconomy Workshop held in Nairobi on Tuesday and Wednesday, they said the bioeconomy could transform Africa's food systems while supporting sustainable construction materials, biochemicals, biopharmaceuticals and bio-packaging, as well as accelerating the transition to low-carbon, nature-positive economies.

Abdou Tenkouano, director general of the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology, said the bioeconomy is becoming an important pathway to a greener future.

"Let us work together across government, the private sector, civil society, and academia to develop bioeconomy pathways that reflect our local aspirations while contributing to global goals on climate, biodiversity, and food security," he said.

Tenkouano said agriculture contributes between 23 and 35 percent of GDP in many sub-Saharan African countries and generates significant biomass, providing a key foundation for the bioeconomy.

"By adding value to this biomass, strengthening supply chains, and enabling distributed manufacturing, the bioeconomy can help diversify growth in a sustainable and inclusive way," he said.

Tenkouano called for greater support for innovation, entrepreneurship, value addition and agro- and bioprocessing to create jobs and incomes, particularly through university-industry partnerships.

He also urged stronger regional cooperation on standards, financing, education, research and training, with greater youth participation.

Isata Kamanda, Sierra Leone's deputy minister of agriculture and food security, called for affordable financial instruments to help domestic agro-processors scale their innovations and develop competitive products for regional and international markets.

She said bioeconomy financing should reach local businesses, rather than being concentrated among research institutions and large companies.

Kamanda also called for shared regional infrastructure, particularly in West Africa, saying countries don't need to establish costly facilities such as genomic laboratories in every capital. "One can serve the region better," she said.

She emphasized the importance of food sovereignty, noting that disruptions to global trade can expose African countries to shortages because of their dependence on imports.

Sierra Leone, she said, is seeking to industrialize cassava production to produce flour that can substitute imported wheat in products such as bread and confectionery.

Building value chains

"The goal is not simply to increase agricultural production but to build value chains that retain more economic value domestically," she said.

Shaukat Abdulrazak, principal secretary in Kenya's State Department for Science, Research and Innovation, called for regional centers of excellence and greater collaboration among countries.

"We need to break the silos, build collaboration, build cooperation, and be able to have exchanges," he said, calling for greater mobility of students and researchers as well as stronger regional research networks.

Niall O'Connor, director of the Stockholm Environment Institute Africa Centre, said Africa must move beyond exporting raw biological resources and retain more value locally through processing and manufacturing to realize its bioeconomy potential.

He also called for a shift from isolated pilot projects to coordinated clusters that bring together producers, suppliers, researchers, processors and investors.

Abdulrazak also urged universities and research institutions to work more closely with industry and establish mechanisms for moving innovations from laboratories to the market.

Africa also needs to facilitate the movement of goods, services, capital and people across borders, he said, noting that the African Continental Free Trade Area provides an important framework for expanding the market for African innovations.

China's 'grass tech' helps reap rich harvest in Fiji

SUVA, Fiji — On a stretch of land once scarred by salt, rows of lush green grass now ripple in the Pacific breeze. Just a few years ago, little could grow here.

Today, the field stands as living proof of how a single plant is helping reshape both the landscape and the lives of local people.

The grass is known as Juncao. The Juncao technology was developed in China and introduced to Fiji more than a decade ago.

Originally designed as a substrate for cultivating edible mushrooms, Juncao has since become a tool for restoring degraded land, supporting livestock farming and creating new sources of income for rural communities.

For Fiji, where soil salinity has long constrained agricultural development in some coastal areas, the technology has brought tangible results.

According to Huang Zhixin, an expert at the China-Fiji Juncao Technology Demonstration Center, planting Juncao for just four months reduced the soil's salt content from 1.67 percent to 0.4 percent.

The impact is also visible on supermarket shelves.

Inside a large supermarket in the western city of Nadi, locally grown oyster mushrooms sit neatly among fresh vegetables.

"Just a few years ago, almost all mushrooms sold in Fiji were imported, selling for more than 30 Fijian dollars ($13) per kilogram, making them unaffordable for many families," said Mere, a supermarket employee.

After the introduction of Juncao cultivation technology, local production gradually expanded, bringing prices down by nearly half.

To adapt mushroom production to Fiji's tropical climate, Chinese technicians worked with the local partners to develop cultivation methods suited to high temperatures, including shaded production areas, suspended growing bags and temperature-controlled storage.

Today, over ten varieties of edible fungi, including oyster mushrooms, king oyster mushrooms and wood ear mushrooms, are produced locally.

The technology has also encouraged the emergence of homegrown mushroom brands that now supply supermarkets, restaurants and hotels across the country.

For villagers, however, the biggest change often begins in their own backyards.

In Muanaira Village near Suva, 76-year-old Alusio Tawakevoudua tends rows of mushroom-growing bags beside his house. The cultivation area occupies only about 10 square meters, yet it provides a steady source of income throughout the year.

Mushrooms can be harvested every six to 10 days. Annual production reaches about 1,200 kg, earning his family roughly 18,000 Fijian dollars in additional income, Tawakevoudua said.

Beyond mushroom cultivation, Juncao is also helping address another long-standing challenge in Fiji's agriculture.

During the dry season, fresh forage shortages have traditionally driven up feed costs and exacerbated overgrazing, putting pressure on natural grasslands.

Sustainable alternative

According to Zhong Siqin, another expert at the demonstration center, Juncao offers a sustainable alternative. Once planted, it can be harvested continuously for more than 20 years, producing 300 to 500 tons of fresh grass per hectare annually. With a crude protein content of 8 to 16 percent, it provides nutritious feed for cattle while reducing pressure on natural pastures.

Since 2014, the China-Fiji Juncao Technology Demonstration Center has carried out three phases of technical assistance projects. To date, it has organized 67 training sessions, trained more than 2,900 local technicians, promoted Juncao cultivation on over 2,500 hectares of land, and helped more than 3,500 households achieve sustained income growth.

As preparations begin for a new round of technical cooperation, Sufuawana Safara Hussein, a researcher with Fiji's Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways, is looking forward to expanding the program.

"China's Juncao has changed our land, and it has changed ordinary people's lives," she said. "We hope to continue working with China so that more villages and more families can benefit from this technology."

XINHUA

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NOTICE

The property located at Room 303, No. 77, Lane 319, Liuying Road, Jing'an District, Shanghai, was owned by Wu Hanchang (deceased), whose heirs include Wu Tieji, Wu Junji and others. The aforesaid house falls within the scope of expropriation for the Old City Reconstruction Project for Plot 128 Neighborhood in Jing'an District.

On June 2, 2026, the People's Government of Jing'an District, Shanghai, issued a House Expropriation Decision (Hu Jing Fu Fang Zheng [2026] No. 1). As of July 3, 2026, the contract-signing rate stood at 99.37%, meeting the required threshold.

To safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the aforesaid property owner(s), the relevant heirs are requested to contact the expropriation authority at the site of the Old City Reconstruction Project for Plot 128 Neighborhood in Jing'an District within two weeks to negotiate matters concerning house expropriation compensation. Failure to make contact within the specified period will result in the matter being handled in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The house expropriation compensation plan and relevant matters concerning the aforesaid owner(s) will be posted on the public notice board at the project site for a period of two months.

Contact Address: No. 45-A, Lane 319, Liuying Road, Jing'an District, Shanghai, China; **Contact Person:** Mr. Ju; Telephone: +86 21-5299 9303; **Business Hours:** Monday-Friday, 9:00-11:00 and 14:00-16:00
House Expropriation Implementation Entity: Shanghai Jing'an No. 1 House Expropriation Service Co., Ltd.

公 告

上海市静安区柳营路 319 弄 77 号 303 室，权利人为吴汉昌（已故），其继承人为吴铁基、吴俊姬等。上述房屋被列入“静安区 128 街坊片区地块旧城区改建项目” 征收范围。2026 年 6 月 2 日，上海市静安区人民政府作出房屋征收决定（沪静府房征［2026］1 号），截止到 2026 年 7 月 3 日签约率为 99.37%，达到生效比例。

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WORLD



Homes lie mired in thick sludge following severe flash floods in Devighat, Nuwakot district, Nepal, on Thursday. PRABIN RANABHAT / AFP

Rescue continues after deadly floods in Nepal

Beijing says it stands with neighbor as deaths exceed 350, hundreds missing

By PRIME SARMIENTO
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Police in Nepal said on Thursday that the death toll from flash floods that tore through three northern districts a day earlier had exceeded 350, with hundreds more people still missing.

"As of 5 pm Thursday, 359 people have died," Nepal Police said in a statement. Officials said the disaster could be one of the country's deadliest in decades.

The floods struck after an avalanche blocked the Lhende tributary of the Bhotekoshi River, sending a wall of water crashing into Timure, a bustling settlement in Rasuwa district near the border with China.

The torrent swept away entire neighborhoods, bridges, hydropower projects and other infrastructure, The Kathmandu Post reported. The worst-hit areas are popular with trekkers, river rafters and Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims.

Home Minister Sudhan Gurung said the focus remained on finding survivors, as rescue teams located 100 missing Indian visitors, mostly pilgrims, in the worst-hit area around the Trishuli river.

More than 650 foreigners remained unaccounted for, while Nepali authorities had yet to determine the number of missing locals.

Prime Minister Balendra Shah extended "heartfelt condolences" to the bereaved families and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

The national disaster authority held an emergency meeting to accelerate search, rescue and relief operations, Shah said. The Nepali Army has rescued 116 people from Timure.

Essential supplies, including generators, portable mobile towers, medical kits and tents, were being sent to the hardest-hit districts, he said.

Temporary mobile connectivity and phone-charging stations will soon be set up to help families stay in contact with loved ones, he added. The measures are aimed at restoring communications in communities where bridges, roads and power lines have been damaged.

Shah visited the hard-hit district of Nuwakot on Thursday to assess the damage and meet local officials on rescue and relief efforts, rehabilitation, and infrastructure restoration, local media reported.

Jai Kamakhya Prasad Kalwar, a shopkeeper in Dhunche town, Rasuwa, recalled how he and his neighbors fled as floodwaters swept through the area.

"We ran to save our lives, and we are safe for now," Kalwar said. He left everything behind, including his home and shop.

"No one here has a house left," he added.

Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Zhang Maoming expressed China's deepest condolences and sincere sympathies to the bereaved families and all those affected, as well as to the government and people of Nepal.

"China stands firmly with Nepal at this difficult time," Zhang told Nepal's state-run NTV World.

Beijing will continue to closely monitor the developments and do its utmost to provide all possible support and assistance, he said.

"We have been working closely with the Nepali side and supporting each other in responding to the disaster," he said. "I'm sure by joining hands together, we will overcome the difficulties and rebuild our beautiful homes."

The Chinese embassy has activated its emergency response mechanism, assessed the situation of Chinese citizens and enterprises in the affected areas, and urged the Nepali government and relevant authorities to make every effort to carry out rescue operations, Zhang said.

The embassy has also dispatched a working team to the affected areas to coordinate and facilitate rescue efforts on the ground, he added.

Rajneesh Bhandari in Trishuli Bazaar, Nepal, and agencies contributed to this story.

US sees generational gap over China policy

By SHI GUANG in New York
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A generational shift in US public attitude toward China may signal a long-term change in how Washington interacts with Beijing, according to a newly released survey.

Conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, US broadcaster NPR and market research firm Ipsos, the survey found that younger people in the United States were less likely than older generations to view China as a threat.

"Younger Americans have come of age in a more interconnected world shaped by digital exchange and cross-border education, where social media trends have made engagement with Chinese culture increasingly ordinary," survey authors Craig Kafura and Debi Jin wrote.

While only 43 percent of Millennials and 34 percent of Generation Zers viewed China's development into a world power as a "critical threat" to the US, the share was 62 percent among Boomers and 56 percent among Generation Xers.

The survey defines Boomers as those born from 1946 to 1964, Generation X as 1965 to 1980, Millennials as 1981 to 1996, and Generation Z as 1997 to 2013.

Ashley Breinholt, a student at Brigham Young University in Utah, said "young Americans should learn about China because it can open your mind to global awareness".

"It can open your mind to a whole other country and culture that's different from our own, but also very similar," Breinholt told China Daily.

Ilaria Luna, a Harvard student who studied at East China Normal University on an exchange program, said the experience had helped her form her own views.

"I know what the news tells us in the US about China and the things that they want us to feel and believe," she said. "But coming (to China) and being able to form my own opinions and experience the people and the kindness and the warmth has been really, really important."

Not surprisingly, a majority of Generation Zers and Millennials, 59 percent and 58 percent respectively, favored a policy of friendly cooperation and engagement with China, compared with 48 percent for both Boomers and Generation Xers.

Millennials and Generation Zers also strongly opposed higher tariffs and restrictive policies targeting Chinese students.

While 86 percent of Boomers and 85 percent of Generation Xers believed China wants to become the world's "dominant power", fewer than two-thirds of Generation Zers agreed.

"Younger cohorts are instead more open to the possibility that China's desired global role might be more collaborative, or that China may not want any leadership role in the world," the authors wrote.

Significantly, one-fourth of Generation Zers said China poses no threat to the US at all, compared with 16 percent of Millennials, 11 percent of Generation Xers and 4 percent of Boomers.

The survey highlighted broad agreement on reducing tariffs on Chinese imports in exchange for increased US agricultural exports, as well as on prohibiting US companies from selling sensitive high-tech products to China.

However, "on other restrictive measures, intergenerational splits become more evident", the authors wrote.

While older generations favored limiting the number of Chinese students studying in the US — 56 percent of Boomers and 63 percent of Generation Xers — a majority of Millennials and Generation Zers, 65 percent and 64 percent respectively, opposed such restrictions.

"As generational replacement continues and younger generations make up a larger proportion of the electorate, that gap between the assumptions driving Washington's China policy and the attitudes of the public it answers to may widen, raising real questions about what kind of relationship with China the next generation of Americans will want," the authors said.

The survey of 1,025 respondents across a range of demographic groups was conducted from March 13 to 15.

Japan urged to mend strained relations

By ZHOU JIN
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A senior Chinese official on Thursday urged Japanese political figures with insight into China-Japan relations to work to bring bilateral ties back on the right track, expressing hope that Tokyo will take practical steps to create the conditions needed to overcome difficulties in ties.

Lu Kang, vice-minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks at a meeting with a bipartisan group of Japanese lawmakers visiting China, led by Shinichi Isa, a Lower House member of the Centrist Reform Alliance.

The visit marks the first trip to China by a group of Japanese lawmakers since bilateral relations became strained following remarks by Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi in November suggesting possible military involvement in the Taiwan Strait.

Lu said relations between China and Japan are facing serious difficulties and that the causes are clear.

He underscored that historical issues, the Taiwan question and other major matters of principle affect the political foundation of bilateral relations and the fundamental trust between the two neighbors.

Lu called on Japanese political parties and politicians to distinguish right from wrong and push those in power to abide by the principles embodied in the four political documents between China and Japan, learn from history, and handle the Taiwan question honestly and strictly in accordance with the one-China principle.

'Deeply concerned'

For his part, Isa said relations between Japan and China are important not only to the two countries but also to Asia and the wider world.

Japan is deeply concerned about the current difficulties in bilateral ties and hopes to maintain communication with China and help improve their relationship, he said.

Commenting on the visit, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a daily news conference on Thursday that the root cause of the serious difficulties in China-Japan relations lies in the erroneous remarks and actions by Japanese governing authorities on Taiwan and in the fields of military and security.

"They should heed and value the voice of reason in Japan, repent for and correct the wrongdoings, and safeguard the political foundation of China-Japan relations with concrete actions," Lin said.

The delegation — comprising Isa, Liberal Democratic Party Lower House lawmaker Gaku Hashimoto, and Komeito Upper House member Yudai Kawamura — arrived in Beijing earlier this week, The Japan Times reported.

Isa, who has served as a diplomat at the Japanese embassy in China, wrote on X earlier this month that bilateral ties have sunk to their worst since the 1972 normalization of relations.

The situation is not in the national interest of either side, Isa said at the time, adding that the Chinese side accepted a request from Japanese lawmakers for a window of dialogue.

Living canvases

Visitors take in an immersive exhibition showcasing the works of Vincent van Gogh at the Nomad Immersive Museum in Madrid, Spain, on Wednesday. The digital display uses high-tech projections to bring the Dutch master's life stories and artistic world to life.
CHENG MIN / XINHUA



ACFTU Special

'Takeaway poet' pledges awards success will never change him

From model workers and master craftsmen to factory hands and gig-economy workers, China's vast workforce is the bedrock of national development. Launched by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, this series shines a spotlight on the responsibility and resilience of the modern Chinese working class, documenting their struggles and stories from the front lines to showcase the dedication, craftsmanship and pioneering spirit driving progress across every sector.



Wang Jibing, known as the "takeaway poet", rides a moped through the streets of Kunshan, Jiangsu province, to deliver a meal. XINHUA

By YUAN SHENGGAO

On July 21, at the symposium for laureates of the ninth Lu Xun Literary Prize, Wang Jibing choked up several times. "No matter what, I have always been a quietly flowing river," said the 56-year-old, who is a takeaway rider in Kunshan, Jiangsu province. "I will answer the years with one piece after another."

Wang is widely known as the "takeaway poet". Born in Pizhou, Jiangsu, he left school early and worked as a builder in Shenyang, Liaoning province, a scrap collector and a street vendor. He currently runs a small convenience store with his wife. In 2018, then nearly 50, he registered as a food-delivery rider.

He once wrote: "For those racing against the clock, there are no seasons — only this stop, and the next." The lines are from his viral 2022 poem *A Man in a Hurry*.

Since seriously turning his hand to poetry in 2009, Wang has composed more than 6,000 poems. On delivery runs, he jots lines on order receipts, cigarette boxes or his own sleeve, then types them into a computer at night. "If I can't write a poem in a day, I can't sleep," he said. "The next day I go out delivering like crazy."

One time, after winning a cash prize of 8,000 yuan ($1,190) in Haikou, Hainan province, Wang walked 26 kilometers from his hotel to the airport, documenting the scenery along the way. "The money came too easily; I needed to push myself the hard way," he said. He keeps spare raincoats and a rope in his delivery box. "After being pulled up from a well, I have a duty to reach down for others," he said.

He has turned down commercial offers that clashed with his principles. For example, a car commercial because he has no driver's license. Also, a dairy advertisement. "I don't even drink milk," he said. His rule is simple: "I write on blank paper for people to read. If there is a stain, the paper turns black and I cannot write on it anymore."

"You must build an inner moral compass. Once your values are shaken, life will collapse." Wang said he read those words in a work of literature and they have guided his every choice since.

The Lu Xun prize has upended his schedule. In August, he spent more than 20 days traveling through five cities. Yet back in Kunshan, he wakes at 5:30 every morning, tends to the shop, writes and still slips out at lunchtime for delivery runs.

"I remain that same river," he said. "Throw me off a cliff and I become a waterfall. Throw rocks in my path and I become waves." In *Low Flight*, he gives voice to fellow riders: "Who says that spreading wings means flying high? Flying low is still flying."

Wang, who dropped out after the second year of junior high, once compared delivery riders to migratory birds and sparrows; constantly on the move, yet calling the city home. "A professor said food couriers are a safety-net job for the city. I couldn't agree more, as long as we are willing to run, the city will give us its roads," he said.

Recalling a fall from a footbridge during a delivery, when passersby rushed to help, he reflected: "Don't think of yourself as just passing through. Every move you make might leave someone with a lifelong impression of an entire city."

To him, ordinary people on the run are like blades of grass on a prairie; individual blades that together form the vast landscape of an era.

"When we love life and love the city, we'll find that life is truly beautiful," Wang said. "As a writer, I have always believed in literature, and I believe that those who walk toward the light leave their shadows behind. That is what city life has taught me."

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COMMENT

Editorials

Dialogue conducive to stabilizing border areas and Sino-Indian ties

The 25th round of talks between the special representatives of China and India on the boundary question, held in Beijing on Tuesday, concluded with an eight-point consensus.

The meeting was co-chaired by Foreign Minister Wang Yi, China's special representative on the boundary question between China and India, and India's Special Representative and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. Its outcomes will help stabilize the border areas of the two neighbors.

The consensus includes the establishment of an expert group on boundary delimitation and a working group on border management under the existing China-India border affairs consultation and coordination working mechanism. The first task of these groups will be to agree on their respective terms of reference so they can advance discussions on boundary delimitation and border management to realize early and substantial progress.

With the aim of improving border management, two additional meeting points were agreed upon for holding the General-Level Mechanism/Senior Highest Military Commander meeting. Similarly two more channels for the border military hotline in the Eastern and Middle sectors were agreed.

Moreover, both sides noted the progress on trans-border cooperation and agreed to strengthen exchanges and cooperation in border trade, pilgrimage and other areas, with the view of working together to create an atmosphere featuring dialogue, peace, consultation and cooperation in the border areas. These outcomes reflect the willingness of both sides to de-escalate border tensions.

During the talks, Wang expressed Beijing's readiness to work with New Delhi to manage their relations from a strategic and long-term perspective. By strengthening communication, enhancing mutual understanding, resolving differences and overcoming obstacles, the two neighbors can be good friends and partners that help each other succeed.

As Wang said, both sides should learn from historical experiences, place the boundary question in its proper context within the bilateral relationship, and continue to move forward "without stagnation, regression, or deviation" so as to gradually foster a positive narrative on China-India boundary affairs, making dialogue, peace, consultation and cooperation the mainstream of their relations.

Indeed, by transcending historical and political differences over the boundary question and deepening cooperation in areas such as trade, technology, climate change and public health, both nations can unlock the potential that exists in relations. Their interests are inextricably linked: a stable, peaceful border allows for the free flow of trade and personnel. The focus should therefore shift from what divides the two sides to the opportunities that can be seized by working in tandem.

It is important that New Delhi resists the temptation to encourage nationalism on the border issue for domestic political gains. Stirring nationalist sentiment over the boundary question only creates a toxic public opinion environment that makes it difficult for both countries to be flexible and engage constructively.

The mainstream narrative in both countries should be one of dialogue, peace, consultation and cooperation. This, rather than confrontational rhetoric, will foster the necessary trust and goodwill for the long-term, healthy and stable development of bilateral ties.

The latest round of China-India talks happened against the backdrop of increasing global uncertainty. The world order is under immense strain, with the ongoing crisis in the Middle East and the protracted conflict in Ukraine causing widespread instability. The global economy remains fragile. Against this complex and volatile backdrop, it is encouraging that both sides reaffirmed their commitment in the meeting to uphold the guidance of the leaders of the two countries, maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas and create an atmosphere for healthy and steady development of bilateral relations.

As members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS, China and India demonstrated through this week's Beijing talks that they possess the strategic wisdom and patience to manage their differences constructively — thereby contributing to regional peace and stability.

Restrictions a disservice to US interests

The US administration has been trying to wall off China from the United States' robotics industry only to discover that US robots have already been learning to walk on Chinese feet.

An internal review by the Association for Advancing Automation of the US found that 28 of 31 research papers led by US universities on humanoid or quadruped robots used products made by China's Unitree Robotics. This is a snapshot of institutional dependence, embedded in the very laboratories where the US administration seeks to maintain technological leadership.

The finding also exposes the contradiction in Washington's strategy: the more aggressively the US tries to "decouple" from China in high-tech, the more it reveals how deeply the two countries' innovation systems have become intertwined.

The Federal Communications Commission updated its "Covered List" late last month to include "advanced robotic devices" produced in foreign countries, stating advanced robots assembled in the US must contain more than 65 percent domestic components by value by 2028, rising to 75 percent in 2029. The ambition is clear enough. The mechanism is not.

China occupies important positions across the robotics supply chain, producing almost everything from sensors, motors and batteries to actuators, lidars and motor controllers. Take the actuators, which determine how humanoid robots move, for example; they can account for 40 to 60 percent of hardware material costs.

The FCC has issued a mandate without first building the industry base needed to fulfill it. The consequences will fall most heavily on US laboratories, start-ups and consumers.

Specialization and the division of labor allow people and economies to become dramatically more productive; prices help allocate scarce resources; and competition provides a powerful incentive to innovate. Globalization extended those principles across borders, building supply chains in which components are produced wherever companies can make them most efficiently.

Washington now appears to be betting on the reverse proposition: that productivity can be raised by dismantling international specialization; that bureaucratic restrictions can allocate resources better than markets; and that competition from Chinese companies will weaken the US.

That is a risky bet. The White House raised the stakes on Wednesday with a national emergency declaration that could curb US imports of foreign power grid equipment — and potentially force utilities to replace gear already online.

Every such arbitrary restriction creates compliance departments, supplier audits, certification requirements and legal uncertainty.

For robotics and AI companies already operating at the frontier of capital expenditure, such costs can become significant. They are ultimately absorbed by companies, consumers or both, adding to the inflationary pressures already confronting the US economy.

If restrictions depend heavily on executive action and can be reversed by a subsequent administration, companies have little incentive to make the long-term investments that Washington says it wants. Industrial policy requires patience and predictability. The US' current regulatory whiplash provides neither.

In an article published on Wednesday, "The turbulent AI era is here. The choices we make now are critical", Bill Gates rightly argued that since AI will be one of the most disruptive technologies in history, the US and China need to cooperate on AI governance before competitive pressures make cooperation impossible. He also observed that much cutting-edge robotics research is taking place in China, something many in US policy circles have yet to appreciate fully.

The history of technological revolutions offers little support for the idea that innovation flourishes behind walls. Previous periods of major-country rivalry did not require dismantling the international division of labor. Today's technology ecosystem is vastly more interconnected, making such an effort even more costly.

As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in a meeting with US Ambassador to China David Perdue on Wednesday, after the US threatened to impose an additional "overcapacity" tariff of 7.5 percent on Chinese goods, China and the US should focus on a positive agenda, manage differences and remove obstacles to high-level exchanges.

If Washington decides that competition itself is a "security threat", it risks confusing national strength with national isolation. A technology superpower should want its companies to win because they are better, not because their competitors have been administratively excluded.

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Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Building climate-adaptive society a task that cannot be delayed

Despite being hit hard by Typhoon Maysak last month, parts of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region had by late August moved from emergency rescue to recovery and reconstruction mode. But whether local livelihoods are better protected before the next disaster strikes is where climate resilience is truly tested.

On Wednesday, a massive flash flood caused heavy casualties along the China-Nepal border.

These disasters, caused by extreme weather, not only highlight the need for fast-rescue responses, but also stronger forecasting, better land-use planning, resilient infrastructure and closer coordination among departments and countries.

On Aug 22, the Copernicus Climate Change Service of the European Union said the daily global average sea surface temperature over the extra-polar ocean had reached 21.1 C, the highest on record since 1979. Warmer oceans raise sea levels through thermal expansion, strengthen marine heatwaves and can feed more moisture and energy into extreme rainfall and some storm systems.

On Tuesday, Panama's government declared a nationwide state of emergency over the climate impacts of El Nino, citing risks of drought, floods and possible effects on Panama Canal shipping, agriculture and energy supply. It said El Nino was forecast to strengthen from October this year through March 2027.

The policy response to climate risk cannot stop at emergency relief or emissions reduction alone. If climate change is testing communities in Guangxi, causing sudden flood risks across borders, warming the world's oceans and threatening canal shipping and agriculture in Panama, adaptation has to become a normal part of national planning, public investment and grassroots governance. This is the context in which China's pledge to basically establish a climate-adaptive society by 2035, included in China's 2035 Nationally Determined Contributions under the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement, should be viewed as a part of its broader efforts to strengthen climate resilience.

China is among a relatively small number of countries that have explicitly included the building of a climate-adaptive or climate-resilient society in their national climate pledges. That sends a clear message: adaptation is integral to the country's modernization.

Without deeper emissions reductions, climate risks will continue to rise, and adaptation costs will become heavier. When the next extreme event comes, will communities, infrastructure and institutions be ready?

The Guangxi floods show that flood control is not only about rescue after the roads are inundated or residents are trapped. It also involves weather monitoring, early warning, reservoir safety, urban drainage, land-use planning, transport, power supply, communications, healthcare and post-disaster recovery. In rural areas, such weather events affect crops, livestock, drinking water safety and the resilience of local livelihoods.

A climate-adaptive society cannot be built by environmental authorities alone. Climate risk must be incorporated into economic planning, urban construction, agricultural policy, infrastructure investment and grassroots governance. Standards for roads, bridges, reservoirs, power grids and drainage systems need to reflect the changing climate, not only historical averages. Early warnings must reach vulnerable communities in time. Local governments need the technical capacity and financial tools to shift from emergency response to risk prevention.

Building a climate-adaptive society is not a defensive slogan. It is a modernization task. It means using better science, stronger planning, more resilient infrastructure and fairer public services to reduce losses before disasters strike. As extreme weather tests communities from Guangxi to the Himalayan region and beyond, the priority is to translate climate adaptation goals into actions.

—HOU LIQIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

APEC pillar of openness, cooperation in Asia-Pacific

Editor's note: *The 33rd Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting will be held in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in November. The 21st Century Business Herald spoke to Zhai Kun, a professor at the School of International Studies at Peking University, about APEC's significance in the regional and global economy and China's role in promoting cooperation among APEC economies. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

At a time when many regional cooperation mechanisms are weakening and exclusive blocs are on the rise, APEC's institutional strengths are its principles of openness, inclusiveness, nonbinding commitments, voluntary participation and consensus building. The "APEC approach" respects diversity and emphasizes flexibility and gradual progress, making it uniquely vital across the Asia-Pacific region where member economies vary significantly.

APEC is the only economic cooperation platform that covers the entire Asia-Pacific, bringing together 21 economies that account for roughly 60 percent of global GDP and nearly half of world trade. Its nonbinding nature, characterized by voluntariness, lowers participation barriers, enabling cooperation among countries with diverse economic systems and development stages. APEC upholds open regionalism and opposes closed, exclusive groups, contrasting sharply with the "small yard, high fence" approach pursued by some economies.

In today's complex international landscape, APEC is still an important platform for safeguarding openness and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. While some mechanisms have weakened due to geopolitical confrontation, APEC has become an indispensable "pressure relief valve" and "buffer" among major countries.

As the host of this year's APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, China has proposed the theme "Building an Asia-Pacific Community to Prosper Together", with three priorities — openness, innovation and cooperation. These elements form a framework that provides systematic solutions to challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region.

Openness is the cornerstone. The biggest risk facing the Asia-Pacific economies today is the erosion of the open order. Prioritizing openness reaffirms China's fundamental commitment to free trade. Innovation acts as the engine. APEC cooperation has expanded beyond conventional trade and investment into new areas such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence governance, green and low carbon development, and supply chain resilience, illustrating that regional cooperation in the 21st century should be innovation-driven. Cooperation is the pathway. No single economy can tackle the challenges confronting the region on its own.

These three priorities make it clear that China advocates countering closure with openness, facilitating growth through innovation and replacing confrontation with cooperation.

Since it joined APEC in 1991, China's role within APEC has evolved from being a participant and beneficiary to a provider of public goods, helping shape the APEC agenda.

China collaborates with many developing economies to prioritize development issues within APEC cooperation, ensuring that the benefits of cooperation are shared more equitably by all parties. During this process, APEC cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative could generate important and strategic synergies. Efforts could focus on the following aspects.

First, deepening the integration of "hard connectivity" and "soft connectivity" will allow the progress made by the BRI in infrastructure development to better align with APEC's efforts to facilitate trade and promote digital economy cooperation.

Second, linking the Digital Silk Road with APEC's digital economy cooperation is important. China's experience in fields such as cross-border e-commerce and mobile payments is worth sharing with more Asia-Pacific economies through the APEC framework.

Third, fostering collaboration between the Green Silk Road and APEC's green and low carbon development agenda will drive the advancement of clean energy, carbon markets and sustainable supply chains.

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VIEWS

Anupam Chander

Drawing the line on AI liability

Who should be held liable when an artificial intelligence model is used in a way that causes harm? The question is being debated both in classrooms and courtrooms across the United States. The answer has enormous implications for US technology companies that offer some of the world's leading AI systems. And it is equally relevant for Chinese companies offering similar models.

At the dawn of the internet age, the US Congress intervened to limit the liability of online platforms for their users' speech. In the AI era, by contrast, governments are debating an opposite approach: increasing rather than reducing the responsibility of technology companies.

The key question is who bears the responsibility when an AI system goes wrong. We might all agree that a driver who puts a car into self-driving mode remains responsible for an accident. But what about the company that made the self-driving system? Should it be liable even when the driver used it improperly? If an airline's customer service chatbot mistakenly reports a fare policy that never existed, must the airline be required to honor it? A Canadian court recently concluded that it should. When a chatbot's conversation with a teenager ends in tragedy, as families now allege in US courts, is the company that built the model liable?

Global Lens

These cases raise the same question: to what extent should AI developers be held liable for the harms their systems may cause?

Legal scholars in the US remain divided. Some advocate what is called strict liability, under which manufacturers are responsible for any harm caused by their product. This would mean that the AI developer would be liable regardless of intent and even if it were not at fault. Supporters of strict liability argue that such an approach would create a strong incentive for AI developers to ensure their systems are completely safe before they are put into operation.

The European Union seems to be moving toward strict liability for AI systems. It recently broadened its Product Liability Directive to cover software, including AI systems, making any AI system manufacturer liable for damage caused by any defect. A 2024 revision to the rules has made it easier for consumers to claim compensation. If the technical complexity of an AI system makes it difficult to prove a defect or if the manufacturer fails to provide sufficient information to the plaintiff, the Product Liability Directive presumes the system was defective. Even failing to provide necessary cybersecurity updates might be enough to establish liability.

Chinese technology companies, many of which release AI models as open source, may find some comfort in the fact that the European Product Liability Directive exempts developers of open-source models from liability. However, this exemption is not available when the open-source software is incorporated into commercial products. This raises some important questions. If a third party integrates an open-source AI model into a smart city project that later causes an accident, would the open-source model provider possibly be liable under the Directive? Such ambiguity undermines efforts to promote open-source models.

In a recent paper, Yale law professor Ketan Ramakrishnan argues persuasively that a strict liability approach to general purpose AI models will ultimately do more harm than good. If companies are expected to compensate for every misuse of their technology while receiving only a fraction of its social benefits, they may simply choose not to release models that could otherwise deliver enormous public value. Since it may be virtually impossible to eliminate all harmful usage, excessive liability could discourage innovation rather than improve safety.

Professor Ramakrishnan uses two examples to demonstrate how strict liability might be excessive. What if a novice programmer uses an AI model to learn how to program well enough to hack into other people's computers; or when an AI model helps people email more quickly, enabling someone to send harmful malware to others in bulk. Strict liability does not seem reasonable in such cases, he argues.

Consider another scenario. There have been cases of attorneys submitting legal briefs citing cases that were entirely fabricated by chatbots. Judges have fined the attorneys, but not the companies that made the chatbot on which the attorneys foolishly relied. This is because it would not seem fair to hold a chatbot maker liable because attorneys failed to do their homework. Notably, the cases thus far seem to have involved general purpose AI models, not ones marketed for accurate legal work.

As courts and lawmakers grapple with these issues, one thing is clear: we have yet to figure out what the basic rules governing AI systems should be.

The author is professor of Law and Technology at Georgetown University, US. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Yao Shuai

Western nations demand more while offering less

The United Nations' 2026 Sustainable Development Goals Report, released on July 7, presents a sobering picture. Of the 139 measurable targets, only 36 percent are on track or showing moderate progress, while 15 percent have slid below their 2015 baselines. Escalating conflicts, climate change, sluggish growth, rising debt, and a record fall in official development assistance were the primary forces that slowed progress, with the world's most vulnerable communities paying the heaviest price.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

The numbers paint a stark picture. According to the OECD, net official development assistance from Development Assistance Committee members plunged by 23.3 percent in 2025 — the largest annual drop on record — with the United States alone accounting for 70 percent of the decline. A further 6.9 percent contraction is projected for 2026, pushing development aid volumes to their lowest level since 2014. Several major donors have announced multi-year reductions in the future. Against this backdrop of unprecedented withdrawal, a narrative has emerged suggesting that a "post-aid era" has arrived, and that developing countries should embrace it as a step toward self-reliance.

This is a trap. After World War II, international development assistance has served as a vital global public good — funding health systems, responding to humanitarian emergencies, addressing displacement and climate change, and preventing local risks from cascading into global crises. When aid is reduced, shared risks increase for everyone. The "post-aid" story is not about liberation; it is a convenient pretext for wealthy nations to walk away from their obligations — that they promised since the 1970s to devote 0.7 percent of their GNI to foreign aid — just when needs are increasing.

Meanwhile, the UN estimates that the annual SDG financing gap has surpassed $4 trillion and continues to widen. Humanitarian funding has shrunk by nearly a third since 2023, reaching a decade low as 239 million people require life-saving assistance.

More troubling than the scale of this retreat is the transformation of what remains. In the past, donors who failed to meet their commitments at least offered explanations. Now, they are not only walking away but also recasting what remains as a commercial transaction. Developing countries are being told that accepting aid cuts is "for their own good", even as remaining engagements are restructured to serve the commercial, political and security interests of the donors.

In April this year, the US launched its "trade over aid" doctrine. Under the guise of "mutually beneficial private-sector partnerships" grounded in free-market principles, it demands pro-business market reforms from developing countries, downplays the role of aid, and reframes development cooperation as trade and investment on Washington's terms. Washington has put this doctrine into practice, signing bilateral agreements with 32 countries under its "America First" global health strategy. Zimbabwe, Ghana and Zambia have refused, citing concerns that range from data sovereignty infringements to clauses tying health assistance to preferential mineral access.

This bilateral retreat by the US is matched by a systematic withdrawal from the multilateral system. The US has exited institutions that span climate change, global health, human rights, development assistance and other key domains of global governance — most prominently the World Health Organization, the Paris Agreement and UN Women. When national self-interest becomes the guiding principle, development cooperation loses its purpose and turns into a transaction disguised as partnership.

This is the fundamental flaw of the "post-aid" narrative. It presents the collapse of assistance as a natural path to self-reliance, but obscures the dismantling of the very instruments that could make self-reliance possible. What must be challenged is not aid itself, but "aid without development" — resources that never lead to lasting progress.

The human cost is clear. In Africa, a global public health emergency caused by an Ebola outbreak required $1.4 billion, the amount initially estimated. But by mid-June, only 13 percent of the pledged funds had materialized, and the Africa CDC warned of imminent collapse. In stark contrast, South-South cooperation has delivered swift, practical solidarity: China has dispatched three medical expert teams to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the latest arriving in Kinshasa on Aug 1 to reinforce ongoing efforts alongside local authorities, the WHO and the Africa CDC.

This contrast reflects a broader philosophy. Across the Global South, a different model of partnership is taking shape — pragmatic, needs-based, and rooted in shared development experience. The benchmark is not the most expensive or technologically advanced option, but what is most suitable, affordable and adaptable to local conditions.

This is a collective strength of the Global South — a growing capacity to support one another not as donors and recipients in the traditional sense, but as partners navigating shared challenges.

At a time when traditional donors are retreating, China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) signals a clear commitment to increasing foreign aid and providing more international public goods.

Equally instructive is the experience of many emerging economies as former aid recipients: external resources, when integrated into nationally owned plans and priorities, can strengthen rather than undermine sovereignty. This history offers a credible alternative to the false choice between dependency and abandonment.

The path forward requires three shifts. First, the international community must reject the "post-aid" narrative for what it is — a self-serving justification for disengagement — and insist on better aid: demand-driven, respectful of national ownership, and focused on building lasting capacity.

Second, the diversity of development actors should be treated as an asset. Different partners bring different strengths; the challenge is coordination around common goals. Emerging technologies offer new tools to improve efficiency and targeting. The World Bank's 2026 World Development Report, released on Aug 4, finds that AI could help developing countries achieve in a decade what might otherwise take a century. But it also warns that without proactive investment in digital infrastructure and skills, the same technology risks widening the gap between and within nations.

Third, the UN must reclaim its anchoring role by moving beyond forums to make developing countries' concrete needs visible, produce the public goods — norms, standards, knowledge — that build confidence, offer networks and practical solutions tailored to diverse country contexts, and translate consensus into coordinated action.

We are not entering a "post-aid era", but an era of cascading crises that demands better aid that is a genuine global public good. Choosing solidarity over selfishness is the only path to a just, resilient and genuinely shared future.

The author is a senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



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China's aspiration for multipolar world explained

China's foreign policy has long been misinterpreted or deliberately distorted in the West, with many assuming that a rapidly rising China will behave just like the United States as a hegemonic power.

China, however, rejects such claims. Its foreign policy is based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual non-aggression; non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence.

While the term "multipolar world" is missing in official US vocabulary, it is central to China's vision for a global order where developing countries, especially those in the Global South, have a bigger say in global governance.

The recently published book, *China's Foreign Policy and the Making of a Multipolar World — Changes Unseen in a Century*, edited by London-based China specialists Keith Bennett and Carlos Martinez, offers valuable insights into China's foreign policy, its historical context, its positions on global issues and its vision for the future.

Published by Praxis Press this month, the book features 10 essays by nine Chinese and international experts and scholars on China, each providing unique perspectives on critical questions, such as whether China is an expansionist and imperial power or whether the Belt and Road Initiative for building connectivity is a "debt trap" as labeled by some China hawks.

China's peaceful rise is remarkable, achieved over a few decades without waging wars, engaging in colonization, pursuing regime change or carrying out assassinations.

According to Bennett and Martinez, the 10 essays share a common premise that China's emergence as a global power, far from being a threat to humanity as claimed by many in the West, is in reality a beacon of hope for a just, peaceful and multipolar world.

In their joint essay on "the world is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century", a phrase used by President Xi Jinping, the two argue that the collective rise of the Global South, with China in the vanguard, is bringing a decisive end to the unipolar moment briefly enjoyed by the US following the dramatic changes in the international landscape in the 1990s.

The authors commend Xi's strategic vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity, highlighting the initiatives proposed by China on global security, development, civilization and governance.

Ken Hammond, professor emeritus of East Asian and Global History at New Mexico State University, provides a historical perspective on China's foreign policy since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

He traces it back to China's bitter experience under Western and Japanese imperialism in the "century of humiliation" that followed the Opium War. This history is critical to understanding China's current mindset.

Jenny Clegg, a China specialist who first visited the country in 1971, elaborates on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as a guiding framework for China's foreign policy over the decades.

In "How China's Peaceful Rise is Changing the World", an essay by Cheng Enfu, former president of the Academy of Marxism of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the author discusses China's global impact across six domains: science and technology, economy, politics, culture, ecology and people's livelihood.

With anti-China smear campaigns reaching hysterical levels in recent years, this book provides a more accurate portrayal of China's foreign policy, its philosophy of win-win cooperation in contrast to the zero-sum game pursued by the US, and China's strong opposition to a new Cold War that threatens to divide the world into confrontational blocs.

China's peaceful rise is remarkable, achieved over a few decades without waging wars, engaging in colonization, pursuing regime change or carrying out assassinations.

China firmly believes that countries with different histories, cultures and political systems can coexist and should cooperate for the benefit of their peoples and the world. BRICS, which includes a diverse group of countries, exemplifies this belief.

The world is undeniably shifting toward a multipolar global order.

It is an unstoppable trend that aligns with China's foreign policy vision and is also the aspiration for most countries in the world.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

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

POU SOTHIRAK AND **HIM RAKSMEY**

New ways to grow together

With increased cooperation in emerging green energy sectors and AI, ASEAN and China can bring mutual benefits to each other as well as to the wider world



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China have had enduring relations ever since both sides established a dialogue partnership in 1991. Anchored by a shared commitment to a cordial neighborly relationship and an eagerness to pursue practical cooperation of mutual interest, the relationship between both sides has progressed substantially over the past 35 years.



Pou Sothirak



Him Raksmey

The depth and breadth of these ties are remarkable and multifaceted, ranging from political security to economic and sociocultural aspects. Given the depth and breadth of the practical cooperation between ASEAN and China, Beijing is poised to be one of the most important natural partners for the region. According to the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute's State of Southeast Asia 2026 Survey Report, since 2019, China has been the most influential political and strategic power, as well as the most influential economic power in Southeast Asia. Based on the Lowy Institute's 2025 Southeast Asia Influence Index, China has the deepest economic relations, the most diplomatic influence, and the most regional engagement in the region.

Built upon extensive cooperation, ASEAN-China ties are currently on an upward trajectory. Both parties have maintained the tradition of focusing on practical cooperation that yields mutually beneficial, tangible results. In fact, as a result of close ASEAN-China relations, several outstanding outcomes have become visible.

On economic integration, ASEAN and China have forged close relations deeply rooted in robust trade and growing investment. China has been ASEAN's largest trading partner since 2009, while ASEAN has been China's largest trading partner since 2019. Data from China's General Administration of Customs show that in 2025, the China-ASEAN trade volume amounted to about $1 trillion. In terms of investment, China has been one of the largest investors in ASEAN. It is estimated that in 2024, foreign direct investment from China to the region totaled $19.3 billion, making China the third-largest source of FDI among ASEAN dialogue partners.

This excellent economic interaction has been driven, in part, by the implementation of key agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Signed in 2020 and entering into force in 2022, RCEP is one of the world's largest free trade agreements, involving ASEAN members, Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea. It covers tariff elimination and promotes unified supply chain rules. In addition, the signing of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol in October 2025 was a significant step toward bolstering economic integration between both sides. The upgrade includes modernizing the free trade agreement by expanding its scope beyond traditional trade to include the digital economy, green economy, supply chain connectivity and consumer protection.

In terms of regional security, China and ASEAN share a strong commitment to upholding the rules-based regional architecture designed to maintain peace, security and open trade through agreed-upon legal principles rather than raw power politics.

Energy and artificial intelligence have become critically important to the future of ASEAN and China. Collaborative frameworks including the ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation and joint AI-related initiatives help both sides manage surging resource demands and technological shifts.

While ASEAN and China have long-standing cooperation in energy, both sides are committed to working even harder in this area in light of the oil price fluctuations arising out of the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. At the ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July in Manila, both sides agreed to carry out the exchange of information on energy policy and practical cooperation and to explore the possible establishment of cooperation mechanisms to enhance regional energy security and resilience, thereby contributing to sustainable development in the region. The two parties also pledged to strengthen cooperation in regional power interconnectivity, energy supply chains, clean low-carbon and renewable energy, energy technology innovation, and other relevant areas.

In the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2026-30) adopted last year, the two sides agreed to promote cooperation, primarily on clean energy, through policy exchanges, joint research and dialogue, and to establish a dedicated institution called the ASEAN-China Clean Energy Cooperation Center to support these important undertakings.

With the affirmation of a stronger political commitment built upon existing cooperation mechanisms, the ASEAN-China energy partnership is likely to grow more substantively in the years to come and yield positive tangible outcomes for both sides.

Collaboration on AI represents another significant area of practical cooperation. Both ASEAN and China regard AI as an important instrument to promote regional prosperity, and seek to develop rules and norms for AI governance and explore opportunities to work together. There has been important progress toward this end. During the 28th ASEAN-China Summit in Kuala Lumpur in October 2025, both sides underscored the importance of strengthening exchanges and cooperation in the field of AI. This political commitment has been translated into concrete actions. The China-ASEAN AI Industry Innovation Center was officially inaugurated in May, while the China-ASEAN Digital Academy is set to be launched within this year.

In addition, the recent establishment of the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization in Shanghai marks another cooperation opportunity for ASEAN and China, particularly in capacity building. Twenty-nine countries — including five ASEAN members — are founding members of the organization. At the launch of WAICO, Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed the need to adhere to the principles of openness and win-win and boosting innovation-driven development, strengthening risk-awareness and ensuring that AI is secure and controllable, encouraging inclusiveness and promoting mutual learning between civilizations, and advocating solidarity and improving global governance.

In conclusion, the milestones of the 35th anniversary of dialogue relations and the fifth anniversary of the comprehensive strategic partnership signal a new era of maturity and depth in ASEAN-China relations. The future prospects of ASEAN-China relations look quite promising as we have witnessed the resounding multitude of practical cooperation between ASEAN and China over the past 35 years.

For ASEAN, China is one of the most influential partners, as well as one of the most influential economic powers for Southeast Asia. For China, ASEAN is not only the largest trading partner and a major source of AI application scenarios and potential green energy market, but also a sturdy partner that can jointly uphold the rules-based regional architecture in which China and ASEAN can jointly inject vitality, despite the increased geopolitical rivalries among the great powers and the challenging external environment.

Both sides have been consistently stepping up their existing excellent relations through increased economic integration through trade and upgrading their ACFTA, as well as strengthening regional stability amid a complex global landscape. With increased cooperation in emerging green energy sectors and AI, ASEAN and China can bring mutual benefits to both sides and to the wider world.

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LIU HONGKUI

Bytes into growth

Open cooperation in digital trade has emerged as a new breakthrough for promoting economic integration and shared prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region

In recent years, the deep integration of digital technology and international trade has accelerated the growth of digital trade, which has emerged as a new engine for global trade and economic growth. According to the 2025 Report on the Development of Global Digital Trade, jointly compiled by the United Nations International Trade Center and the organizing committee of the Global Digital Trade Expo, the scale of global digital trade exports increased from $4.59 trillion to $7.23 trillion between 2020 and 2024, with an average annual growth rate of 12.1 percent, surpassing the global trade growth rate of 9.7 percent during the same period. The Asia-Pacific region, with its vast market size, diverse industrial structure and close economic ties, has become a frontier for digital trade innovation.



China's digital trade development has also accelerated in recent years. According to the Ministry of Commerce's report on China's development of digital trade 2025, the country's trade in digitally deliverable services exceeded $406.72 billion, a 5.4 percent increase from the previous year, while cross-border e-commerce trade reached 2.71 trillion yuan ($403 billion), a 14 percent increase, both setting new records. China's digital trade development not only contributes to its own high-quality trade growth but also injects new momentum into the collaborative development and shared prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region through spillover effects.

The Asia-Pacific region has developed a multilayered, broad-coverage and differentiated digital trade cooperation system, combining institutional foundations and market advantages to strengthen the basis for regional digital economic and trade cooperation. Various regional and bilateral trade agreements continue to improve digital economic and trade rules. For instance, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world's largest free trade agreement by population and economic size, includes a dedicated e-commerce chapter with systematic and flexible arrangements for e-commerce, electronic authentication and online consumer protection, providing institutional guarantees for Asia-Pacific digital trade development.

Additionally, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation mechanism continues to advance regional digital connectivity, while the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement focuses on high-standard digital economic and trade rules, offering important prerequisites for cooperation in the Asia-Pacific digital sector.

The digital economies of Asia-Pacific countries are highly complementary, creating significant opportunities for coordinated development. For example, China has advantages in digital technology, the platform economy and digital industries, while the digital economies of the ASEAN members are rapidly emerging, with market demand continuously expanding. This creates broad space for industrial division of labor in digital products, services and technologies within the region. However, it is important to note that the digital economic development in the Asia-Pacific region remains uneven, with some economies lagging behind in digital infrastructure and digital transformation capabilities, widening the digital divide. Fragmented rules and inconsistent standards also hinder regional digital trade integration, necessitating a consensus on cooperation to address development challenges collectively.

China can share the benefits of its consumption upgrade by opening its vast market. As the world's largest online retail market for 13 consecutive years, China's online retail sales reached 15.97 trillion yuan in 2025. Through mature cross-border e-commerce platforms and digital services trade systems, goods, professional services and high-quality digital content from other Asia-Pacific economies can enter the Chinese market at lower cost and with high efficiency, sharing the benefits of China's market openness.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

China has enhanced regional supply chain resilience through industrial chain cooperation. The widespread application of digital technology significantly reduces the organization and coordination costs of regional industrial chains, fostering new digital trade formats and industry chain divisions. In 2025, China's offshore service outsourcing execution volume with other RCEP member countries reached 321.1 billion yuan, accounting for 27.5 percent of the national total. Chinese digital platforms leverage their resource integration advantages to link numerous small- and medium-sized enterprises in the Asia-Pacific region, promoting deep integration and coordinated linkage of the digital industrial chain, effectively enhancing the stability and competitiveness of regional industry chains.

China can help narrow the regional digital development gap through inclusive growth. Digital trade significantly lowers the barriers to international trade participation, enabling more developing economies and small and micro enterprises to engage in international trade and integrate into global value chains through China's digital trade platforms. This inclusiveness helps address regional development imbalances and promotes inclusive and sustainable development.

China facilitated regional trade connectivity through digital infrastructure. Leveraging the Digital Silk Road, China continues to promote open cooperation in digital infrastructure and technology services, aiming to unblock bottlenecks in the Asia-Pacific region. It is also promoting mutual recognition of cross-border electronic signatures and the establishment of cross-border settlement service platforms, strengthening the foundation for Asia-Pacific digital trade connectivity.

Looking ahead, the potential of China's digital trade development will be increasingly unleashed. The key lies in how to better leverage this positive factor to foster shared prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

First, openness in the digital sector needs to be deepened and the institutional foundation for regional cooperation strengthened. By actively aligning with international high-standard digital economic and trade rules and deepening openness in the digital sector, the momentum for China's digital trade innovation and development will be more robust, and its contribution to regional shared prosperity will be greater. It is essential that China fully utilizes the open platform roles of free trade pilot zones, national digital service export bases and national digital trade demonstration zones to explore new models of digital trade development and promote stable development of Asia-Pacific digital trade cooperation.

Second, joint construction of digital infrastructure should be promoted to narrow the regional digital divide. China and other Asia-Pacific countries should actively explore new cooperation models in areas such as 5G base stations, big data centers and smart ports. The focus should be on carrying out digital technology training, talent exchanges and technology transfer assistance to build an inclusive, interconnected regional digital infrastructure system. This will help address the digital shortcomings of less developed countries.

Third, the areas of digital cooperation should be expanded to unlock shared development dividends. China and other Asia-Pacific countries should actively expand their cooperation in offshore service outsourcing, digital content trade, telemedicine, online education and other fields. China should promote the improvement of supporting service systems such as cross-border logistics, overseas warehouses and cross-border payments, helping small and micro enterprises and more people in this region benefit from regional digital trade.

Fourth, it is crucial for China to use multilateral regional cooperation platforms such as RCEP and APEC to actively promote dialogue and consultation on digital-trade rules among Asia-Pacific economies, build regional consensus and continuously reduce barriers in order to promote a more open, inclusive, balanced and win-win Asia-Pacific digital trade governance system.

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BUSINESS

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China voices opposition to potential tariff

Nation reserves the right to take all necessary measures, ministry says

By **ZHANG CHENXU**
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China has voiced firm opposition to a potential move by the United States to impose an additional 7.5 percent tariff on Chinese goods, and said it would keep a close eye on any follow-up steps Washington makes while reserving the right to take all necessary measures, the Ministry of Commerce said on Thursday.

Successive rounds of tariff hikes have done little to revive US manufacturing or narrow trade imbalances with its major trading partners, officials and analysts said, urging Washington to lower trade barriers and pursue mutually beneficial economic cooperation.

Their remarks came as Washington was reportedly weighing an additional 7.5 percent tariff on Chinese goods under a Section 301 probe launched in March into alleged "structural excess capacity and production in manufacturing sectors" across 16 economies, including China.

"The investigations politicize economic and trade issues and represent a typical act of unilateralism and protectionism," Huang Ling, spokeswoman for the Ministry of Commerce, said at a news conference on Thursday in Beijing.

The ministry last month released a document on the so-called "overcapacity" issue, calling for a comprehensive, objective and fair approach to capacity concerns and for differences to be addressed through open and mutually beneficial cooperation.

The US was "set to impose" the levy, which would bring the additional tariffs introduced during US President Donald Trump's second term back to around 20 percent, Bloomberg reported on Monday, citing people familiar with the matter.

The final rate has yet to be settled. One option under discussion is to announce a higher tariff but suspend part of it, bringing the effective rate down to 7.5 percent, the report said.

Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the additional tariff, if imposed, would do more harm than good to efforts to revive US manufacturing, as it would raise trade costs and erode efficiency gains from global specialization.

Similar concerns were raised in an analysis released earlier this month by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank.

Examining potential tariffs stemming from the Section 301 probe into alleged manufacturing overcapacity, it said Washington's high-tariff strategy had yet to deliver the promised gains. "None of these benefits has yet been realized," the analysis stated.

While the US trade deficit with China had narrowed, deficits with other trading partners have widened, leaving the country with "no reduction in its overall trade deficit", according to the analysis.

High tariffs have "contributed to growing prices and uncertainty", the analysis stated, citing a Yale Budget Lab estimate that they would cost each American household roughly $1,100 per year.

Zhou said a lasting revival of US manufacturing would require openness and cooperation rather than confrontation and economic coercion. "Otherwise, any recovery would be difficult to sustain," he said.

Cui Fan, a professor of international trade at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, echoed that view.

"Shifting blame onto China will do nothing to solve the problem," he said, adding that China remains willing to deepen industrial and supply chain cooperation in manufacturing with countries around the world.



The construction site of a power transformation facility in Wuhu, Anhui province.
ZHENG XIANLIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

State Grid unveils plan to add 200 GW of wind, solar capacity annually

By **ZHENG XIN**
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State Grid Corp of China aims to lift the share of renewable power generation across its operating footprint to over 30 percent by 2030, committing to meet all incremental electricity demand with clean energy under a comprehensive decarbonization blueprint unveiled for the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30).

To deliver on its targets, the world's largest power utility plans to connect an average of 200 gigawatts of new wind and solar capacity annually through the end of the decade.

The company has pledged to guarantee the seamless grid connection of mega renewable bases in desert and Gobi regions, alongside offshore wind and distributed energy projects.

State Grid's ambitious targets are designed to keep pace with China's broader, world-leading renewable energy rollout.

According to the latest data from the National Energy Administration, the country's cumulative installed power generation capacity reached 4.08 billion kilowatts by end-July, representing a robust 11 percent year-on-year rise, with the rapid expansion of renewable energy to continuously headline the sector's growth.

Solar power capacity grew 16.1 percent to 1.29 billion kW, while wind power capacity surged 19.5 percent to 690 million kW, it said.

As this green footprint rapidly expands, the pressure on the grid to safely integrate and absorb intermittent power has never been higher.

To manage the inherent intermittency of these green power sources, the grid operator is significantly ramping up system flexibility. State Grid aims to have over 120 GW of pumped-hydro power storage in operation or under construction by 2030, while an additional 140 GW of new energy storage capacity will be integrated into its network during the 2026-30 period.

Concurrently, the utility will support the low-carbon and flexibility retrofitting of traditional coal-fired power plants. By lowering their average minimum output to 35 percent of rated load, the grid will free up critical peak-shaving capacity to accommodate more renewables.

Optimally allocating this surging clean energy requires massive physical investments. State Grid will accelerate the construction of ultra-high voltage transmission corridors, planning to commission 15 new cross-regional direct current lines by 2030. This build-out will elevate cross-provincial transmission capacity to an unprecedented 500 GW.

According to the NEA, grid infrastructure investments are rapidly accelerating this year.

National grid investment reached 302.7 billion yuan ($45.04 billion) in the first half of this year, up 4.0 percent year-on-year. State Grid completed over 310 billion yuan in fixed-asset investment, facilitating 3.48 trillion kilowatt-hours of marketized electricity trading and providing critical support for cross-regional power sharing and new energy consumption, it said.

At the local level, the utility is overhauling its distribution networks to absorb more than 60 GW of distributed clean power annually. By deploying agile virtual power plants and rural microgrids, State Grid aims to maximize on-site power consumption and sharpen real-time demand response.

Industry experts point out that this massive grid overhaul is necessary because greening the grid goes far beyond just building more solar panels.

"High-quality development and absorption of renewable energy is not solely an issue for power generators and grid operators; it is a systemic engineering feat that involves multiple sectors including power, heating, industry, transportation and construction," said Chen Guoping, vice-chairman of the China Energy Research Society. "Currently, the spatial and temporal mismatch between renewable energy output and load demand is the primary contradiction in its development."

APEC eyes need for standards to cover AI

By **ZHANG XIAOMIN** in Dalian, Liaoning and **LI JIAYING** in Beijing

Representatives from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Sub-Committee on Standards and Conformance recently gathered in Dalian, Liaoning province, for in-depth discussions on issues including harmonizing standards and disseminating good regulatory practices that support the responsible use of artificial intelligence and the broader deployment of clean energy.

"The two issues that China has raised this year are important. They're a new type of matter that we need to take into serious consideration and keep going in that direction," said Byung Goo Kang, vice-chair of the APEC SCSC.

There will be a new type of regulation on AI, he said. Economies need to exchange information on standards or conformity assessment related to AI, as well as products or compliance embedded in AI.

The SCSC held its second plenary meeting of 2026 on Aug 21-22 in Dalian, as a key component of the Third APEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM3) this year. More than 70 delegates attended the event, representing APEC member economies, regional partnership bodies and international standardization organizations.

They exchanged views on the year's key work priorities, consolidating the foundation for standards-related cooperation in SOM3.

"It's important to build trust among the economies," said Kang.

He pointed out that mutual recognition looks very good, but in practice there are many barriers to accepting or recognizing each other's testing reports or certifications.

"We hope that with standards or conformity assessment there shouldn't be any barriers, so we are sharing information and trying to build a better regulatory system or better standards to help our industry," he said.

During the two-day session, participants reviewed annual reports from regional partnership bodies and discussed ongoing SCSC projects and new proposals.

Under the SOM3 framework, China organized a series of high-level thematic seminars focusing on areas of shared interest among APEC economies, including the silver economy, cross-border e-commerce, road transport and voluntary sustainability standards.

Bilateral and multilateral consultations were held to align project proposals and promote joint endorsement, advancing regional harmonization of standards and mutual recognition of conformity assessment.

Delegates reaffirmed that standards and conformity assessment serve as "intangible infrastructure" for trade and investment facilitation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Through regulatory alignment, technical standard coordination and mutual recognition of assessment results, barriers to cross-border compliance can be effectively reduced, unlocking the region's growth potential.

"The APEC region is a great market. We have to deal with making technical barriers in this market less and less," said Anton Shalaev, head of Russia's Federal Agency on Technical Regulating and Metrology, adding that the SCSC can be a very good tool through which the economies can exchange their views on how to reduce these technical barriers.

For emerging technologies such as the bioeconomy and AI, he said that economies need very unified rules and special terms in conformity assessment, as well as measures to eliminate trade and technological barriers.

Data from the State Administration for Market Regulation showed that during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), China implemented 14 cooperative projects under the SCSC, covering the digital economy, green transition, the silver economy and food safety.

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Briefly

Meitu sees robust revenue growth in H1

Chinese selfie-enhancing internet company Meitu said its revenue in the first half had increased by 22.1 percent year-on-year to 2.21 billion yuan ($326 million). During this period, Meitu recorded an adjusted net profit attributable to the parent company of 650 million yuan, up 39.5 percent year-on-year. The company said the core photo, video and design products business segment saw revenue reach 1.77 billion yuan in the first half of the year, marking a year-on-year increase of 30.9 percent and accounting for 80 percent of total revenue.

200 key standards made for AI sector

China has so far formulated nearly 200 key standards for artificial intelligence to steer the sector toward sound and orderly development. AI has now been largely integrated across the entire chain in China, including research and development, design, production, manufacturing, quality inspection, as well as operations and maintenance, said the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

UBS sees broader RMB funding role

By **ZHOU LANXU**
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UBS's inaugural panda bond — the first issued by a Swiss financial institution — highlights the renminbi's growing role as a funding currency for international institutions and UBS's commitment to China, as financial opening-up and technology-driven growth create new opportunities, a senior executive said.

The Swiss banking group has priced the 2 billion yuan ($297 million), five-year bond at a coupon rate of 1.78 percent, the lowest on record for a five-year panda bond issued by a foreign financial institution, UBS said.

Panda bonds are yuan-denominated bonds issued in the Chinese mainland by overseas institutions.

Janice Hu, China country head of UBS and chairperson of UBS Securities, said China's bond market has become increasingly connected internationally, while its growing maturity and relevance have made it a natural funding market for international institutions.

"We see the onshore RMB market as an important component of UBS's diversified funding toolkit," Hu said in an exclusive interview with China Daily, adding that panda bonds and RMB financing can play an increasingly meaningful role as international institutions diversify their funding amid heightened global financial volatility.



Tourists seen in front of a UBS bank in Switzerland. IMAGO

China will further improve policy arrangements for panda bonds to facilitate more issuances and trading by overseas institutions, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, told China Daily earlier.

The bond issuance comes amid a broader expansion of UBS's presence in China. The group increased its stake in UBS Securities from 67 percent to full ownership in April 2025 and raised the unit's registered capital from 1.49 billion yuan to 2.21 billion yuan in December.

UBS Futures, meanwhile, raised its registered capital from 540 million yuan to 640 million yuan in February and then to 740 million yuan in April.

"These are not isolated capital deployments. They are part of one overarching vision — to build a stronger, more integrated and more competitive UBS platform in China for the long term," Hu said, adding that the additional capital supports investment in the group's platform, technology, talent and risk-management capabilities. China is one of UBS's most important strategic markets, where the group aims to reinforce its investment-banking position while expanding its wealth and asset management businesses.

A key opportunity for foreign financial institutions such as UBS is the listing wave among Chinese artificial intelligence and technology companies, Hu said, and such financing needs are gradually extending from IPOs to more sophisticated financing and cross-border mergers and acquisitions.

Since the start of 2025 until now, UBS Global Banking has helped clients complete about 80 transactions in the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, raising more than $50 billion, according to the group.

Hu said participation by foreign investors in Chinese tech IPOs has been increasing, with active involvement from sovereign wealth funds, global long-only asset managers and specialist technology funds.

One reason for that interest is scarcity, she said, explaining that such listed Chinese companies offer foreign investors scarce exposure across the AI value chain, spanning large language models, robotics, data infrastructure, semiconductors and sensors, with a distinctive cost-performance advantage.

Hu also expressed a constructive medium-term view on Chinese equities despite recent volatility, as UBS's chief investment office continues to rate Chinese equities as "attractive", with net northbound flows from stock connects into A shares turning positive at $33 billion in the second quarter.

Further opening-up of China's futures market could also create more opportunities for UBS Futures, Hu said, particularly as international investors seek broader market access and more sophisticated risk-management tools.

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BUSINESS

China's NEV pioneer looks to the future

Nation strives for global role as collaborator, trailblazer and leader



A customer checks out a new energy vehicle at a dealership in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Aug 5.
ZHANG YING / FOR CHINA DAILY



A robot performs welding operations at an auto manufacturing workshop in Qingdao on Aug 18.
LIANG XIAOPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

BEIJING — In Wan Gang's Beijing office, three objects present a compact history of China's rise in electric vehicles.

One is a kerosene lamp, a reminder of his youth spent in rural Jilin province, where he often read by its light.

Another is the Nicolaus August Otto Award, presented to him in 2023 by German engine maker Deutz in recognition of his pioneering work, including contributions to EVs and hydrogen technology. The prize is named after the inventor of the four-stroke engine.

The third is a transparent bottle holding a miniature scene of Christopher Columbus' voyage — a symbol, he told Xinhua, of exploring an unfamiliar frontier.

Wan, 74, is honorary president of the China Association for Science and Technology and former minister of science and technology. He was chief scientist of the major EV project under the National High-tech R&D Program, or the 863 Program, a national initiative launched in 1986 to advance China's capabilities in strategic high-tech fields.

In a wide-ranging interview with Xinhua News Agency, Wan looked back at why China chose the EV path and set out his views on what comes next — from competition at home and new battery technologies to the overseas development of Chinese automakers.

The interview comes as China's auto transition reaches another milestone. New energy vehicles — China's official category covering pure EVs, plug-in hybrid EVs and fuel-cell vehicles — accounted for 60.4 percent of all new vehicle sales in July. NEV sales reached 9.007 million in the first seven months of 2026, up 9.6 percent year-on-year.

Globally, China produced nearly three-quarters of the world's electric cars in 2025, according to the International Energy Agency. BloombergNEF estimated that China accounted for 63 percent of electric cars sold worldwide that year.

Wan's assessment is measured: China has reached the global forefront in NEVs, he said, but "there is still much to do".

Wan traced China's EV strategy to three practical concerns at the turn of the century: rising dependence on imported oil as car ownership grew, worsening air pollution and the risk that Chinese manufacturers would remain dependent on foreign core technologies if they continued to follow the established internal-combustion route.

EV and hybrid technologies were still in their early stages globally, leaving more room for competition. China also chose a diversified approach rather than relying on a single technology.

The 863 Program's EV project pursued pure electric, hybrid and fuel-cell vehicles in parallel, while also supporting research on batteries, motors and electronic controls.

That strategy was followed by years of research, demonstration projects, infrastructure development and market building.

As purchase subsidies were gradually phased out, the industry entered fully market-oriented competition.

The economics have changed markedly. The IEA estimates that, even before government incentives, nearly 70 percent of battery-electric cars sold in China in 2025 were cheaper than their internal-combustion equivalents.

China also accounted for more than 80 percent of global battery-cell production, while battery-pack prices were around 30 percent lower than in North America and 35 percent lower than in Europe.

Recent 2026 analyses pointed to several drivers behind that cost advantage.

McKinsey said some Chinese companies have achieved battery-pack cost advantages of 25 to 40 percent through simplified architectures, lower-cost chemistries such as LFP and component optimization. CSIS highlights how private firms and technology-focused entrants have intensified competition and experimentation in manufacturing, software, battery management and autonomy.

This influence is spreading beyond China.

BloombergNEF said EV demand in emerging markets, including Southeast Asia and Latin America, is growing rapidly. In Thailand, EVs accounted for 27 percent of new car sales in 2025, with Chinese brands making up 88 percent of EVs sold.

China's EV deployment is also reducing oil use. The IEA estimates that the global EV fleet displaced about 1.7 million barrels of oil demand a day in 2025, with China accounting for roughly 1 million barrels a day.

China's role in the global EV transition is therefore no longer only about production volumes. Its scale has helped expand the supply of affordable EVs and lower some of the cost barriers to electrification.

Rapid growth has also brought new challenges.

Wan pointed to anxiety as one factor behind the "involution-style" competition in China's auto industry.

The sales of all automobiles in China expanded from about 26 million units in 2021 to 34 million units in 2025, with NEVs contributing a big portion of the growth. Companies rushed toward a fast-growing market, while traditional automakers had to maintain conventional vehicle businesses and compete in NEVs at the same time. Wan said this anxiety sometimes has escalated into irrational competition.

His prescription is practical: know the customer, focus on clearer market segments and improve after-sales service.

What automakers learn from existing owners, he argued, should feed directly into the next generation of products.

The need for that shift is becoming clearer. The profit margin of China's vehicle manufacturing sector fell to 1.5 percent in the first five months of 2026.

> "Pure EVs are a long-term solution, but plug-in hybrid EVs, including extended-range models, will retain a substantial role."
>
> **Wan Gang,** honorary president of the China Association for Science and Technology and former minister of science and technology

The authorities have also stepped up efforts to regulate disorderly price competition and encourage companies to compete more through quality, technology and value.

Wan also rejects the characterization that China simply has too much auto capacity.

He pointed to vehicle ownership of a little over 260 cars per 1,000 people — far below levels in major developed markets — and to room for demand to grow at home and overseas.

More recent data provide additional context. China's NEV exports reached 2.909 million in the first seven months of 2026, up 120 percent year-on-year, according to official industry data.

BloombergNEF expected 23.3 million passenger EVs to be sold globally in 2026, an 11 percent increase from 2025.

For an industry that serves both domestic and international markets, production numbers alone don't tell the whole story.

Wan emphasized that the next phase of growth should focus on better products, clearer market positioning and stronger service rather than simply increasing volume.

Wan is equally direct about the next stage overseas.

Chinese automakers, he said, should establish local production bases to better navigate trade barriers and build the after-sales, marketing and training systems needed for long-term operations.

He pointed out that overseas service networks remain an area where Chinese brands have room for improvement.

The direction is already visible. Trade barriers and industrial policies are pushing more Chinese automakers toward local production in overseas markets.

The shift is increasingly visible in Southeast Asia, with Thailand and Indonesia among the markets building deeper local EV manufacturing capabilities.

For Wan, overseas production and service are part of the same task: Chinese automakers need to understand local customers and build stronger local capabilities rather than rely only on vehicle exports.

The technology roadmap also remains open.

Wan said: "Pure EVs are a long-term solution, but plug-in hybrid EVs, including extended-range models, will retain a substantial role. Pure EVs could eventually account for about 65 to 70 percent of the combined market for the two technologies, with plug-in hybrids taking about 30 to 35 percent."

On solid-state batteries, Wan is cautious about dramatic claims on range and charging speed. The key questions, he said, are whether difficult materials and engineering problems can be solved and whether the technology makes economic sense. He expects large-scale industrialization around 2030.

That timetable is broadly consistent with recent industry assessments.

McKinsey said commercial-scale production of all-solid-state batteries is unlikely until after 2030, with manufacturing hurdles around interfaces, yields, performance, longevity and cost still to be overcome.

Wan also sees hydrogen fuel cells playing a role in commercial vehicles and intelligent connected vehicles as another important direction for the industry.

Twenty-five years after China's major EV project began, the basic question is no longer whether China can build a globally competitive EV industry.

The next challenge, as Wan described it, is to improve quality and services, foster healthier competition, advance new technologies and build stronger businesses overseas.

He summed up the role he hopes China's NEV industry will play globally in three words: collaborator, pioneer and leader.

China should encourage its automakers to expand overseas while continuing to welcome foreign companies to invest and innovate in the Chinese market, he said.

The miniature ship in Wan's office remains a fitting symbol. China's EV industry is no longer exploring an empty field. It is navigating a larger global market — with more opportunities still ahead.

XINHUA

More EV charging facilities added as sector booms

BEIJING — China's electric vehicle charging infrastructure has continued to expand swiftly, with the total number of charging points reaching 23.68 million by the end of July 2026, up 41.9 percent year-on-year, the National Energy Administration said on Monday.

Of this total, public charging facilities numbered 5.099 million, an increase of 21.3 percent from a year earlier.

Private charging facilities totaled 18.58 million units by the end of last month, surging 48.8 percent year-on-year.

The data, sourced from the national charging infrastructure monitoring and service platform, highlight the continued expansion of China's EV support network alongside a surge in EV sales.

41.9 percent
year-on-year growth of total charging points by end July

26.8 percent
year-on-year growth of NEV output in July

China's new energy vehicle sales in July 2026 accounted for more than 60 percent of monthly new car sales for the first time, industry data showed earlier this month.

In July alone, NEV output and sales reached over 1.57 million and 1.56 million units, respectively, up 26.8 percent and 23.7 percent year-on-year, according to data from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

As NEV sales continue to soar, China has been accelerating the improvement of its charging network to keep pace with growing demand.

In October, China unveiled a three-year action plan to improve the country's EV charging infrastructure, aiming to establish a nationwide network of 28 million charging facilities, with public charging capacity surpassing 300 million kilowatts by the end of 2027.

China aims to increase the share of NEVs in its total vehicle fleet to 30 percent by 2030, according to an action plan for carbon peaking during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30).

XINHUA



Workers inspect EV charging piles at a public charging station in Anhui province on June 15. XIAO BENXIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

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CHINA

Birthday centenary



Community workers and villagers hold a birthday party to celebrate Xi Meiqiu's (center, wearing a birthday hat) 100th birthday at a relocation center due to Typhoon Saudel in Wulian new village, Wenling, Zhejiang province, on Thursday. According to the National Meteorological Center, Typhoon Saudel is expected to make landfall between Zhejiang's Sanmen and Fujian's Xiapu early on Friday, bringing heavy rainfall to multiple provinces. Residents affected by the typhoon have been relocated to safety shelters. SUN JINBIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

High-altitude glacier collapse in Nepal triggered mudslide

Disaster highlights impact of climate change on Qinghai-Tibet Plateau

By **ZHAO YIMENG**
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The deadly mudslide that swept through a major China-Nepal border crossing was triggered by a high-altitude glacier collapse in Nepal, China's Ministry of Natural Resources said on Thursday, highlighting the growing risks posed by unstable mountain environments as the climate warms.

The disaster occurred on Wednesday morning on the Nepal side of the border, sending a torrent of ice, rocks and debris toward Gyirong Port in Gyirong county, a major land crossing linking China and Nepal in Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region.

The disaster caused heavy casualties and left hundreds missing in China and Nepal.

According to the ministry, the disaster began with a high-altitude glacier collapse in Nepal. The falling ice and rock traveled rapidly down a mountain slope, scouring loose glacial debris along its path and developing into a debris flow before entering the Gyirong Zangbo River and becoming a mudslide.

The flow then struck facilities at Gyirong Port before continuing downstream toward Nepal, said Guo Zhaocheng, director of the geological disaster investigation and monitoring center at the China Aero Geophysical Survey and Remote Sensing Center for Natural Resources.

The debris flow generated by the glacier collapse traveled at about 50 meters per second. The extreme speed left people little time to react and allowed the flow to affect an area more than 20 kilometers from its source, contributing to the heavy losses, the ministry said.

> "Global warming is driving changes in glaciers, permafrost and snowfall that can increase the frequency and complexity of high-altitude disasters."
>
> **Du Jun,** director of the climate center of the Xizang regional meteorological bureau

The combination of ice, water, loose rock and steep slopes can make high-altitude disasters particularly fast-moving and difficult to predict, experts said.

"If an ice-rock avalanche can be detected upstream, it is theoretically possible to provide downstream communities with about 20 minutes of warning," said Kang Shichang, director of the Institute of Mountain Hazards and Environment at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Chengdu, Sichuan province.

But the disaster occurred in a remote Himalayan area characterized by deep valleys and high mountains, where monitoring infrastructure is limited. The floodwater also reached the border rapidly, further shortening the available warning time, Kang said.

The disaster highlights a concern that climate change is reshaping the hazards of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and surrounding mountains.

Du Jun, director of the climate center of the Xizang regional meteorological bureau, said global warming is driving changes in glaciers, permafrost and snowfall that can increase the frequency and complexity of high-altitude disasters.

Glacier retreat can expand glacial lakes and increase the volume of water they hold, raising the risk of glacial lake outburst floods. "It also exposes more loose glacial debris, increasing the amount of material available to mudslides, while greater meltwater can strengthen erosion and the capacity of rivers to transport debris," Du told China Daily.

At the same time, permafrost degradation weakens slopes and foundations, and changes in groundwater and runoff can intensify erosion.

In southern Xizang, the number of snow-cover days has declined significantly since 1981, falling by an average of 12.36 days every decade, according to Du.

A shorter snow-cover season can alter the timing and intensity of spring snowmelt, while reducing the buffering effect of snow cover and increasing erosion, he said.

Multiple changes can overlap in both time and space, with glacier melt, permafrost degradation and heavy runoff interacting across different elevations. "The result is a shift in highland disasters from isolated events toward more frequent, cascading and interconnected disasters," Du said.

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau has already experienced rapid warming and wetting. From 1961 to 2022, average temperatures across the plateau rose by about 0.37 C per decade, faster than the global and national averages, while average precipitation increased by 9.4 millimeters per decade. Satellite observations show that the plateau's glacier area shrank by about 18 percent from 1985 to 2020, from roughly 83,000 to 68,000 square kilometers, according to the China Meteorological Administration.

Zhang Xingying, a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and an official with the China Meteorological Administration, warned during China's annual two sessions in 2025 that glacier surges, ice avalanches and glacial lake outburst floods could become more frequent as glaciers melt.

"The risks of glacier-related mudslides, major disasters and catastrophes could also increase," he said.

Zhang has called for a monitoring system integrating ground, air and satellite observations across the plateau and surrounding areas, as well as stronger research into glacier-related disaster mechanisms and improved forecasting and risk assessment.

Li Menghan contributed to this story.

Conservation efforts revamp Zoige Wetland into thriving ecosystem

CHENGDU — On a monitor in his office, Sonam Dorchi watched a family of black-necked cranes move slowly through the shallow waters of Zoige Wetland.

The chick had grown tall, much of its down already gone. In another two or three months, it would learn to fly and follow the flock south for winter.

Nineteen years ago, Sonam Dorchi would have had to walk or ride for a long time across marshland to see the same scene.

Sonam Dorchi, an ethnic Tibetan, joined the administration of the Zoige Wetland National Nature Reserve in Southwest China's Sichuan province in 2007 after working as an elementary school teacher. A fresh hand in wildlife conservation, he began by following experts into the fields, studying plant samples by day and comparing them with illustrated guides at night.

He rode along the edges of marshes, marking wetlands and nesting sites on hand-drawn maps. Years of fieldwork eventually made him so familiar with the reserve that colleagues came to regard him as a "living map".

In 2019, monitoring cameras were installed. When black-necked cranes return to nest in April, Sonam Dorchi no longer has to head into the field every day. Once a nesting site is spotted, he alerts local herders hired as rangers, asking them to keep people and livestock away.

Yet technology has not replaced fieldwork.

Every June, Sonam Dorchi and two younger colleagues spend five days surveying 90 sites along four routes, crouching in the grass to count adult cranes and chicks and check which nests have produced twins.

The reserve covers more than 166,000 hectares, too vast for the administration's several dozen staff members to patrol on their own. Around 200 local herders now serve as rangers across 28 administrative villages, generally two or three in each village, though some have more.

Reserve officials say years of conservation outreach have helped local residents recognize the importance of protecting the grasslands they call home, while the ranger program provides an additional source of income.

Gu Haijun, a nature reserve protection official with the Sichuan provincial forestry and grassland administration, described the black-necked crane as a living indicator of wetland health.

The species has exacting habitat requirements, he said. A decline in its population could signal degradation of the grasslands on which local residents depend, while a stable or growing population indicates that the grasslands and wetlands remain healthy.

Over the years, the number of nationally protected first-class species in the reserve has risen from nine to 18, while the number of second-class species has increased from 25 to 52. The black-necked crane has also been reclassified from "endangered" to "near threatened".

Asked whether he was disappointed by the change, Sonam Dorchi laughed.

"I'm glad," he said. "It means our work has not been in vain."

His work is increasingly about passing on what he has learned. He taught one of his two younger colleagues to identify waterbirds, telling him that to record changes in the wetland, he first had to know what was in the frame. The apprentice can now identify most of the reserve's waterbirds, and his social media account is filled with images of wetland wildlife.

Another colleague, the daughter of a local herder, has become so familiar with the terrain that visiting researchers often specifically ask her to guide them during field surveys.

The lessons have reached home, too. Sonam Dorchi's younger son accompanied him into the field as a child, collected fallen crane feathers and learned to draw the birds before starting school. In third grade, he gave his classmates a presentation on Zoige wildlife using photographs taken by his dad.

Each November, the black-necked cranes leave Zoige. Around the same time, whooper swans arrive from Siberia to spend the winter.

"The cranes leave, and the swans come," Sonam Dorchi said. "It is like a changing of the guard."

After 19 years, he too is beginning to pass the torch and leave the watch to others.

XINHUA



Black-necked cranes rest at the Zoige Wetland National Nature Reserve in Sichuan province on March 27. XINHUA

Resection extends survival in liver cancer patients

By **WANG XIN** in Shanghai
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A pioneering Chinese study has established that surgical resection can offer additional survival benefit in patients with advanced-stage liver cancer who respond to systemic therapy.

The study, published on Saturday in the journal The Lancet, focused on addressing the question of whether patients with advanced-stage liver cancer, or hepatocellular carcinoma, should undergo surgical resection after systemic therapy or continue with the therapy.

Led by Zhongshan Hospital, affiliated with Fudan University in Shanghai, the trial involved 24 hepatobiliary tumor centers across China. With high-quality evidence supporting the procedure, the findings suggested that surgical resection — removal of part of the organ — in patients with advanced liver cancer who respond to systemic therapy can greatly extend their time to treatment failure, and may offer them the opportunity for tumor-free survival.

Liver cancer poses a serious threat to the health of many Chinese people. Most liver cancer patients are found in the intermediate or advanced stages at the time of diagnosis, having lost the opportunity for resection and curative treatment, which often results in a poor prognosis.

In recent years, with continuous advances in systemic therapies, such as immunotherapy and targeted therapies represented by the combination of atezolizumab and bevacizumab, the median survival of patients with advanced liver cancer has increased from about one year to nearly two years. But the overall therapeutic efficacy still remains unsatisfactory.

Clinically, some patients with advanced liver cancer see tumor shrinkage or tumor downstaging after systemic therapy, making them eligible for surgical resection. However, whether such patients should undergo surgery or maintain the therapy presents a difficult decision for clinicians, patients and their families.

Although surgery can remove residual drug-resistant tumor cells to offer patients the opportunity for curative treatment, patients are usually left with surgical incisions that are challenging to recover from. Additionally, systemic therapy has to be suspended before and after surgery, which may also lead to loss of tumor control. Thus, whether surgical resection is superior to continued systemic therapy requires evidence from high-level evidence-based medical studies.

To address this question, Fan Jia, an academician with the Chinese Academy of Sciences and honorary president of the hospital, led a team to start the randomized, open-label, multicenter, phase 3 trial about seven years ago.

Between April 2021 and July 2024, the team enrolled 489 treatment-naive patients with hepatocellular carcinoma, macrovascular invasion and no extrahepatic metastasis from 24 hospitals across China. They were first treated in the induction phase with systemic therapies for four cycles, and 201 of them entered the next stage.

They were later randomly assigned to two groups. Patients in the surgery group underwent surgical resection followed by one year of sequential treatment with atezolizumab and bevacizumab, while those in the other group received maintenance therapy.

After a median follow-up of over 18 months, the team found that the combination of resection and systemic therapy can significantly extend patients' time to treatment failure, with a nearly twofold increase to 20.4 months. Survival follow-up for this study is ongoing, and preliminary survival analyses indicate that survival in the surgery group also shows a trend toward superiority over the maintenance therapy group.

"The results indicate the success of our study," said Sun Huichuan, a first author of the article and professor at the hospital.

"We have rigorously demonstrated that about 40 percent of patients with advanced liver cancer can meet the criteria for surgery following systemic therapy. Patients in the surgical resection group derive greater benefits than those in the maintenance therapy group, and have the opportunity for curative surgical resection."

In a commentary on this article in the same issue, Spanish professor Alejandro Forner spoke highly of the team's work. He noted that the study suggested that resection of the tumor and its visible vascular emboli may help prevent systemic dissemination, thereby transforming temporary systemic disease control into long-term disease remission.

"Resection is agreed to be the best way to treat liver cancer. Clinical solutions for its treatment have been advancing step by step, bringing new opportunities to patients in the advanced stage.

"Despite interpatient heterogeneity, the study is expected to provide new insights into the treatment of overseas patients with advanced liver cancer. It can also inspire the treatment of other tumors such as cholangiocarcinoma, pancreatic cancer, lung cancer, gastrointestinal tumors and more," said Fan, corresponding author of the article.

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VISUAL



ILLUSTRATIONS BY WANG XIAOYING AND MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Engineering China's enhanced road safety

Motorsport circuit designer draws on racing principles to refine traffic infrastructure

By LI LEI in Shanghai
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For decades, the rigorous safety engineering behind Formula One, the pinnacle of motorsport, has been a closely guarded secret.

However, pioneering circuit designer Yao Qiming is bringing these elite-level safety standards to China's public roads. Yao, deputy chief engineer at Tongji Architectural Design Group, has spent her 23-year career in the racing industry meticulously translating technology used on the racing circuit to China's own road network.



Her breakthroughs have not only been applied on the circuit but also for autonomous-vehicle testing and smart traffic infrastructure.

That trajectory is rooted in a childhood dream. Before Yao was born, her father survived a serious road accident that left him reliant on medication for years. She said that experience forged a lifelong ambition to mitigate conditions that lead to traffic casualties.

"All my life, I just want to do one thing right: make roads safer," she said.

Commitment to precision

Yao has long distinguished herself in motorsport engineering through an unyielding pursuit of microscopic precision — with her work centered on safely pushing race cars to their mechanical limits.

Every curve, banking angle and gradient on racing circuits is scientifically calibrated to maximize performance while mitigating catastrophic failure at high speeds. "In circuit design, there are numerous details. We must rely on scientific means to try to find the most extreme conditions and every potential accident that might occur," Yao said.

She said racing circuit design demands construction precision accurate to a single millimeter.

Such accuracy is indispensable in motor racing, where margins are exceptionally thin. The slightest irregularity in track geometry can alter vehicle dynamics, compromise driver control and pose serious safety risks.

Despite there being no universal standards or uniform protocols, racing circuit design integrates more than a dozen technical disciplines, demanding rigorous oversight and meticulous attention to detail.

Colleagues describe Yao as relentlessly precise — she enforces a strict ban on vague terms such as "maybe", "probably" and "approximately" in all technical assessments.

Dismantling barriers

Motorsport circuit design has long been a male-dominated engineering field. Yao broke into the niche sector with a mission to design world-class race circuits in China, championing domestic expertise for more than two decades in a sector long led by Western engineers.

Her career in circuit engineering began in 2003, when she joined a Shanghai municipal research institute and contributed to the design of supporting facilities for the Shanghai International Circuit, as the city prepared to host the inaugural F1 Chinese Grand Prix in September 2004.

In 2004, she was appointed chief designer for Shanghai's DTM street race, a circuit winding through the financial district around the Oriental Pearl Tower.

During research for her master's degree, Yao published some 10 academic papers on safety barriers.

That expertise helped her master strict regulations set by motorsport's governing body, the International Automobile Federation.

She revised a long-standing FIA safety barrier design, developing a new dual-purpose barrier suitable for both race circuits and urban roads while cutting material costs by a quarter — a feat that earned praise from the governing body.

Fresh off the DTM street-race success, Yao set her sights on a permanent circuit.

It just so happened that the northeastern city of Changchun in Jilin province had plans to build one. She wrote to event organizers and sports bureau officials and expressed her interest in taking on the project. The authorities gave her three months.

Yao locked herself in a 10-square-meter attic in Shanghai. She had no codes, no standards — just an uneven plot of land where the race circuit was to be developed.

She contacted a foreign design agency for assistance, but their responses were blunt: their standards were proprietary, and while they could design the circuit for her, it would come at a cost. At the time, China's circuit-design field was virtually nonexistent, and Yao recognized the country lagged behind Western nations by nearly a century in circuit design, with the latter holding far more case histories and data.

To close the gap, she resolved to pursue technological breakthroughs. "I decided right then, I'm going to do this myself," she said.

Yao, who holds a national-level computer proficiency certificate from her college days, soon realized manual calculations would not keep pace with the design demands.

Drawing on her coding skills, she built a circuit simulation system from scratch — writing programs, running computations and refining the system through countless iterations.

At a later FIA meeting in Paris, international experts unanimously endorsed her design proposal for the Changchun circuit, while expressing surprise at China's rapid advances in a field it had long trailed in.

While the Changchun circuit remains to be built, the project marked China's entry into international circuit design.



Driving innovation

In 2009, at the height of her professional career, Yao made a strategic move, taking a position as a designer at Tongji Architectural Design Group to anchor her work in deeper academic research, and simultaneously pursued a doctoral degree in road safety at Tongji University.

In 2013, she took on the Wuhan International Circuit project, where she introduced a "circuit as a service" design philosophy — applying race circuit-level safety principles to autonomous driving and public roads. That same year, while pregnant, she continued running simulations and refining the design right up until giving birth.

The effort translated into results in 2014, when the circuit's safety simulation data closely aligned with the FIA's parameters, drawing global recognition. The finished, butterfly-shaped circuit also became an integrated venue for both racing and autonomous-vehicle testing, helping bridge circuit technology and everyday road safety.

Over the course of her career, Yao and her team have designed more than 200 motorsport circuits and secured over 40 industry-first achievements for China and the wider motorsport sector.

In recent years, circuit engineering, however, accounts for only a third of her professional work, Yao said.

The bulk of her time is devoted to researching intelligent traffic safety and innovative mobility, repurposing racing circuits as high-standard testbeds for civilian vehicle development.

"Modern race circuits are no longer exclusive to motorsport; they provide critical testing environments for autonomous vehicles operating under the most extreme driving conditions," Yao said.

In 2020, she established the Shanghai Research Center for Smart Mobility and Road Safety, applying race circuit safety technologies to autonomous-driving and public-road applications.

She also invests time in public education, publishing popular books such as *The Story of Motor Sports* and a karting-themed comic book that have reached millions of young readers. "I have received so much encouragement and praise from society in this era, and I've always thought about how I can give back," she said, adding that she will continue to donate to efforts geared toward road-safety science popularization.

In 2020, Yao was named one of China's model workers.

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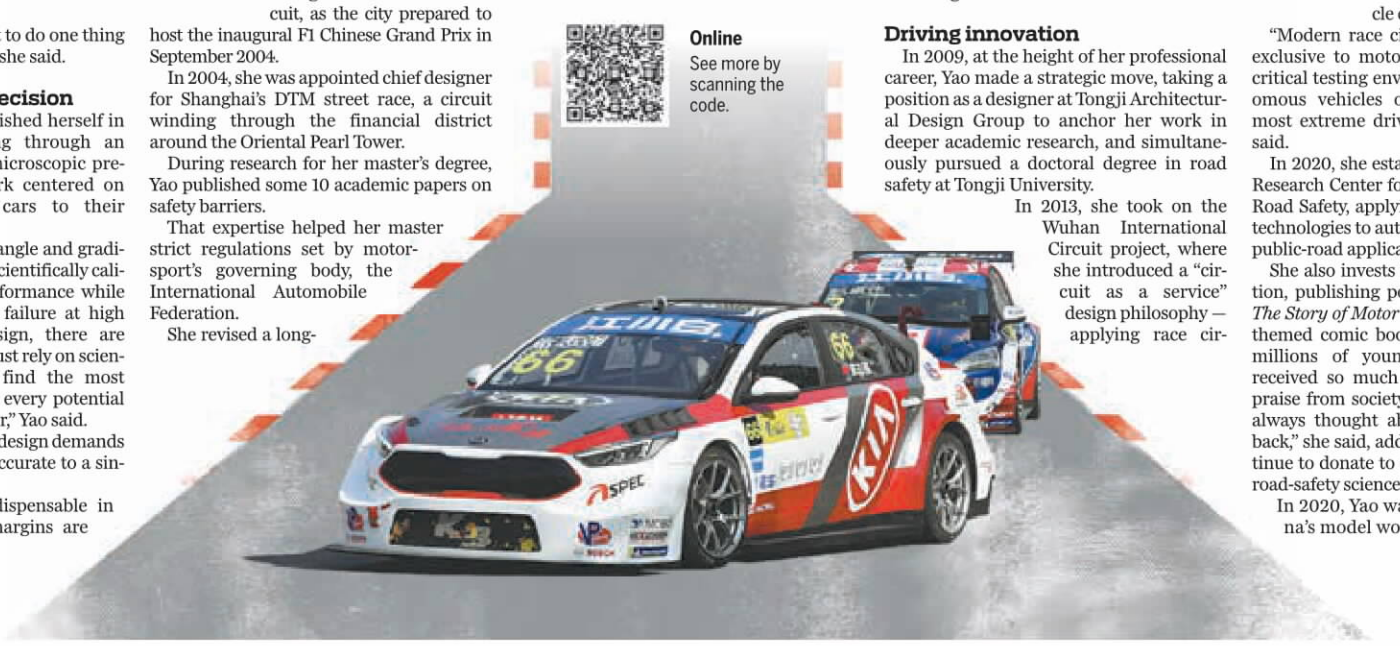

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LIFE



The streets of Shangxiahang in Fuzhou, Fujian province, are packed with visitors exploring its historical buildings and modern offerings.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Giving old streets a fresh scent

In Shangxiahang, ancient buildings are becoming places visitors can experience instead of simply observing history, **Yang Feiyue** reports in Fuzhou.





Left: A nighttime show is a major draw in the historical neighborhood. **Right:** Folk performances are staged at major festivals to enhance travelers' experiences in Shangxiahang.

Amid the summer heat in Shangxiahang in Fuzhou, Fujian province, visitors sit beneath the eaves of an old courtyard house, sipping chilled jasmine tea and sampling pastries infused with the same floral fragrance. Some browse books, while others chat over tea or wander into nearby shops selling fragrances, handicrafts and cultural products. The scenes offer a glimpse of how historical buildings and old traditions are being woven back into everyday life in the Shangxiahang neighborhood on the north bank of the Minjiang River, once one of the city's major commercial centers.

For guide Xin Xiaoqi, the best way to understand the neighborhood is to start with the river.

More than 1,000 years ago, sediment carried by the Minjiang gradually formed sandbanks in the area. Changing tides created two routes used by boats — one farther north during high tide and another farther south as the tide receded. The routes came to be known as Shanghang and Xiahang, referring to the upper and lower waterways. The names were later carried over to the two commercial streets that developed in the area, which together gave the neighborhood its name, Shangxiahang, Xin says.

As land developed around the waterways, the area grew into a bustling commercial hub. By the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, merchants were trading goods from across Fujian and beyond.

Tea was among the commodities that passed through the district, alongside Dehua porcelain, textiles, medicinal materials, and dried foods.

One old trade was known as the *jingguo* business, dealing in dried foods and other goods exchanged between northern and southern China. Northern merchants brought grain and other staples south, while southern traders supplied dried fruit, seafood and other local products, Xin says.

The trade also drew merchants from across Fujian, whose communities left their mark through guild halls, shops and residences, she adds.

The district's recent revival has sought to preserve that commercial character while giving it new uses. Its current layout retains the logic of the historical neighborhood, with four horizontal routes connected by Longping Road along a central north-south axis.

The riverside section, along Sanjie River, has become a more relaxed leisure area, with teahouses, cafes, cultural and creative shops and evening activities. Longping Road brings together traditional Fuzhou snacks and newer food concepts. Xiahang Road focuses on intangible cultural heritage experiences, while Shanghang Road is being developed as a quieter cultural space with bookstores, exhibitions and other venues.

"The idea is to let different parts of the neighborhood offer different experiences," Xin says.

Discovering new rhythms

At Caifeng Villa, a residence built in 1920 with funding from overseas Chinese businessman Yang Hongbin, much of the original architecture remains.

The 2,500-square-meter villa is a provincial-level protected cultural relic and one of Fuzhou's best-preserved examples of a modern residence combining Chinese and Western architectural elements.

Its old window decorations, tiles and other architectural details have been retained. Rather than becoming a building that visitors can only view as a historical relic, it now houses a cafe, restaurant and bookshop.

Yang Jiayu, a staff member at the venue, says customers usually come for drinks, food and conversation, but some stay for hours.

"A customer can spend the whole afternoon here," Yang says.

Average spending is around 100 yuan ($14), while visitor numbers can reach 200 to 300 on holidays, Yang says.

The transformation of Shangxiahang is also reflected in the ways local traditions are being adapted for contemporary consumers.

At Fuzhou Teahouse, manager Zeng Xiang has witnessed the neighborhood's recent changes firsthand.

The teahouse was among the first new businesses to move into the area during the pandemic, when the streets were still relatively quiet.

"When we first arrived, there were very few people walking around, especially in winter," Zeng recalls. "Now the streets are packed, particularly on weekends and in the evenings."

The shop specializes in Fuzhou jasmine tea, but its offerings extend well beyond traditional tea leaves. Jasmine-flavored mung bean cakes, pastries, fragrances, essential oils and cultural products introduce the city's signature floral scent in different forms.

The strategy is particularly aimed at younger customers, Zeng says.

Traditional Fuzhou jasmine tea is often brewed in a *gaiwan*, a small lidded bowl used for tea preparation. But younger consumers may find more contemporary formats easier to approach.

"We have introduced cold-brewed tea and modern tea drinks to make it more attractive for younger consumers," he says.

Foreign visitors have joined in as well. Zeng recalls receiving international students who came to experience Chinese tea culture.

Their first reaction, he says, was often to the tea's fragrance.

For those visitors, the fragrance is only the beginning of the story.

At a tea experience center in the neighborhood, Yan Jinhua, an inheritor of Fuzhou jasmine tea scenting techniques, demonstrates the craft behind the aroma.

Jasmine flowers are picked during the day and allowed to bloom at night, when they release their strongest fragrance. The flowers are then combined with prepared green tea, so the leaves absorb the floral aroma, he explains.

The scenting can be repeated several times, with higher-quality teas undergoing more rounds.

Before scenting begins, the tea must first be prepared to the right condition. The flowers also need to be "nurtured" after picking so they can fully open.

During his demonstration, Yan shows visitors key steps such as mixing and separating the tea and flowers, revealing the role of timing, weather and craftsmanship in producing the finished tea.

For Yan, such experiences are part of a broader effort to bring Fuzhou's jasmine tea culture closer to visitors and younger consumers. The same idea is shaping the development of Shangxiahang itself.

Chi Yingyue, deputy general manager of Fuzhou Shangxiahang Protection and Development Co, says the aim is not simply to restore old buildings, but to give them new functions while retaining their connection with the neighborhood's commercial and cultural history.

That approach can be seen in the mix of businesses and cultural activities now filling the district. The neighborhood has brought in intangible cultural heritage enterprises, cultural and creative businesses and food and beverage outlets, while festivals, performances and evening activities draw people onto its streets.

The district received nearly 13 million visitor trips in 2025, according to Chi.

The next stage, Chi says, will explore more ways to activate historical residences associated with notable Fuzhou figures, creating cultural experiences that can further connect the area's buildings with the people and stories behind them.

The result is a neighborhood where history is no longer confined to preserved facades or museum displays. It can be encountered over a cup of jasmine tea, through a traditional craft demonstration, in a century-old residence turned cafe, or along the riverside as the old commercial quarter finds a new rhythm, she adds.

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

China and Brazil turn musical differences into harmony

By ZHANG KUN in Shanghai
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Left: The Shanghai Chinese Orchestra played in six cities in Brazil from July 29 to Aug 14. **Right:** Chinese flutist Zhao Yunmeng performing with the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra during its debut tour in Brazil.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"We didn't know each other's language, but music connects us all," says Zhao Yunmeng, a bamboo flute player with the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra, recalling a performance of *Tico-Tico* with Brazilian musicians during the ensemble's debut in Rio de Janeiro last month.

As the flagship project of the 2026 China-Brazil Culture Year, the orchestra toured Brazil from July 29 to Aug 14, performing for nearly 6,000 people across six cities: Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Brasilia, Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, and Porto Alegre.

"We prepared *Tico-Tico* for the tour because it is a Brazilian song that everyone knows," Zhao told China Daily after returning home to Shanghai.

The orchestra invited musicians from a local ensemble to join onstage. "When the music started, our instruments naturally came together and became one. It was a magical experience," she says.

Tico-Tico was performed as an encore after Digital Splendor, a nine-movement concert that takes traditional Chinese colors as its narrative thread.

Jointly produced by the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra and TME Lyra Lab under Tencent Music, the concert is the first AI-co-created Chinese orchestral concert in China.

An AI composition system generated the emotional arc of the nine movements, blending Chinese plucked-string instruments, including *guqin* and *pipa*, bamboo flute, and other instruments with classical poetry and visual art. But the musicians did not simply reproduce what AI produced.

"We tried playing it as soon as we received the AI-generated sheet music," Zhao says. "You can feel that the overall melody is really nice, and the basic structure is very solid, but the performance sounds somewhat stiff and lacks emotional expression."

The performers then reshaped the work, making adjustments to playing techniques, breath control and dynamics, while fine-tuning the interplay and responses between the instruments.

"It was important for us to bring the music to life," Zhao says.

Since its founding in 1952, the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra has sought to bring together folk traditions, contemporary sensibilities and international expression, according to Zhu Jianxin, deputy director of the orchestra, who led a 29-member ensemble on the Brazil tour. This concert is an experiment in blending traditional folk music with modern aesthetics, he says.

The approach resonated strongly with Brazilian audiences.

Painter Hileia Pedersen says the music awakened all her senses: "I saw birds, heard the wind, smelled flowers — the melody sparked so many creative ideas."

Aline Machado, a Brazilian student of Chinese language and culture, was equally taken by the unfamiliar sounds. "We couldn't name the instruments, but everything felt fresh — they make me want to go to China now!" she says.

American-Brazilian musician and music critic Harold Emert observes: "The concert took the audience through thousands of years of musical history with instruments that predate the great masters of Western classical music by centuries — even millennia.

"These remarkable instruments existed long before Bach, Telemann, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms — or even The Beatles. Yet they communicate the same universal emotions that music has always inspired."

Claudia Jannuzzi, chairperson of the Brazil-China Innovation Economics Research Institute, notes that "the combination of traditional music, Chinese colors, ancient instruments, Eastern aesthetics and modern technology was a completely different artistic experience".

The collaboration also inspired the Brazilian musicians who joined the Chinese ensemble.

Cellist Bryan Victor describes the experience as "explosive with new ideas", while violinist Maria Cecilia says the differences between the musicians ultimately brought them closer.

"Even though we have different cultures, languages and play different instruments, we share the same language of music," she says.

Zhu Qingqiao, Chinese ambassador to Brazil, says the exchange reflects the deep civilizational ties between the two countries. "China and Brazil are both nations of profound and diverse civilizations. Cultural exchange resonates across mountains and time, building the popular foundation for a China-Brazil community with a shared future."

Among those in the audience were members of Brazil's Chinese community, including one Chinese-Brazilian who has lived in the country for more than 30 years and flew to Rio especially for the concert.

He brought with him a broken *sheng*, a mouth-blown free-reed instrument made up of multiple bamboo pipes. No local craftsman had been able to repair it.

Wang Yang, a member of the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra, spent 10 painstaking hours repairing and retuning the instrument.

In doing so, they restored not only the *sheng*, but also, for its owner, the sound of home.

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Left and middle: A graduate of the inaugural Shanghai house stewards program, An Xiaojiao balances her daily organizing with her studies. **Right:** An (right) with her classmates. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Program helps organize better lives for all

By training and certifying domestic workers, skills and salaries improve, while employers receive greater understanding in childcare, housekeeping and elderly assistance, **He Qi** reports.

After eight years as a home organizer, An Xiaojiao finally feels her profession is receiving the recognition it deserves.

A graduate of the inaugural Shanghai house stewards program, An took first place in home storage and organization at the 2026 Shanghai women's domestic service vocational skills competition this year. Her salary has risen 10 percent since completing the program.

"Before, I only addressed surface-level behavioral problems with elderly clients. Now I dig into the psychological needs behind those behaviors and match them with targeted professional skills," says An, who works at a local community service development center.

When organizing a home, she no longer simply arranges items but guides clients through decluttering and builds a storage system around their daily habits. "Clients witness how a cluttered home transforms into sustainable order, and they can directly perceive the value of professional service."

The second term of the program launched at the Zhongyuan campus of Shanghai Open University on Aug 8, when over 50 selected workers began a five-month systematic curriculum.

Guided by the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce and led by the university, the initiative aims to elevate Shanghai's domestic service industry to a high-quality level.

Strong outcomes

Last summer, 67 students graduated from the inaugural program. The results were impressive: 85 percent received client commendations and salary increases, 56 percent achieved significant career advancement, and several won municipal vocational awards, according to the university.

Behind these outcomes lies a profound transformation in Shanghai's domestic service sector.

In October 2025, six municipal departments led by the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce issued a three-year action plan to develop employee-based domestic service enterprises. Official data show that the first 16 pilot firms have helped 2,741 people find domestic service jobs, with 97.8 percent holding vocational certificates. Their revenue grew 32 percent year-on-year in the first half of 2026.

Policy support has expanded across multiple dimensions.

Domestic service workers and infant development guides have been added to the city's urgently needed skilled talent list, with skill-upgrading subsidies raised by 30 percent. By this April, 11,774 people obtained domestic service vocational certificates. The government has also built dedicated housing for workers and provides free commercial insurance.

"Domestic work is no longer low-end labor many assume it to be," says Yu Haiqun, president of the Shanghai Home Service Industry Association. Since entering the industry in 2019, he has witnessed three major shifts: increased industry recognition, clearer regulatory responsibilities, and a younger workforce.

"In the future, home care for the elderly and children will implement an occupational access licensing system. Domestic service is a high-end livelihood sector," he says, revealing that Shanghai plans to lead the formulation of unified national standards for the industry.

A well-planned initiative

The second term of the program builds on 13 core modules with new courses in smart home management, medical accompaniment, pet care, and family psychological counseling, aligning with emerging market demands.

"Domestic workers should evolve from being mere helpers to becoming professional family life service specialists," states Jia Wei, dean of Shanghai Open University. He emphasizes that high-end talent must not only possess diverse professional skills but also understand family culture and living habits to help families improve their lives.





Above: An Xiaojiao speaks at the opening ceremony of the second term of the Shanghai house stewards program on Aug 8.
Left: On the first day of the program, a national model worker teaches students how to integrate aviation-level service standards into housekeeping scenarios.

"Our first lesson is to 'see the family' — to look beyond housework and recognize the emotional needs and relationship dynamics within a household, allowing them to apply their skills where they are most needed," Jia explains. Trainees learn to identify and bridge emotional gaps in families, transforming from ordinary domestic workers into professional service providers.

The trainee profile has improved significantly.

The average age of the students is 39.8 — 1.2 years younger than the first term — with 42.3 percent holding a bachelor's degree or higher, up 14 percent. Nearly a quarter have over 10 years of experience, and all were chosen through resume screening, psychological testing, written exams, and interviews.

Zhong Wenfeng, a new trainee and former children's art teacher with a degree in fine arts, now works as a child companion.

"Many people don't understand my choice. They think a college graduate is wasting her education in domestic work," Zhong says. "But domestic service is far from just cleaning. I apply my art expertise — teaching children painting and crafts, designing learning spaces, and guiding their cognitive development through art."

All training hours are recorded in the university's credit bank and can be converted into credits for domestic service degree programs. Shanghai Open University is the city's only institution accredited to offer undergraduate degrees in domestic service studies.

Upon graduation, trainees will have access to academic credit pathways and priority hiring at employee-based enterprises. Eligible graduates will be prioritized for the Shanghai high-skilled domestic service talent pool.

"The domestic service industry is a sunrise industry, and more importantly, a heartwarming livelihood cause," says Zhang Jingjing, director of the livelihood service industry development division at the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce.

For An, the professional organizer, the program has meant more than skill upgrading. She now trains new practitioners, researches market demands, and develops standardized service protocols. Her former classmates remain in close contact — some have transitioned into high-end private chefs, while others promote professional services through new media.

"There are no shortcuts in this profession. Short-term experience can only get you through the moment. Continuous learning is what carries us forward," An says. "We have chosen a career related to family happiness. Stand on professionalism, deliver service with warmth, and we will earn society's respect for the domestic service industry."

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City's landmark Ferris wheel set to reopen in 2027 at new heights

By **WANG YING**
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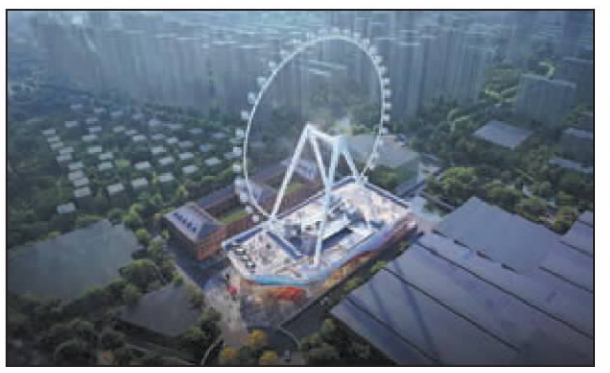
The Ferris wheel at Shanghai's Jinjiang Action Park, which operated for decades and holds local residents' cherished childhood memories, has officially begun reconstruction at its original site. The landmark is expected to return next year at a new height of 118 meters, 10 meters taller than its previous version, according to the designer and developer of the facility.

Unveiled on Aug 9 at the project's launch ceremony, the new Ferris wheel will feature 36 cabins, each offering panoramic views of the city. Upon completion, it will be the first single-tube Ferris wheel structure in China to stand more than 100 meters tall, the Shanghai Observer reports.

More than an amusement facility offering panoramic views from above, the new Ferris wheel is designed as a three-dimensional cultural tourism landmark that combines sightseeing, leisure and urban tourism, according to the Shanghai Morning Post, citing its designer, Shanghai Institute of Architectural Design and Research Co, affiliated with the Chinese architecture firm Arcplus Group.





Left: The design for the updated Ferris wheel at Jinjiang Action Park, now under construction. COURTESY OF SHANGHAI INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND RESEARCH **Right:** The Ferris wheel captured in November 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The new Ferris wheel's cabins will serve multiple purposes, with some featuring themed restaurants, wedding spaces and small meeting areas.

Once one of the city's most distinctive landmarks, the original 30-meter-high Ferris wheel has created cherished childhood memories for generations of Shanghai residents since the park opened in 1984.

Completed in 2002, the second-generation Ferris wheel stood 108 meters tall, becoming China's first Ferris wheel to exceed 100 meters and the world's third-tallest at the time. It also ranked among the first in China to offer air-conditioned cabins.

Situated in Shanghai's southwest Minhang district, the Jinjiang Action Park was the city's first major amusement park and one of the closest to downtown. To meet upgraded tourism needs, the park announced it would temporarily close in January 2025.

On Feb 12, 2025, Jin Jiang International Holdings Co announced it had signed a joint venture framework agreement with Warner Bros to open a Harry Potter studio tour. *Warner Bros Studio Tour Shanghai — The Making of Harry Potter* will be located in the renovated Shanghai Jinjiang Action Park.

Scheduled to open in 2027, the theme park will take visitors behind the scenes of the Harry Potter films, bringing their iconic scenes to life. Unlike its counterparts in London and Tokyo, the Shanghai edition will incorporate Chinese elements and offer enhanced interactive experiences powered by digital technology, according to thepaper.cn.

It will be the third Harry Potter-themed attraction in the world, following those in London and Tokyo, and the first of its kind in China.

As part of the park's renovation and upgrade, all existing rides and attractions will be dismantled, with the hotel and Ferris wheel being the only facilities retained.

Zhu Zhengzheng, general manager of the Ferris Wheel (Shanghai) Tourism Development Co, says that the project will prioritize safety and quality.

According to Zhu, construction will be conducted strictly in accordance with all management requirements, and the company will prepare for subsequent operations in advance.

To allow more residents and visitors to witness the development of the new-generation Shanghai grand Ferris wheel, the project operator is considering giving away around 100,000 tickets.

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LIFE



Mo Yan, the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, in conversation with Song Fangjin, a screenwriter, TV director and novelist, during the launch of Mo Yan's new book at this year's Shanghai Book Fair. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Renowned author sparks frenzy at book fair

More than 18,000 fans vie for limited seats as Mo Yan publishes his new short story collection after a six-year hiatus, reports **Zhang Kun** in Shanghai.

The launch of Mo Yan's new book, *Ren Na* (*Being Human*), broke the ticketing system as more than 18,000 fans tried to make a reservation for the event on Aug 15.

It's been six years since the 71-year-old writer published his last book, and his latest is a collection of 81 tightly crafted short stories, the shortest consisting of no more than 71 Chinese characters.

The book launch at the Shanghai Exhibition Center was the highlight of this year's Shanghai Book Fair, as the writer had not attended the largest reading festival in the city for 14 years.

Within minutes of the event opening for reservations, enthusiastic fans crashed the booking platform connected with the publisher's account on the social media platform Xiaohongshu. The publisher, Dook Media Group, had to move it to Damai.cn, the leading ticketing platform for concerts, theater and sports events in China.

In all, more than 18,000 people competed for the 770 seats in the Friendship Auditorium at the Shanghai Exhibition Center, which were taken within seconds.

"I've been lucky," a senior middle school student who preferred to remain anonymous told China Daily.

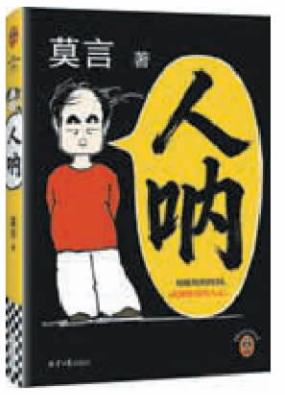
"My hobby is collecting the autographs of renowned authors, but I only go for writers that I really like. Mo Yan is a great writer, and I also like how he interacts with readers on the Internet."

One of the most translated Chinese authors in contemporary China, he is the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, which he won in 2012 for his body of work that "with hallucinatory realism merges folk tales, history and the contemporary".

He is best known for his novel *Red Sorghum*, which was adapted into the Golden Bear-winning film of the same title in 1988. He is also active on several Chinese social media platforms and his WeChat account features a comic cartoon portrait and a simple sentence: "I want to chat with young people."

The book launch for *Ren Na* featured Mo Yan in dialogue with Song Fangjin, a screenwriter, TV director and novelist. Song started the session by asking about his experience working with director Zhang Yimou on the movie adaptation of his novel *Red Sorghum*.

"When the movie was being shot in Gaomi (Mo Yan's hometown in Shandong province), I went to visit the set, and Zhang Yimou showed me the final draft of his script. It was just a thin few dozen pages," Mo Yan recalls. But then he witnessed how a simple line in the script was turned into the most intense dramatic scene in the movie.





Mo Yan's latest book, *Ren Na (Being Human)*, is a collection of 81 tightly crafted short stories. It's been six years since the 71-year-old writer published his last book.

Zhang went on to work with other writers, and created a series of movies.

Mo Yan says: "Zhang grafts his cinematic art onto novels by different writers. His films naturally have this diversity.

"I think we, as novelists, can learn some useful lessons from the director's approach. That means we have to constantly change our narrative angles, explore new story types, create new characters and try to use fresh, creative language.

"You could say that the movies played a big role in introducing contemporary Chinese literature to the world."

The international success of Chinese movies evoked Western publishers' interest in the original novels from which these films were adapted, Mo Yan says.

Soon after the movie came out, *Red Sorghum* was translated into multiple foreign languages. The same happened to the novels of other Chinese writers such as Yu Hua, Su Tong and Liu Heng. Writers and filmmakers "worked together — everyone's efforts complemented each other", Mo Yan says.

Song, a strong advocate of micro dramas, reveals that like many others, Mo Yan is addicted to short videos, and spends up to eight hours a day binge-watching them on his mobile phone.

Mo Yan says that he searches for inspiration while watching micro-dramas, and goes on to recommend a mini video series — *Yimengshan Ga Laotai* (*A Little Boss of Yimengshan*) — depicting trivial incidents in a village in the Yimeng Mountains in Shandong.

The vivid characters, authentic storytelling, and dynamic dialogues in the local dialect have all brought him new inspiration, he says.

As a writer, "we need our language to be vivid and precise, metaphors especially apt and fresh, things that others haven't used before", he says, adding that this skill needs to be learned from everyday life. "I feel that watching short videos like this is rewarding and helpful for my own creative work."

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Literary icon launches the Chinese edition of her latest work

By **ZHANG KUN** in Shanghai

British author Jeanette Winterson concluded her third book tour in China earlier this month, during which she shared insights about creative writing in the time of artificial intelligence.

During her stay from Aug 10 to 19, the 67-year-old writer participated in the Shanghai Book Fair and launched the Chinese edition of her latest publication, *Love*, in Shanghai and Beijing.

Winterson is known internationally for her unconventional, quirky and darkly comic storytelling. Her first novel, *Oranges Are not the Only Fruit*, was published in 1985 and examines the relationship between a young gay woman and her devoutly religious mother. The book has since been translated into multiple languages and sold in more than 30 countries.

The Chinese edition, translated by Yu Shi, came out in 2010, and has sold more than 1 million copies.

The book has been loved by generations of readers and has inspired countless young people who feel out of place in the world to bravely pursue their own paths, according to the literary center of Thinkingdom Media Group, Winterson's Chinese publisher, when discussing the enduring popularity of the novel in China.





Jeanette Winterson, British author of the best-selling novel *Oranges Are not the Only Fruit*, launches the Chinese edition of her new book, *Love*, in Shanghai and Beijing from Aug 10-19. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"*Oranges Are not the Only Fruit* has become an iconic work representing love, growth and the pioneering spirit, but its significance goes far beyond that — it is about the collapse and rebuilding of faith, bravely exposing the lie of the 'one and only truth' and about how everyone finds their own language to tell their own story," says You Yanqing, a representative of the literary center of Thinkingdom Media.

The book has helped Winterson build a solid fan base in China, among whom are some of China's renowned writers and web influencers, such as Zhang Yueran and Zhan Qingyun.

Thinkingdom Media has so far published eight books by Winterson in Chinese. The latest one, *Love*, is not a novel but a selection from her previous books "about that impossible, essential force, stories and truths that search for the mythical creature we call love", according to its English publisher, Penguin Books.

At the book launch event at Sinan Literary Home in Shanghai on Aug 12, enthusiastic readers began to line up at the gate hours ahead of the event. A security staff member asked in amazement, "Is this a star singer giving a concert tonight?"

Winterson's last visit was in 2017. Before that, she came in 2011 for the inaugural Shanghai International Literary Week, which has since become a regular part of the annual Shanghai Book Fair.

"Every time I come to China, I have to work so hard that I don't see anything," she says.

But meeting with readers is the most precious. "It's the energy that comes between us... That's the thing that makes writing and reading worthwhile, because we meet on the steps of a story."

She recounts her journey to becoming a writer. Like the heroine in *Oranges*, she was raised by adoptive parents who were devoted evangelical Christians, and wanted her to be a missionary.

Growing up, she found a passion for creative writing. She talks about the superpower of imagination.

"When you're doing something using your imagination, you're not thinking about money and power.

"You say I'll make it anyway, because I love this," she says. "Then this is an act of resistance to the dominant values of the world."

Today, AI has infiltrated cultural and leisure experiences worldwide. Winterson has worked with the AI company Anthropic, which used her books in its corpus.

She was happy about the payment from this, but then, "we see books as beautiful, wonderful things, and the tech world sees books as training data".

All the tech world wants is the product, she says, "but we love the process".

She compares it to cooking dinner: "You want to get all the ingredients, and do it beautifully. You want to be creative, and change things around a little bit. We want to have the process. We like it, and they are taking that away."

She also notices that "China is grappling with artificial intelligence because it's affecting young people tremendously in your country".

She suggests, "Maybe you can solve this problem, because you want a future. Europe and America are not solving this problem, so maybe it's going to be you guys."

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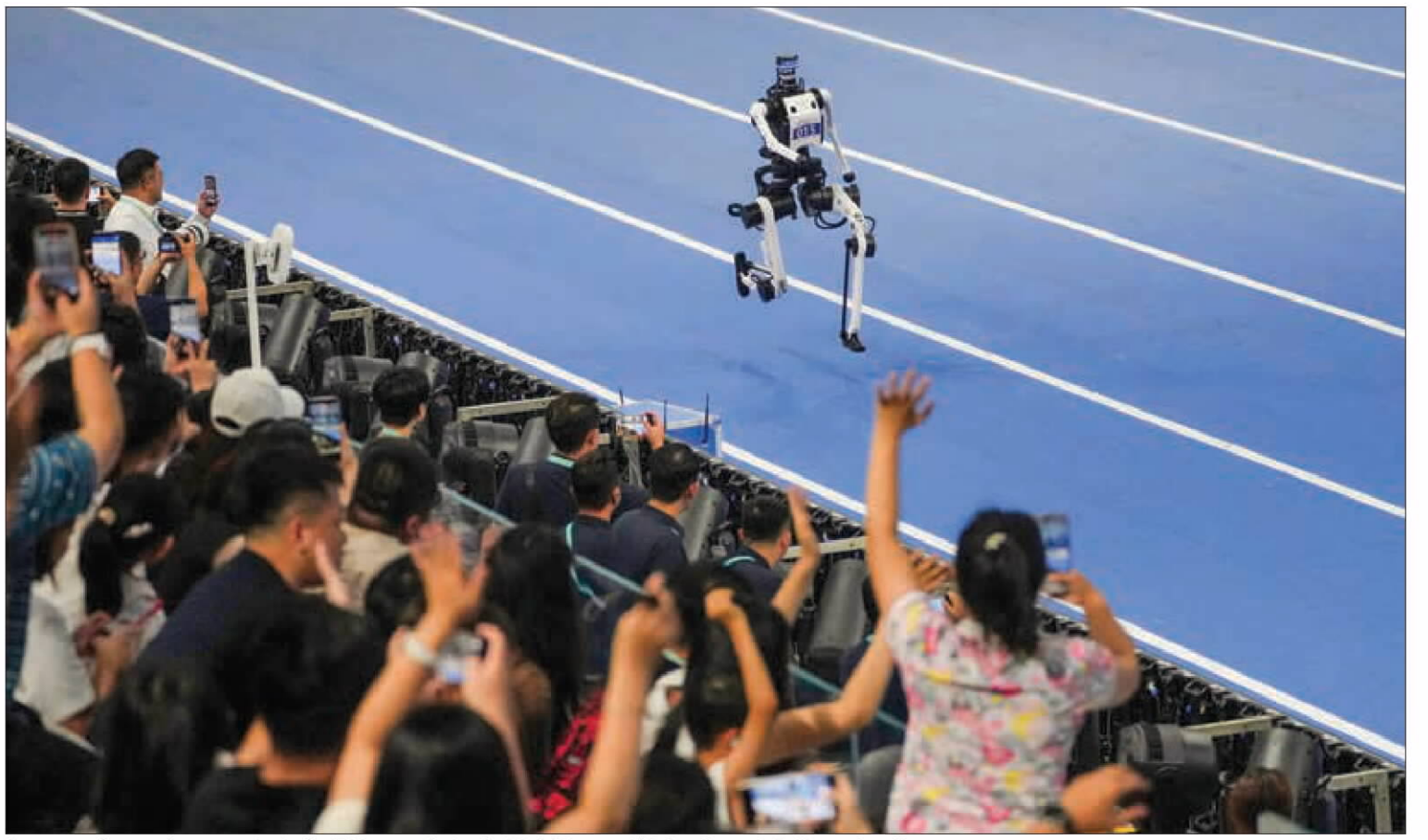
AMERICAFOCUS

China's humanoid robots take the lead

Engineering edge results in record performances and offers platform for global applications



Spectators cheer a robot competing in the 1500m race during the World Humanoid Robot Games in Beijing on Aug 23 ACHMAD IBRAHIM / AP

By **LIA ZHU** in San Francisco
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China is leading global humanoid robot shipments driven by its strong manufacturing chain and electric-vehicle ecosystem, an industry investor said, and the smarter response is to build specialized applications on top of Chinese hardware rather than replicate it.

Global humanoid robot shipments reached about 19,100 units in the first half of 2026, up from 5,100 a year earlier. Chinese vendors accounted for more than 97 percent of global shipments during the period, according to a report by US-based market research firm Smart Analytics Global.

Shanghai-based AgiBot shipped about 8,400 units, accounting for 44 percent of the global total, while Hangzhou-based Unitree Robotics shipped about 5,900 units, or 31 percent, the firm said.

Other research firms have also placed Chinese companies at the top of the global humanoid robot market by volume, although their estimates use different measures. International Data Corporation estimated that about 18,000 humanoid robots were shipped worldwide in 2025, with AgiBot and Unitree each shipping approximately 5,000 units. Counterpoint Research estimated about 16,000 installations in 2025 and said China accounted for more than 80 percent of the total.

Andrew Young, vice-chairman and managing partner of IPG Capital, said China's lead is built on a manufacturing ecosystem that allows companies to develop products quickly and drive down costs as production scales.

"China has a very strong supply chain. It is the same in the auto industry: as long as you have a strong supply chain, you can bring products to market, and then it becomes very difficult for others to compete with you," he said.

Young, based in Hong Kong and specializing in green technology and robotics, spoke with China Daily during a visit to Silicon Valley.

China also benefits from a large pool of engineers, a complete manufacturing supply chain, software capabilities and rapidly developing artificial intelligence, he said.

"Once you achieve scale, costs can fall even further," Young said. "China has a relatively high level of engineering and strong software capabilities. AI, in particular, is developing very quickly. China has a large talent pipeline in AI, as well as strong energy and infrastructure support."

His opinion echoes findings in an April report by consulting firm McKinsey & Company.

How that supply chain matures will help determine the pace and economics of humanoid robot deployment over the next decade, says the report examining the humanoid robot supply chain.

Many components used in humanoid robots overlap structurally with the electric-vehicle value chain, giving China an advantage because of its strong EV ecosystem and its significant manufacturing capacity in several critical components.

China accounts for 90 percent of global capacity for permanent magnets used in motors, according to the McKinsey report. It also holds 40 percent of global capacity in precision bearings, 35 percent in motors and 30 percent in power electronics.

China's manufacturing base also provides cost advantages through economies of scale, clustering of component suppliers, competition among suppliers and the reuse of mature EV-grade manufacturing ecosystems, the report says.

> "China has a relatively high level of engineering and software capabilities. AI, in particular, is developing very quickly."
>
> **Andrew Young,** vice-chairman and managing partner of IPG Capital

Those advantages become more difficult for competitors to overcome as production expands, Young said.

"Once you do something well, it becomes very difficult for others to catch up," he said.

As humanoid robot hardware matures, Young said companies and investors outside the robot-manufacturing sector could focus on developing applications that use existing platforms rather than attempting to build competing robots from the ground up.

Smart Analytics Global estimated that more than 70 percent of humanoid robot shipments in the first half of 2026 went to industrial or commercial applications. At the same time, the firm said rapid expansion in hardware continued to outpace improvements in reliability, manipulation, AI and safety, as well as reductions in cost.

Young said his strategy for startups is to take advantage of already advanced robot platforms and concentrate on specialized use cases.

He pointed to a robot developed by Hong Kong researchers that adds an AI-powered dual-arm system to a Unitree four-wheeled and legged robotic platform to pick blueberries.

"Because we can't compete with Unitree, we can focus on application scenarios," Young said.

Another example is San Francisco startup Tau Robotics, which offers an invitation-only home-cleaning service using Unitree humanoid robots at $30 per hour. Tau sources the robot hardware from Unitree while designing the cameras, claws and onboard computer in-house.

However, companies such as Tau Robotics that source hardware from China may face growing regulatory restrictions in the United States.

US regulators have moved to restrict some foreign-produced advanced robotic devices. In July, the Federal Communications Commission added such devices to its Covered List, which the agency describes as a list of communications equipment and services determined to pose an unacceptable risk to US national security under the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act of 2019.

The FCC said the category includes mobile robots such as humanoids and quadrupeds. According to the agency's published guidance, covered foreign-produced advanced robotic devices generally cannot receive the equipment authorization required before they can be imported, marketed or sold in the US unless a conditional approval or another applicable authorization is granted.

Young acknowledged that recent US policies targeting China would have an effect on the sector, but said the market would ultimately adjust around demand for products that can perform tasks that alternatives in the local market cannot.

"If we focus on specific application scenarios, we will still have a competitive advantage," he said. "If the local market does not have a product with the same functionality, and customers genuinely need that product, then a market will naturally emerge."

Rather than viewing China's manufacturing strength only as competition, Young said companies could identify areas where mature hardware can be combined with local technologies and applications to create commercial value.

"We believe that technology can often transcend political factors," he said.

"Of course, politics will have an impact, but from an investment and application perspective, we will still look for markets where products can be deployed and create value."

HK agri-tech projects eye US to tackle farming challenges

By **LIA ZHU** in San Francisco
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Two agri-tech projects from Hong Kong are seeking to tackle some of the most pressing challenges facing agriculture, from resource scarcity and labor shortages to rising greenhouse gas emissions, while eyeing the US market for deployment.

The first is a regenerative, solar-powered air-to-fertilizer production platform developed by Amonova, a Hong Kong-based agri-tech startup with manufacturing on the Chinese mainland.

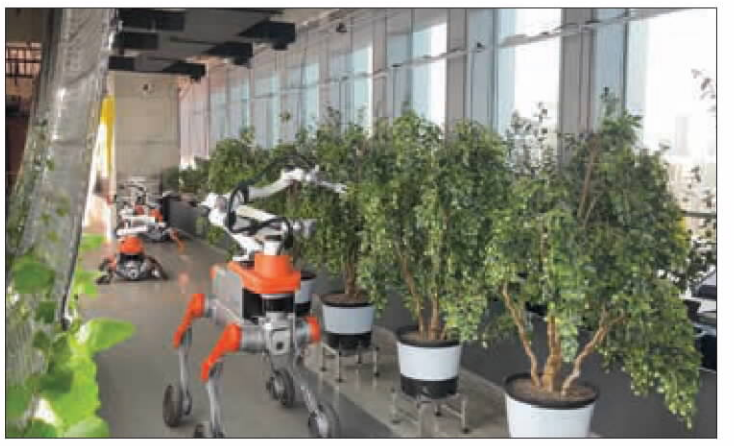
The system uses air, water and light to produce nitrogen fertilizer locally, allowing farms to reduce their dependence on large centralized production plants and long international supply chains.

"Our ambition is to change where fertilizer is made. Today, farmers around the world depend on nitrogen produced in a small number of large plants, often thousands of kilometers away," said Simson Wu, founder and CEO of Amonova.

Amonova is part of a Hong Kong delegation visiting Silicon Valley to showcase technologies and meet potential investors.

Wu said the core technology is a light-driven catalytic process that enables nitrogen fertilizer to be produced on-site, effectively "shrinking large factory systems into farm-scale units".

According to the company, a modular unit occupying about 1 to 2 square meters can produce nitrogen fertilizer for a field of around 10,000 square meters. The technology can be deployed in greenhouses, vertical farms and outdoor farming operations, with pilot projects underway in India, Japan and China.



An "Intelligent Blueberry Harvesting Robot", developed by the Hong Kong Center for Logistics Robotics, harvests fruit. By combining a dual-arm mobile platform with artificial intelligence, the robot is capable of identifying ripe blueberries, analyzing suitable grasping positions and harvesting the fruit without damaging it, according to the center. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"The strongest use case is in regions that are highly dependent on imported fertilizer or fertilizer raw materials. Japan, for example, relies on imports for most of its major fertilizer raw materials, and South Korea also relies substantially on imported urea. In these markets, the value is not only the potential to reduce emissions but also greater supply resilience," he said.

Wu pointed to recent disruptions of transportation through the Strait of Hormuz as an example of the vulnerability of global fertilizer supply chains. He said the technology could also help reduce the carbon and environmental footprint of conventional agriculture, an area where he sees particular potential in the United States.

> Our ambition is to change where fertilizer is made. Today, farmers ... depend on nitrogen produced in a small number of large plants."
>
> **Simson Wu,** founder and CEO of Amonova

Food waste and compost can provide useful recycled nutrients, he said, but they may not always deliver nitrogen in the form, concentration or timing required by a crop. A locally controlled nitrogen production system could therefore complement them.

Over-application of nitrogen can also contribute to water pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and soil acidification, making more precise nutrient management increasingly important, he said.

California offers a potential use case because of its abundant solar resources. The state experiences periods when the grid cannot absorb all available solar generation, and surplus electricity could be used to produce fertilizer, said Wu. Amonova's solar-ammonia process uses sunlight more directly as an energy input.

While Amonova is addressing fertilizer supply and resource efficiency, another project is targeting labor shortages that threaten agricultural production.

The "Intelligent Blueberry Harvesting Robot", developed by the Hong Kong Centre for Logistics Robotics, combines a dual-arm mobile platform with artificial intelligence to identify ripe blueberries, analyze suitable grasping positions and harvest the fruit without damaging it.

Andrew Young, head of the Hong Kong delegation, said the technology could have strong deployment potential in the United States, where labor shortages have long been a challenge for agriculture, contributing to higher production costs and risks to crop harvesting.

"The equipment may just be a four-wheel mobile platform. But once you add different systems on top of it, it can be used to pick blueberries, strawberries and blackberries. You can also build a larger robot to pick cherries. All of these applications are possible," said Young, vice-chairman and managing partner of IPG Capital, which focuses on green technology and robotics.

Young said the two projects reflect what he sees as a direction for Hong Kong's emerging industries: focusing on high-value applications while taking advantage of the Chinese mainland's deep and highly competitive industrial supply chains.

Rather than competing directly in basic manufacturing, Young said Hong Kong could concentrate on products that are more precise, smaller-scale and higher value-added, building strengths in areas such as system integration, software and specialized applications.

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Envoy says trust drives bilateral cooperation

By ZHAO JIA
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Political trust and regular high-level exchanges have created favorable conditions for Kyrgyzstan and China to deepen practical cooperation in transportation, trade, energy and emerging technologies, said Aktilek Musaeva, the ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to China.

"Kyrgyz-Chinese relations are currently at a very high level and are characterized by sustained political dialogue, mutual trust and dynamic development across virtually all areas," Musaeva said in a written interview with China Daily as President Xi Jinping arrived in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, on Sunday and kicked off his third visit to the Central Asian country.

"The main driver of this dynamic is, above all, the political will of the leaders of the two countries and regular dialogue at the highest levels," she said, adding that political trust had provided the conditions needed to implement large-scale projects and steadily expand cooperation.

China is one of Kyrgyzstan's most important trade and investment partners. According to statistics, bilateral trade reached a record $27.2 billion in 2025.

"For us, however, it is important not only to increase the overall figures, but also to make trade more balanced and create greater opportunities for Kyrgyz producers and exporters," she said.

Connectivity occupies an important place in bilateral cooperation. Musaeva said the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway is of strategic importance not only to the three countries, but also to the wider region.

"This is not simply a project," she said. "We see the future railway as a new economic corridor that can expand trade, reduce delivery times and create new opportunities for Kyrgyzstan and Central Asian countries."

She also highlighted efforts to improve border crossings and expand agricultural trade. Kyrgyzstan wants to develop processing, generate greater added value and establish joint production chains rather than simply export raw materials, she said.

Artificial intelligence is another area of cooperation. Kyrgyzstan, a founding member of the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization, hopes the organization will become a practical platform for sharing experience, technology and expertise, she said.

"For Kyrgyzstan, it is important that the development of AI should not create a new technological divide between countries," Musaeva said.

See **Envoy,** *page 2*



President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, wave from the door of the aircraft after arriving in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on Sunday. Xi is in Kyrgyzstan to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit 2026 and pay a state visit to the country. ZHAI JIANLAN / XINHUA

Xi arrives for SCO summit, visit

President hails long history of friendly ties with Kyrgyzstan

By **MO JINGXI** in Bishkek
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President Xi Jinping said on Sunday that he looks forward to working with Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov to draw up a new blueprint for building a China-Kyrgyzstan community with a shared future, as he arrived in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz capital, for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit 2026 and a state visit to Kyrgyzstan.

In written remarks delivered upon his arrival, Xi extended sincere greetings and best wishes to Japarov and the Kyrgyz people on behalf of the Chinese government and people.

Xi said the traditional friendship between China and Kyrgyzstan has a long history, with the majestic Tianshan Mountains bearing witness to friendly exchanges between the two peoples spanning more than a millennium.

Over the 34 years since the establishment of diplomatic ties, China-Kyrgyzstan relations have withstood changes in the international landscape, maintained sound and steady development, and reached the high level of a comprehensive strategic partnership for a new era, he said.

In recent years, bilateral cooperation has entered a "golden period" of rapid growth, Xi said, noting that bilateral trade and visits between the two countries have reached record highs, while major projects, including the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, have made smooth progress.



Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov and his wife Aigul Japarova welcome Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, at the Manas International Airport in Bishkek. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

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Tangible outcomes of mutually beneficial cooperation have brought extensive benefits to the two peoples, he added.

Statistics showed that trade in goods between China and Kyrgyzstan reached $27.2 billion in 2025, up 20 percent year-on-year.

In a signed article published in Kyrgyz media outlets ahead of the visit, Xi said that China has for years ranked as Kyrgyzstan's largest trading partner and biggest source of foreign investment.

Xi wrote that Chinese smartphones and electric vehicles had become "trendy choices for Kyrgyz consumers", while an increasing number of quality Kyrgyz farm products were making their way into Chinese kitchens.

Xi's current trip marks his third visit to Kyrgyzstan as Chinese president, following visits in 2013 and 2019.

During his stay, Xi will hold in-depth discussions with Japarov on China-Kyrgyzstan relations, bilateral cooperation in various fields, and international and regional issues of common concern.

Last year marked a high point in China-Kyrgyzstan diplomacy, with the two leaders meeting three times. Key engagements also included their back-to-back meetings on the sidelines of the second China-Central Asia Summit in the Kazakh capital of Astana in June and the SCO summit in the Chinese port city of Tianjin in August.

In the written speech, Xi also said he looks forward to attending the SCO summit in Bishkek and working with all parties to promote the organization's continued development.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the SCO. Since its founding in Shanghai in 2001, the organization has grown into the world's largest comprehensive regional organization in terms of geographical coverage and population, with cooperation expanding across security, economic development and cultural exchanges.

At the SCO summit in Tianjin last year, Xi announced three China-SCO cooperation platforms for energy, green industry and the digital economy, as well as three cooperation centers for scientific and technological innovation, higher education, and vocational and technical education.

During the Bishkek summit, Xi will exchange views with other leaders on deepening SCO cooperation under the new circumstances, as well as major international and regional issues, and make plans for the organization's high-quality development and its participation in reforming and developing the global governance system, according to the Foreign Ministry.

Upon arrival at Manas International Airport in Bishkek, Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, were warmly received by Japarov and his wife, Aigul Japarova.

Japarov presented flowers to Peng, while young Kyrgyz women offered Xi and Peng traditional bread and honey, welcoming them with a traditional ceremony reserved for the most distinguished guests.

With honor guards standing in salute on both sides of the red carpet, the two presidents and their wives watched performances featuring traditional musical instruments and singing, as well as cultural displays of falcons, hunting dogs, traditional warriors, horsemen and yurts. Local teenagers also sang a Chinese song.

WORLD WATCH
By Nurlan Yermekbayev

At 25, the SCO is still evolving and growing

The story of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization began on June 15, 2001 in Shanghai, where the heads of six states — Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan — took the momentous decision to establish a new international organization. This step marked the birth of a fresh format for regional interaction.

From the very outset, the leaders laid down the foundational values that have enabled the SCO's steady advancement over the past 25 years. Essential to this has been the "Shanghai Spirit" — a set of principles centered on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, mutual consultation, respect for cultural diversity and the common aspiration for shared growth.

The SCO Charter signed in 2002 enshrined the key principle of consensus in decision-making within the organization, underlining the full equality of all members, regardless of territorial size or economic weight.

Since then, the SCO has expanded to include India (2017), Pakistan (2017), Iran (2023), and Belarus (2024), bringing its membership to 10 states. Together, they cover nearly one-fourth of the world's landmass, are home to almost half of the global population and generate 25 percent of global GDP. With two observer states, 15 Dialogue Partners, and over a dozen applications pending, the SCO's appeal speaks for itself.

The organization's current institutional framework includes the Council of Heads of State, the Council of Heads of Government, the Council of Foreign Ministers, 30 sectoral meetings and the Council of National Coordinators. The main executive body is the SCO Secretariat in Beijing, alongside which there is a specialized Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Over time, as envisioned by the heads of member states, the SCO has evolved beyond military-political issues into a universal platform for dialogue and cooperation across political, security, trade, economic, transportation, scientific, cultural and educational fields.

On security, the SCO maintains a strong focus on traditional and emerging challenges, continuing the fight against terrorism, separatism, extremism, as well as drug trafficking. A multi-level system of interaction has been established in these fields.

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China Vibes
INSIDE
Chinese yoga wear wins global consumers
China, page 5

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Rescue teams intensify searches in Gyirong

By **PALDEN NYIMA** and **WANG XIAOYU** in Gyirong county, Xizang and **YANG ZEKUN** in Beijing

Rescue teams are advancing by air, land and water routes into the hardest-hit area of the Gyirong border port in Gyirong county, Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region, as search operations for hundreds of people missing after Wednesday's devastating mudslide were stepped up.

The disaster has so far left 16 people dead and 546, including 261 foreigners, missing.

In a major development, the first emergency communication base station at the Gyirong port was put into operation on Sunday afternoon.

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Located 1.2 kilometers from the border gate, the base station fills a communication coverage gap, providing stable and reliable support for rescue operations, road clearance, material transportation and front-line workers, Xinhua reported.

Communication signals have reached the core rescue site, Nyima Dorje, director of the regional communications administration, confirmed on Sunday.

According to regional authorities, 499 residents from five at-risk villages had been evacuated to hotels and guesthouses.

Gama Cedain, chairman of the Xizang regional government and head of the emergency rescue headquarters, said the region activated its highest-level emergency responses shortly after the mudslide struck on Wednesday.

So far, 2,141 personnel from the People's Liberation Army, armed police, fire and rescue services, border defense and public security authorities, as well as from China Anneng Group, have been mobilized, along with 269 rescue vehicles and 3,922 sets of equipment, he said.



Workers prepare to unload Chinese relief supplies at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, Nepal, on Sunday. ZHANG PING / XINHUA

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XI'S VISIT

More Kyrgyz youths opt for Mandarin tests

Candidates rush to embrace broader opportunities as bilateral ties flourish

By **ZOU SHUO**
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The number of people appearing for Mandarin proficiency tests in Kyrgyzstan has surged more than threefold over the past five years, reflecting a growing interest in the Chinese language amid deepening economic ties and educational cooperation between the two countries, the administrator of the HSK examination said.

Li Peize, general manager of Chinese Testing International Co, which administers the exam, said the total number of HSK candidates across all levels grew from 3,139 in 2021 to 12,611 in 2025 in Kyrgyzstan.

According to Li, in the first half of the year, more than 7,600 candidates took the test, with the annual total expected to exceed 15,000. The number is projected to surpass 20,000 by 2028, making Kyrgyzstan the first Central Asian country to reach that milestone, he said.

He said that Kyrgyzstan's interest in China shows that the bilateral relationship has entered a golden era. "Economic and trade needs have created a broad market, policy support has built a solid bridge, and the desire to study in China and cultural identification have injected endless vitality," he added.

The Chinese Embassy in Kyrgyzstan has for years run a scholarship program that requires applicants for full scholarships to have completed at least HSK Level 3. Four Confucius Institutes and more than 20 Confucius classrooms have been established in the Central Asian nation, along with a Luban Workshop and a Silk Road School for cross-border e-commerce — initiatives that link language learning with vocational training and employment, he said.

Li noted that a growing number of young Kyrgyz people also consider Chinese as a gateway to better opportunities. China's world-class educational resources, increasingly convenient visa policies and transportation links have made studying in China more attractive than ever.

The profile of Chinese learners in Kyrgyzstan has also diversified. Test-takers now include university students, civil servants, translators, business professionals and skilled workers — evidence that Chinese is shifting from a cultural interest to a practical tool for career advancement, he added.

For many Kyrgyz students, learning Chinese has opened doors to new experiences and opportunities.

Ayana Bazarkulova, 20, a student at Beijing Foreign Studies University, said that after two years in China, she found the country "highly developed and modern, especially in terms of technology".

She added that Chinese people are "friendly, kind and welcoming" toward international students.

Erkemai Zarylbekova, 19, a student at Beijing International Studies University, said after two years of study, she found China a modern, safe and convenient country to be in with its excellent public transportation and advanced technology.

Nuraiym Aibekova, 27, a second-year PhD student at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, first came to China in 2018. She returned to campus in 2023 and said China has become "like a second home". She praised the country's safety, cleanliness and convenience.

"At first, I learned Chinese because it was necessary for my studies and daily life," she said. "However, as my language skills improved, I realized that Chinese opened many new opportunities for me."



A Chinese-language teacher in Kyrgyzstan (front, first from right) and her colleagues celebrate the one-year anniversary of the "Hello, Chinese language!" learning center together with students in Karakol, Kyrgyzstan, on Sept 22, 2025. LI RENZI / XINHUA



Musical welcome

President Xi Jinping (second from right) and his wife, Peng Liyuan (second from left), enjoy a performance of Chinese songs by local youth with Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov and his wife, Aigul Japarova, in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, on Sunday. Xi arrived in Bishkek to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit 2026 and pay a state visit to Kyrgyzstan.
YAN YAN / XINHUA

High-tech hub aids farm growth in member states

By **DI FANG** and **HU QING**

Across the vast landscape of northern Kazakhstan, rows of rapeseed plants thrive. The seeds of the plants traveled more than 3,000 kilometers from Yangling in Shaanxi province to reach these fields.

The crop was grown from seeds supplied by an agricultural company based at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Demonstration Base for Agricultural Technology Exchange and Training, an agricultural high-tech hub in Yangling.

The company has been working to grow high-quality crop varieties and test their adaptability in different environments, with the aim of bringing Chinese agricultural technologies and varieties to overseas markets.

Last year, trials of the rapeseed variety started in Kazakhstan. The results showed that its yield was 32 percent to 51 percent higher than that of traditional local varieties, according to the company.

The variety also performed well in terms of key quality indicators, including thousand-kernel weight and protein content, and showed strong adaptability to Kazakhstan's high-latitude and drought-prone conditions, as well as its large temperature swings.

Li Yiya, the company's general manager, said the successful introduction of the variety marked the first commercial-scale introduction of rapeseed from Shaanxi province into Kazakhstan and diversified the local supply of high-quality seed varieties.

With the production license for import and export of its crop seeds approved, the company has established an integrated operation spanning variety selection, overseas trials, seed production under standardized practices and large-scale exports.

The company plans to expand its presence in major markets across Russia and Central Asia, aiming to secure a 10 percent share of the regional commercial rapeseed market within the next three to five years, Li said.

Rapeseed is not the only crop being used to test how agricultural expertise developed in the demonstration base can adapt to conditions in SCO countries.

In Kyrgyzstan's Chui region, where high elevation, drought and relatively poor soil conditions have long hampered apple production, Yangling Modern Agriculture International Cooperation Co and Baoji Haisheng Modern Agriculture Co jointly established a 3.3-hectare apple demonstration orchard using standardized cultivation practices in May 2025. After more than a year of intensive management, the trees are growing well and have started to produce young fruit.

"We hope to introduce high-quality new domestic apple varieties to Kyrgyzstan so that the local people can enjoy apples that are crisp and sweet," said Wang Xiaoqing, assistant general manager of Baoji Haisheng.

The company has introduced cold-resistant, drought-tolerant and poor-soil-tolerant rootstocks developed by a team at China Agricultural University, and paired these with high-quality cultivars in order to develop a diverse planting system suited to local conditions.

Wang Zhigao, director of the Park Services Center of Yangling Modern Agriculture International Cooperation Co, said that future projects include exporting advanced planting equipment. Large-scale growers from Kyrgyzstan will also be regularly invited to China to study agricultural techniques.

These projects are part of Yangling's broader effort to promote agricultural exchanges and cooperation among SCO countries.

Since the agricultural demonstration base was launched in October 2020, it has established 11 agricultural science and technology parks in countries including Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, with more than 110 technology demonstration projects conducted jointly, local authorities said.

They added that the achievements included high-quality wheat varieties that have increased yields by as much as 60 percent, and integrated water and fertilizer irrigation systems that have cut water use by 50 percent.

Meanwhile, more than 100 training sessions have been held in Yangling, providing agricultural expertise to more than 3,000 officials and professionals from SCO countries and those participating in the Belt and Road Initiative. In addition, 60 online lectures have also been organized, attracting over 60,000 participants, according to local authorities.

In June 2024, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited Yangling and announced plans to send 1,000 students to the agricultural demonstration base for training.

Hafiz Muhammad Bilal Ather, previously a scientific officer with Pakistan's federal government, was among those students. He was enrolled as a doctoral student in the animal genetics, breeding and reproduction program at Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University in 2025.

"Modern breeding and genomic tools can help us develop animals that are more resistant to disease and heat, and produce more milk and meat," he said, adding that his studies had given him new knowledge, skills and ideas.

"After my doctoral program, I aim to go back to Pakistan as a scientist and researcher and bring Chinese knowledge and research experience back to my country to help improve Pakistan's agricultural research system," he said.

Agricultural trade has grown alongside the exchanges in technology and human resources. In 2025, trade between Shaanxi and SCO countries reached 776 million yuan ($115.4 million), 30.6 times the level when the base was established, official data showed.

Yangling is also home to the China Yangling Agricultural Hi-Tech Fair, which has so far held 32 editions and attracted more than 10,000 agricultural enterprises as well as research and educational institutions from more than 80 countries and regions, helping to bring more than 1,000 agricultural technologies to international markets each year.

Since 2022, Yangling has hosted the SCO Agricultural Expo, bringing together participants from all SCO countries and further deepening their pragmatic agricultural cooperation.

Contact the writers at huqing@chinadaily.com.cn

Envoy: Systematic steps to modernization lauded

From page 1

"On the contrary, new technologies should help narrow development gaps and make modern services more accessible."

She said Kyrgyzstan is interested in working with China on specialist training, scientific research, computing capacity and practical AI applications.



Aktilek Musaeva

As Kyrgyzstan is to host the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit 2026, Musaeva said the SCO over the past 25 years has produced a distinctive cooperation model based on the Shanghai Spirit, featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for the diversity of civilizations, and pursuit of common development.

While regional security remains a key priority, the SCO has expanded into economic, transportation, energy, digital, environmental and humanitarian cooperation.

Musaeva said Kyrgyzstan expected the summit to further strengthen the SCO's role as an effective and influential organization, with attention to security, connectivity, trade and investment, digital transformation, and energy, food and environment.

China has played an important role in the SCO's development by helping to build its institutional framework and advance practical cooperation, she said.

Musaeva also spoke positively of the four global initiatives proposed by Xi, saying that they shared an emphasis on strengthening dialogue, mutual respect and international cooperation.

Having lived and worked in China for more than 15 years, Musaeva said that she is impressed by the country's ability to combine scale with attention to detail.

"The most important lesson of China's modernization is not any single technological achievement. It is the systematic approach," she said.

Organization: SCO's intl profile continues to expand

From page 1

Recognizing the need to adapt, the member states decided in 2024 to comprehensively modernize the organization. In 2025, this led to a decision to create new specialized security bodies: the SCO Anti-Drug Center in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and the Universal Center for Countering Challenges and Threats in Tashkent. The latter will include an information security center, as well as the Center for Combating Transnational Organized Crime in Bishkek. The work is underway to establish these mechanisms so that the SCO can respond more effectively to both traditional and emerging threats.

The SCO's profile on the international stage continues to grow. When unforeseen situations arise that threaten peace, security and stability in the region, the SCO member states respond collectively, drawing on an agreed set of political and diplomatic response measures. Political and diplomatic statements on situations challenging regional peace remain the principal instruments — demonstrative of the organization's united approach. Such political statements are subject to unanimous approval by all member states.

The organization also operates an observer mission for presidential and parliamentary elections, as well as referendums. This work is based on the principles of objectivity and noninterference in internal affairs.

Besides observation missions, following the results of the electoral activities held in the SCO area, the Secretary-General extends congratulatory messages to the leadership of the countries which are members, observers or partners of the organization.

The SCO takes a comprehensive approach to security, believing that economic development is integral to the broader security agenda. Permanent cooperation mechanisms are operational in trade, finance, transport, agriculture, energy, and customs, while new areas of cooperation such as the digital economy, the creative economy, green development and antitrust regulation are also emerging.

The SCO Development Strategy until 2035, adopted last year, sets ambitious yet realistic targets to enhance practical cooperation: deepening cooperation in trade, the economy, finance, investment, and high technology, including digital and green development, in order to create new areas of growth, ensure sustainable development, and improve the well-being and living standards of peoples in the SCO area.

To name a few practical outcomes, in transport, the Concept on Ports and Logistics Centers is being implemented and international road transport routes are being expanded. In 2025, member states made a political decision to establish the SCO Development Bank in a format of interested parties. In the digital sphere, work is underway on e-commerce and data-exchange platforms.

China has played a responsible role in the organization, implementing projects such as the SCO Demonstration Base for Agricultural Technology in Shaanxi province and the China-SCO Local Economic and Trade Cooperation Demonstration Area in Qingdao, Shandong province, that now serve as successful zonal platforms. During China's chairmanship in 2024-25, three cooperation platforms were established — on energy, green industry and the digital economy — along with three centers for scientific innovation, higher education and vocational education.

The SCO is not resting on its laurels and it remains confident that the goals we have set will be successfully attained.

Beyond politics and economics, the members believe in fostering mutual understanding and cultural ties among the SCO peoples.

The member states cooperate in music, theater, movies, the fine arts, archives, libraries, museums and heritage protection.

An important role in strengthening cultural ties is assigned to public diplomacy. The institution of SCO Goodwill Ambassadors has been functioning since 2022.

Youth engagement remains a priority, with the SCO Youth Council and SCO Model providing a space for dialogue among the younger generation.

Sport is also in focus with many sports events taking place in SCO countries, including such landmark ones as the International Kunming Marathon and the International Issyk-Kul Marathon.

In 2025, the SCO presidency passed to the Kyrgyz Republic. The theme of its presidency — 25 Years of the SCO: Together Toward Sustainable Peace, Development and Prosperity — reflects the continuity of the agenda and the organization's firm focus on the future. Kyrgyzstan has been successfully fulfilling its presidential responsibilities, with the Bishkek Summit set to serve as the culmination of its chairmanship.

In June 2026, the SCO members widely celebrated the 25th anniversary of the organization. The anniversary is a moment to take pride in the collective journey and to draw inspiration for the road ahead. Over the past quarter-century, the SCO has matured into a unique community of nations bound not by force, but by trust; not by self-interest, but by shared purpose.

The values and principles of the SCO, such as noninterference, the rejection of the use and threat of use of force, equality, respect for the diversity of cultures and civilizations and multipolarity, are all attractive to many states. This is evidenced by the growing number of countries and organizations wishing to join the SCO in one capacity or another.

As the SCO members look ahead, they do so with optimism, knowing that the bonds they have built and the principles they hold dear will continue to guide the region toward a future of peace, shared prosperity and mutual understanding.

The author is the secretary-general of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The views do not necessarily represent those of China Daily.

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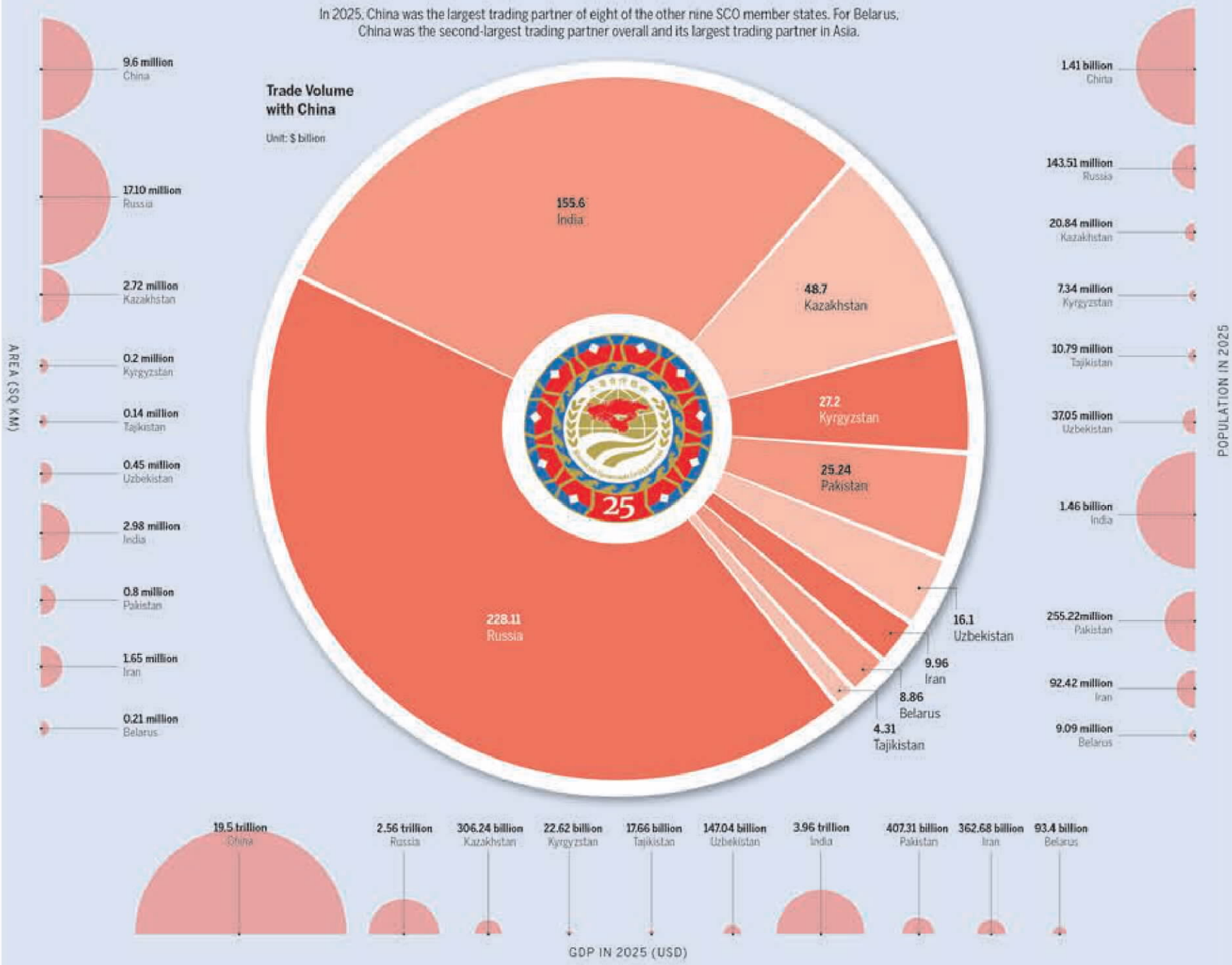
XI'S VISIT

25 YEARS OF SCO: COOPERATION IN ACTION

China's Trade Relations with Other SCO Member States

In 2025, China was the largest trading partner of eight of the other nine SCO member states. For Belarus, China was the second-largest trading partner overall and its largest trading partner in Asia.



Key Facts about the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Founding Date
June 15, 2001

Member States (10)
China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, Iran, Belarus

Observer States (2)
Afghanistan, Mongolia

Dialogue Partners (15)
Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkiye, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Bahrain, the Maldives, Myanmar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Laos

Permanent Bodies (2)
SCO Secretariat (Beijing, China); Executive Committee of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (Tashkent, Uzbekistan)

Official Languages (2)
Chinese and Russian

Geopolitical Significance
The SCO represents nearly half of the world's population and a quarter of the global economy, standing as a key pillar of regional stability and practical cooperation.

"Shanghai Spirit"
Mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diversity of civilizations and pursuit of common development.

China-SCO Trade (2025)
China's trade in goods with the other SCO member states totaled approximately $524.1 billion in 2025.

Chinese Investment (2025)
As of July 2025, China's stock of various types of investment in the other member states exceeded $84 billion.

China-Europe Railway Express
As of July 28, 2026, China-Europe Railway Express had made more than 130,000 trips in total and transported goods worth over $520 billion.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization summits (2001–26)

June 2001 — Shanghai, China: Adopted the Declaration on the Establishment of the SCO and the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism

June 2002 — St. Petersburg, Russia: Signed the SCO Charter and the Agreement on the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure

May 2003 — Moscow, Russia: Signed the Moscow Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO

June 2004 — Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Launched the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure; Mongolia became an observer state

July 2005 — Astana, Kazakhstan: Granted observer status to Pakistan, Iran and India

June 2006 — Shanghai, China: Signed the Declaration on the Fifth Anniversary of the SCO

August 2007 — Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Signed the Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation among the Member States of the SCO

August 2008 — Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Adopted the Dushanbe Declaration by the Heads of Member States of the SCO and the Regulation on the Status of Dialogue Partner of the SCO

June 2009 — Yekaterinburg, Russia: Granted dialogue partner status to Sri Lanka and Belarus

June 2010 — Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Approved the Regulation on Admission of New Members to SCO

June 2011 — Astana, Kazakhstan: Signed the Astana Declaration of the 10th Anniversary of the SCO

June 2012 — Beijing, China: Signed 10 documents and accepted Afghanistan as an observer state and Turkiye as a dialogue partner state

September 2013 — Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Approved the Action Plan for Implementation of the Treaty on Long-Term Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation of SCO Member States in 2013-2017; China announced the establishment of the SCO Committee on Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation

September 2014 — Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Signed the Dushanbe Declaration by the Heads of the Member States of the SCO

July 2015 — Ufa, Russia: Approved the Development Strategy of the SCO until 2025; started the procedure for admitting India and Pakistan to the SCO as members

June 2016 — Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Signed the Tashkent Declaration of the 15th Anniversary of the SCO

June 2017 — Astana, Kazakhstan: Officially admitted India and Pakistan as full members

June 2018 — Qingdao, China: Adopted the Qingdao Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO

June 2019 — Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Signed the Bishkek Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO and focused on combatting terrorism, separatism and extremism

November 2020 — Moscow, Russia (virtual): Adopted the Moscow Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO

September 2021 — Dushanbe, Tajikistan (virtual): Signed the Dushanbe Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of the SCO

September 2022 — Samarkand, Uzbekistan: Signed the Samarkand Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO and issued statements concerning energy security and food security

July 2023 — New Delhi, India (virtual): Signed the New Delhi Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO and Iran was formally admitted as a member state

July 2024 — Astana, Kazakhstan: Held the first "SCO Plus" Meeting; China assumed the rotating presidency after the summit; Belarus officially joined the SCO

August 2025 — Tianjin, China: The summit adopted the Tianjin Declaration and approved a SCO development strategy for the next 10 years (2026–35). The summit granted Laos the status of an SCO dialogue partner

August 2026 — Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Theme of Kyrgyzstan's SCO presidency: 25 Years of the SCO: Together Towards Sustainable Peace, Development, and Prosperity

Sources: China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, National Development and Reform Commission, General Administration of Customs, Xinhua News Agency, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the World Bank.

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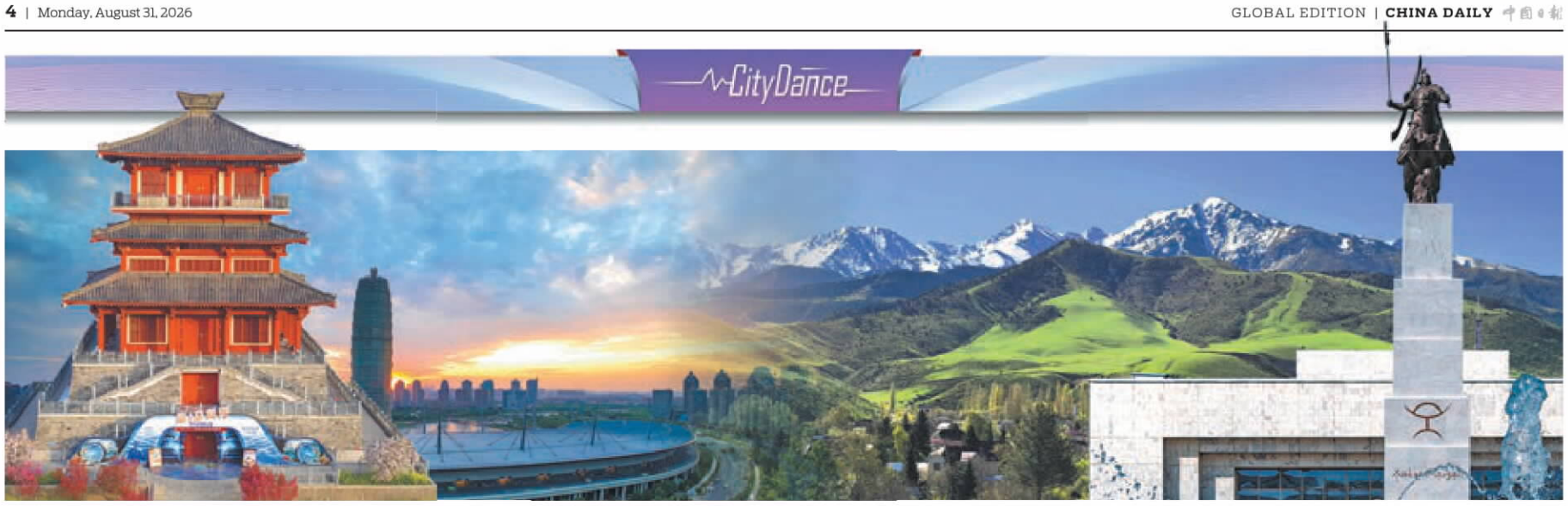

Blessings beyond buses and beverages

Sister-city ties between Zhengzhou, Bishkek bring new opportunities to China, Kyrgyzstan

By **WANG HAORAN**, **SHI BAOYIN** and **CHEN FENGYUE** in Zhengzhou







Clockwise from top: Leonid Mitrofanov introduces Tokmok to Chinese visitors as a tour guide. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Passengers in Bishkek board a Yutong bus during their daily commute on Aug 7. WANG YANG / FOR CHINA DAILY A view of Zhengzhou International Land Port in Henan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"Hi, my name is Li Bai," Leonid Mitrofanov often tells Chinese visitors as he prepares to lead them through the boulevards of his hometown, Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. For the tourists, this introduction by the Chinese-speaking tour guide is a delightfully memorable icebreaker.

Mitrofanov, 28, took a liking to poetry when he was young, and his life took a decided turn when he was 16 and took up Chinese studies in Zhengzhou, Henan province. After more than three years, he gained a solid command of the language.

It was after gaining fluency that his literary curiosity led him to classical poetry, specifically the works of his namesake Li Bai (701-762), one of ancient China's most revered poets.

After learning that the poet was said to have been born in the ancient city of Suyab, near present-day Tokmok in Kyrgyzstan and just a short drive from Bishkek, Mitrofanov adopted the moniker as his own.

"Li Bai is far more than a fun Chinese name for me," Mitrofanov says. "It's a cultural symbol that bridges my life today in Bishkek with my student years in Zhengzhou, symbolizing the deep bond between Kyrgyzstan and China."

On May 28, Zhengzhou and Bishkek established sister-city relations. The agreement developed their ties into a comprehensive partnership, bridging aspects of urban life — from consumer goods and public transportation to education — into a framework for mutual growth.

Lu Kang, president of the Henan Chamber of Commerce in Kyrgyzstan, who has lived in Bishkek for nearly 30 years, says he has felt ties between Henan and Kyrgyzstan have grown even closer through the Belt and Road Initiative, which was proposed in 2013.

"Walking through the streets of Bishkek today, you can feel a Henan touch. You can enjoy Henan *huimian* (braised noodles) and *hulatang* (spicy soup), and Henan-made instant noodles have entered local supermarkets and convenience stores, becoming everyday consumer goods for locals."

For Mitrofanov, Henan's presence in Bishkek brought back memories of his years in Zhengzhou. During his studies, he grew fond of the city's ubiquitous milk tea spots. He relived those memories in June when the Zhengzhou beverage chain Mixue Bingcheng opened outlets in Bishkek.

After stopping by one of the new, bustling outlets to try the brand's signature soft serve ice cream, Mitrofanov recognized the familiar flavor immediately.

"Now I can taste Zhengzhou right here in Bishkek," he said, adding an enthusiastic "*Zhong! Zhong! Zhong!*" — meaning "terrific" in Henan dialect.

Economic and trade collaboration between China and Kyrgyzstan is thriving, something reflected in daily life in Bishkek and beyond, says Rashid Yusupov, director of the Belt and Road Research Center of Kyrgyz National University for Nationalities in Bishkek.

The arrival of Chinese beverage brands in Bishkek, for example, has done more than just enrich consumer choices, he says. "It also drives the development of the service industry and fosters the growth of a modern urban consumer culture."

Beyond daily consumer culture, Henan's presence in Bishkek is visible along the capital's busy transport arteries.

As a tour guide, Mitrofanov frequently travels the city's roads. "When I take tour groups around the city, I'm constantly on buses. Over time something dawned on me: most of Bishkek's buses, as well as the tour coaches we rely on, come from one firm — Yutong Bus of Zhengzhou."

Yutong entered Kyrgyzstan in 2019, where it now has a fleet of more than 350 vehicles. As of July, Yutong buses account for more than 65 percent of public buses in Bishkek, says Shan Yao, account manager for Central Asia at Yutong Bus. Diesel and compressed natural gas models dominate the fleet, but small-batch trials of electric buses have already begun.

"Kyrgyzstan is a key market in our Central Asia strategy," Shan says. "Its mountainous terrain and extreme climate place extraordinarily high demands on vehicle reliability. Buses that perform well here give us even greater confidence in other markets."

Yusupov says Chinese technology and enterprises are increasingly woven into daily life in Bishkek, spanning service sectors, infrastructure and logistics.

Economic agreements deliver practical benefits, but human connection forms the true foundation of long-term collaboration, he says, noting that thousands of Kyrgyzstanis are now studying in China, including in Zhengzhou.

Among them is Bekzat Tashbolotov, 19, from Bishkek, who is studying at Zhengzhou University of Industrial Technology. Tashbolotov, encouraged by a friend's firsthand experience, found an engaging academic environment with attentive teachers who tailor their lectures to ensure international students can thoroughly understand and master the material.

For Tashbolotov, mastering Mandarin is central to his long-term goal.

Bridge for communication

"I know language is the bridge for cross-border communication. I hope eventually to work in Kyrgyz-Chinese translation, business liaison and people-to-people exchanges, drawing on my strengths to build a communication bridge and serve as a youth ambassador for bilateral friendship."

Tashbolotov describes Zhengzhou as an inclusive and vibrant city steeped in thousands of years of history. It has also offered an unexpected personal connection, he said.

"After arriving in Zhengzhou, I was surprised to learn that the Yutong buses I used every day to commute back home were made right here in the city where I study."

Dong Pengfei, associate dean of the School of International Education at Zhengzhou University of Industrial Technology, who oversees international student administration and exchanges, views youth dialogue as the most fundamental and enduring tie between countries.

The university works closely with Kyrgyz higher education institutions on degree programs, joint research and two-way cultural exchanges, Dong said.

"Kyrgyz students come to China to experience its development and deepen their professional knowledge, and our faculty and students travel to Kyrgyzstan to share Chinese culture and understand Central Asia. This interaction fosters deep dialogue, cultural identity and emotional ties between young people of both countries," Dong added.

Young people in Kyrgyzstan and China have far more opportunities for communication, study and cooperation than previous generations, Yusupov says.

Lu of the Henan Chamber of Commerce in Kyrgyzstan says that under the Belt and Road Initiative, Henan and Kyrgyzstan have deepened their ties and worked together for a China-Central Asia community with a shared future.

"Zhengzhou, as a national transportation hub and an inland gateway for opening-up, and Bishkek, as a pivotal city in Central Asia, complement each other and foster mutual empowerment in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," he said.

"I hope that within the SCO framework, highly fruitful ties between Zhengzhou and Bishkek continue to strengthen, allowing more Henan brands and China's Central Plains culture to take root in Central Asia."

Mitrofanov said: "I feel a deep bond with Henan and the people of Zhengzhou. I hope more young people study in China, and more Chinese come here to explore business. That exchange is how we truly get to know each other."

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Firsthand experience allays doctor's concerns about traditional medicine

By **WANG HAORAN, SHI BAOYIN** and **CHEN FENGYUE** in Zhengzhou



Traditional Chinese medicine practitioner Chang Guanglin (right) checks the pulse of a patient in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in August. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinara Kaparova regarded herself as being fairly familiar with traditional Chinese medicine and open-minded about it, but she said she nevertheless nursed a fear about some of its procedures.

The pediatric neurologist, 59, in Bishkek certainly appreciated its value, having studied TCM in Beijing for a month several years ago. Yet when it came to her own ailments — headaches, high blood pressure, insomnia and icy feet that dragged down her quality of life — she hesitated. It was only after her sons, who had received effective treatment from a TCM practitioner, urged her to visit him that she decided to take that step.

Through a tailored regimen of acupuncture, massage and cupping, along with lifestyle advice — going on walks outdoors and eating more fresh produce — her health began to steadily recover, she said. To be sure, there was no miraculous overnight cure, just a palpable, day-by-day return of her vitality.

"TCM is a unique, highly individualized treatment in the hands of true professionals, a treasure the Chinese people can be proud of," Kaparova said.

Her experience reflects a growing openness to traditional Chinese medicine in Kyrgyzstan, and practitioners such as Chang Guanglin, who treated Kaparova, are making these traditional therapies more accessible than ever.

Chang's journey abroad was deeply rooted in his youth. Raised and educated in Zhengzhou, Henan province, he mastered Russian during his secondary school years. After studying traditional Chinese medicine at Henan University of Chinese Medicine, he practiced domestically for years before taking up postings in Europe and Central Asia, until he retired in 2008.

"Studying in Zhengzhou cemented my Russian-language skills and fueled my devotion to TCM, sealing it as my lifelong vocation," Chang said. "Zhengzhou is the place that is dearest to me, and to which I owe a debt of gratitude.

"However, when I retired, I felt my mission as a doctor remained unfinished. Taking TCM to Central Asia was not just about treating patients but also about building cultural bridges and friendship across countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative."

Drawn by Kyrgyzstan's temperate climate, cuisine and the warmth of its people, he traveled to Bishkek in 2015 to open a practice, eventually founding the Zhongjing Traditional Chinese Medicine Research Institute, named after Zhang Zhongjing, a pharmacologist, physician of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) and native of Henan.

"Since 2015 I've watched our patient base grow steadily as more locals welcome TCM's approach to wellness," Chang said.

"We don't do any advertising. Our patients arrive here through word of mouth. Gaining the recognition of the local community has been deeply rewarding."

For Kaparova, the true test of trust came this spring during a health crisis. With her blood pressure spiking dangerously high, Chang and his medical assistant Yao Meirong administered emergency treatment, performing a fingertip bloodletting technique, alongside targeted acupuncture on her head and legs.

"It was incredibly effective," Kaparova said, noting that she has since recommended Chang to her family, friends and even her own patients.

During the pandemic, in addition to offering clinical care, Chang offered free lectures on medical classics to local students such as Nargiza Duishongazieva to promote TCM thinking. Duishongazieva now serves as his apprentice, honing her skills under his guidance in both TCM theory and hands-on clinical practice.

Chang does far more than treat patients, Duishongazieva said, constantly explaining the rationale behind the treatment he is dispensing.

"Thanks to him, I have gained immense practical knowledge," she said.

"My dream now is to pursue postgraduate studies in China to elevate my professional skills so I can bring that expertise back here to help even more patients."

Rashid Yusupov, director of the Belt and Road Research Center of Kyrgyz National University for Nationalities, said practitioners such as Chang do far more than enrich the lives of people — they exchange complementary medical knowledge and cross-cultural dialogue, quietly yet effectively deepening the friendship and mutual understanding between the two nations.

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CHINA



Shenzhen and Hong Kong authorities conduct the second cross-boundary stress test at the Huanggang Port in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Saturday. EDMOND TANG / CHINA DAILY

Port to aid single-document travel

Shenzhen crossing to simplify entry, exit from mainland for HK residents

By ATLAS SHAO in Hong Kong and **LI BINGCUN** in Shenzhen

Hong Kong residents will be able to use a single travel document — either their Mainland Travel Permit or Hong Kong identity card — to enter and leave the mainland through the new Huanggang Port when it opens.

The arrangement was announced by Chris Tang Ping-keung, secretary for security of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, on Saturday following the largest stress test to date at the revamped port.

The SAR government has coordinated closely with the central government and Guangdong provincial authorities to implement the arrangement, Tang said.

Under the existing immigration clearance system, Hong Kong residents making a two-way trip to the mainland are required to present two documents: their Mainland Travel Permit, also known as the Home Return Permit, to enter the mainland, and their Hong Kong identity card when returning to Hong Kong.

Once the new Huanggang Port begins operation, Hong Kong residents using e-channels will be able to use a single document for immigration clearance in both directions — either their Mainland Travel Permit, including permits issued to non-Chinese Hong Kong and Macao permanent residents, or their Hong Kong identity card.

A similar arrangement is already in place at three checkpoints connecting Zhuhai in Guangdong with the Macao Special Administrative Region — the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, Hengqin and Qingmao ports. The three crossings use a "collaborative inspection and joint clearance" model, which the new Huanggang Port will also adopt. Under the model, travelers need to wait in line only once for document inspection.

The new Huanggang Port, located in Shenzhen's Futian district, will replace the existing facility, which opened for passenger clearance in 1991 and is currently the only 24-hour checkpoint between Shenzhen and Hong Kong.

Hong Kong and Shenzhen authorities on Saturday conducted the largest stress test to date at the new port, involving 20,000 personnel and over 1,000 vehicles, to comprehensively assess customs clearance and emergency response capabilities during peak hours.

Tang said the exercise demonstrated the smooth operation and effective management of the facility by the Hong Kong and Shenzhen authorities. However, he noted that several areas still required improvement, including limited Wi-Fi capacity.

The exercise included drills covering key aspects of cross-boundary passenger and vehicle clearance, including pick-up and drop-off operations at public transportation hubs, inspection procedures for cross-boundary vehicles, the operation of joint inspection channels, passenger clearance procedures and a fire emergency response drill.

One drill simulated the arrival of 15,000 passengers from Shenzhen, divided into five batches of 3,000 people each. The batches arrived at five-minute intervals, corresponding to the train arrival schedules at Huanggang Port station on Shenzhen metro's Line 7.

Tang said the full-process pressure test, involving twice as many participants as a similar drill conducted a week earlier, proceeded smoothly. The maximum waiting time for immigration clearance was no more than 15 minutes.

The drill also marked the first test of the joint one-stop vehicle lanes for cross-boundary vehicle clearance.

The lanes integrate inspection functions across five departments in Shenzhen and the HKSAR, covering customs, immigration, border control and health and quarantine. The arrangement reduced vehicle clearance time to slightly more than one minute per vehicle, according to an on-site port employee responsible for the operation.

About 300 cross-boundary private cars were deployed to test the joint one-stop vehicle clearance lanes.

"The drill has achieved the expected results," Tang said.

On the Shenzhen side, the tests focused primarily on tiered and segmented crowd-control mechanisms, the capacity of security scanners and vehicle inspection procedures.

Liu Weixiang, director of the Office of Port of Entry and Exit of Shenzhen Municipal People's Government, said the exercise achieved its desired results.

The Shenzhen and Hong Kong authorities will carefully review and refine their plans to ensure that final preparations for the opening of Huanggang Port proceed smoothly and meet the highest standards, he said.

Kevin Lam, a Hong Kong resident who took part in the trial operations, said he was particularly impressed by the port's collaborative passenger inspection system, which reduced his clearance time from about 30 minutes to about five minutes.

Lam said he frequently visits Shenzhen for its food and that the new 24-hour facility would make it more convenient for him to return to Hong Kong in the evening.

However, given the hot weather and large crowds, he said he hoped the temperature inside the port could be lowered slightly to provide a more comfortable environment for travelers.

William Xu contributed to this story.

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Lu Xun literary prize winners celebrated

By ZHANG KUN in Shanghai
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Delivery worker Wang Jibing was among winners of the Lu Xun Literature Prize, one of China's most prestigious literary awards, celebrated at a ceremony held in Shanghai on Friday.

The ceremony was held for the first time at the AIA Grand Theatre, where awards were presented to honorees across seven categories.

Wang, 58, won the poetry award for his collection *Flying Low*.

Having worked as a deliveryman for eight years, Wang said his collection was inspired by his daily work and conversations with more than 140 of his fellow delivery workers.

"I love my life and take it seriously, just as I love literature and take it seriously," Wang said after accepting his award.

"I believe literature can make the world warmer and softer," he said. "I portray a group of people who live life with the same seriousness, holding light in their hearts.

"Not all wings can soar high; flying low is also flying."

Quan Yongxian, 60, one of five winners in the novella category, said his generation had experienced civilizational progress and tremendous social changes that would normally take humanity hundreds or even thousands of years to undergo.

"Winning the Lu Xun Literature Prize has special significance to me," Quan said. "In our writing careers, having the chance to connect our own works with Lu Xun's name is an immense honor for us."

Ban Yu, who was awarded the prize for short stories, spoke about the mission of writers.

"Writing is about using yourself as a stepping stone to reveal everything in your heart," he said. "What we do is tell the stories that urgently need to be told, cast our sight on those lovable, gentle, kind and just people, and let literature illuminate a wider world."

Organized by the China Writers Association, the Lu Xun Literature Prize was founded in 1996 and is conferred every four years. This year's event coincided with the 90th anniversary of the death of Lu Xun (1881-1936), who is widely recognized as one of 20th-century China's greatest writers.

A day before the ceremony, the Shanghai Literature Museum was officially opened to the public.

Located at the intersection of Jiangxi North Road and Wujin Road in Hongkou district, the museum consists of a main building and three historical structures.

Its opening exhibition features the development and achievements of Shanghai literature through writers' manuscripts, rare vintage books, historical documents and immersive audiovisual experiences.

At the opening ceremony of the museum and the launch of Lu Xun Literary Week on Tuesday, Sun Ganlu, chairman of the Shanghai Writers' Association, announced that from this year on, the Lu Xun Literature Prize will be held in Shanghai permanently.

"This is an honor for the city, as well as its duty," he said.



Guests present awards to winners during the poetry award segment of the Lu Xun Literature Prize in Shanghai on Friday. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

SOCIAL MEDIA FUELS CHINESE YOGA WEAR BOOM

Online marketing campaigns, stores help drive international interest in domestic brands

By ZHENG YIRAN in Shanghai
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Amid the global yoga culture boom, Chinese yoga wear brands have expanded overseas and found favor with international consumers.

On TikTok, a young girl from the United States shared her thoughts on her recently discovered favorite brand CRZ YOGA — a sportswear brand from Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

In front of the camera, she tried on four sets of yoga wear. "The quality is good. The material is super light. I like the texture of the clothes. The color is what I look for. I wear CRZ YOGA to the gym every day," she said.

The video received thousands of likes and comments, and many other users also praised the Chinese brand.

Ashton and Ryan, a couple from the US, tried on yoga wear together in a video posted on TikTok. "I already went to the gym today, but I feel like going to the gym again," Ashton said. They also favor yoga wear from Halara — another Chinese brand.

Relying on a mature, flexible supply chain in China, domestic yoga clothing brands have established a high cost-effectiveness advantage. With platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, they are gaining popularity among overseas consumers.

On US online shopping giant Amazon, CRZ YOGA performs well, often occupying nearly half of the top 10 spots on the women's yoga pants bestseller list, and often taking the top spot on the women's sports short skirt list. Among its products, the high-waisted nude yoga leggings priced at $26 are the best-selling product under the brand, with over 26,000 user reviews on Amazon alone. Additionally, CRZ YOGA has also expanded its men's clothing line.

To enhance visibility and trust, CRZ YOGA has established a matrix of Instagram, TikTok and YouTube accounts in social media marketing, producing content based on the characteristics of different platforms.

On TikTok, it collaborates with small- and medium-sized influencers to shoot "one outfit, multiple wear" lifestyle videos, and showcase the versatility of products and achieving significant results. According to data from market researcher Jungle Scout, one of the brand's $32 yoga pants sold more than 80,000 units on TikTok in a month, with a monthly revenue of $2.84 million.



Yoga enthusiasts practice at a park in Lujiang county, Hefei, Anhui province, on Aug 6. CHAO ZHIBIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Halara, a sportswear company based in Beijing, entered the US market in 2023. It opened several official TikTok accounts, including a main account with 700,000 followers, with content focused on dressing up and interacting with cute pets. Its popular topics have drawn more than 1 billion views.

Data from cross-border information platform Crosspie revealed that Halara ranked second in sales in the US sportswear category on TikTok in March 2025 and topped the charts in April.

The total sales of its four small stores in the US exceeded $63 million, and its flagship store Halara US has been ranked first in TikTok's sports and outdoor categories for four consecutive months. Influencers account for 58.23 percent of total sales. The independent website has received more than 13 million visits in the past three months, with 84.46 percent of the traffic coming from the US.

Gabby Hirata, president of Halara, said that going forward, the company will adjust the marketing style and content on social media, while increasing a new round of brand building.

"Our website will be optimized and adjusted based on the brand's tone and user habits.

"Also, we will continue to diversify our content creator team and continue to release some guidelines to encourage users to share what they want completely freely," she said.

Lin Xianping, executive deputy secretary-general of China Urban Expert Think Tank Committee, and associate professor at Hangzhou City University, said: "The reason behind domestic yoga clothing brands quickly opening up overseas markets is the flexible supply chain in China. Also, scenario-based product positioning meets the real consumption needs overseas, with high cost-effectiveness forming a strong market penetration, and short-video social media model reconstructing the overseas marketing path."

According to data from China Sporting Goods Federation, China's export value of sports equipment reached $28.39 billion in 2024, a year-on-year increase of 6.77 percent.

Mudslide: Temporary shelters established

From page 1

Ren Wei, executive vice-chairman of the regional government, said the rescue operations have been complicated by unstable geological conditions.

The disaster severely damaged National Highway G216, the main route to the Gyirong port. "The overall difficulty level of the rescue operation is far more than in a conventional geological disaster," Ren said.

Rescue teams opened a mountain route and used ropes to lower firefighters into the core area. Engineering teams were working to reopen G216 while searching for survivors and missing people along the road and nearby river. Two helicopters have flown into the core area to deliver supplies and transport personnel and victims, while specialized drones are providing communications support.

Basang Dondrub, a soldier from a unit of the Xizang Armed Police corps in Shigatse told China Daily that the force was continuing with road clearing and transportation work. "The machinery assisted in clearing roads and moving large rocks that couldn't be done manually. Meanwhile, personnel used shovels, pickaxes and their hands to dig and clear the ground and roads," he said.

Meanwhile, the barrier lake that had formed above the Gyirong port has basically drained, the Ministry of Water Resources said on Sunday, citing drone footage and images captured in the morning.

The ministry said an impact crater upstream of the barrier lake still warrants attention. Located about 5.6 km upstream at an altitude of around 3,700 meters, the crater is roughly 800 meters higher than the barrier lake.

Authorities are using satellite remote sensing, radar, hydrological monitoring and video surveillance to monitor the lakes, river channels and surrounding slopes. Eighty-six specialists have been sent to identify possible secondary hazards.

For evacuees, five temporary accommodation sites have been established, said Norbu Tsering, acting mayor of Shigatse.

The city has mobilized 380 Party members and officials, township workers and medical staff members to provide round-the-clock assistance. Special arrangements have also been made for the elderly, children, pregnant women and infants, he said.

Nyima Chozom, 28, from Kopa village in Salhe township, located adjacent to the mudslide stricken zone, said she was cutting grass in a field on Wednesday when she saw debris rolling down the mountainside opposite her village.

"It sounded deafening, almost like an earthquake," she said, adding that trees were swept away and objects outside her home shook violently.

All eight members of her family were safely evacuated to a hotel. "We are safe now, and the conditions here are good," she said.

She said most of her family's crops had already been harvested and she was reassured after learning that troops were helping villagers with farmwork.

Wang Chao, deputy director of the disaster relief department of the Ministry of Emergency Management, said that more than 100,000 relief items had been allocated, enough to meet current rescue and resettlement needs.

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CHINA

Glacier collapse underscores need for regional monitoring

Experts probe how climate warming may amplify Himalayan geological risks

By **ZHAO YIMENG** in Beijing and **ZHAO JUNFENG** in Chengdu

The collapse of a high-altitude glacier in Nepal triggered a deadly mudslide at a major China-Nepal border crossing. Experts said the underlying instability may be linked to a warming climate that is rapidly altering glaciers, permafrost and mountain slopes across the Himalayas.

The disaster occurred on Wednesday morning on the Nepal side of the border, sending a torrent of ice, rocks and debris toward Gyirong Port in Gyirong county, a major land crossing linking China and Nepal in Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region. The mudslide caused heavy casualties and left hundreds missing in China.

It was triggered by the collapse of a glacier at an elevation of about 5,200 meters on the southern slope of Langtang Lirung in Nepal. The glacier broke apart at about 10:52 am on Wednesday, triggering an ice-rock avalanche, the Xizang regional government said on Sunday.

The avalanche rapidly descended to an elevation of about 4,000 meters, scouring the mountain slope and generating a massive debris flow. It traveled 22 kilometers in seven minutes before reaching Gyirong Port, at an elevation of about 1,800 meters.

The disaster flattened about 0.7 square kilometers of the area and destroyed 27 buildings and associated facilities, authorities said.

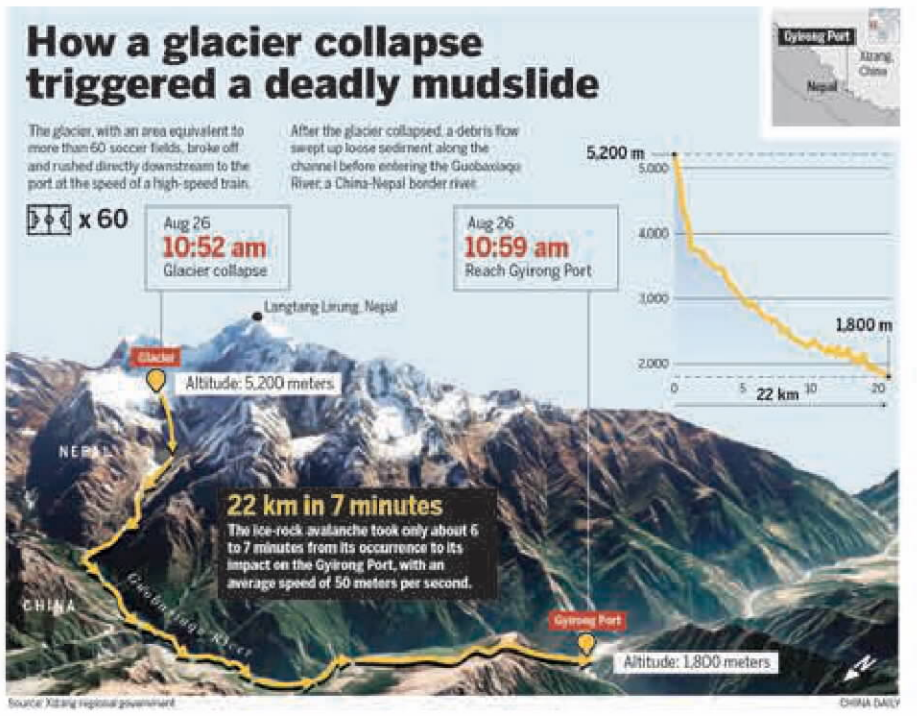
The findings were based on an analysis of remote-sensing data and information transmitted from the disaster site, combined with field inspections and interviews conducted by a cryosphere emergency disaster mitigation team from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Mountain Hazards and Environment in Chengdu, Sichuan province.

Xu Qiang, president of Chengdu University of Technology, said the disaster's extreme destructive power was driven by geological factors, including the huge elevation drop of more than 3,000 meters.

The massive volume of debris and the sudden onset of the collapse also left little time for warning or response, Xu said.

The US Geological Survey similarly found that the disaster was likely triggered by a rapid slope failure involving a glacier in the Langtang National Park in Nepal.

Ben Mirus, a research geologist with the USGS, said glacier collapses combined with debris avalanches are relatively uncommon, but large landslides and rockfalls can cause devastating damage.



> After the disaster, we immediately contacted experts in Nepal, but they also lacked data from relevant weather stations to confirm the conditions at the site."
>
> **Fan Xuanmei,** director of the State Key Laboratory of Geohazard Prevention and Geoenvironment Protection

However, while scientists have identified the immediate mechanism, they have yet to determine why the glacier and surrounding rock became unstable and collapsed at that particular moment.

"It's really hard to attribute the exact trigger for this particular glacial collapse," Mirus said.

According to local meteorological data, there was no heavy rainfall near the outlet of the debris flow at the time of the disaster, making it unlikely that intense rainfall alone could explain the event.

Fan Xuanmei, director of the State Key Laboratory of Geohazard Prevention and Geoenvironment Protection at Chengdu University of Technology, said that, based on current evidence, the collapse was likely the result of a combination of the region's geological setting and a warming climate.

The Himalayas are located along the collision boundary between the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. Continued tectonic activity has fractured mountain rock and contributed to frequent earthquakes, leaving slopes vulnerable to failure.

"Against this long-term tectonic backdrop, climate warming is acting as an important 'amplifier'," Fan said.

She added that rising temperatures are accelerating the melting of snow and ice, intensifying freeze-thaw weathering of rock and reducing the stability of snow cover and glaciers, "thereby increasing the likelihood of large-scale avalanches, glacier collapse and rockfalls".

As glaciers retreat, they can also expose and leave behind large quantities of loose rock and sediment that can later be mobilized by a collapse, she said.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the world has warmed by about 1.4 C, according to the Copernicus Climate Change Service.

China Meteorological Administration data shows that the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau's average temperature increased by 0.37 C per decade between 1961 and 2022, faster than global and national averages.

The changing climate is also affecting the region's water systems. The area of lakes in 12 major river basins on the plateau increased 36.7 percent from 1990 to 2020, according to the administration.

Experts warn that these changes can create interconnected hazards rather than isolated disasters.

"Detecting such failures before they occur is extremely difficult," Fan said.

Potential source areas are often above 5,000 meters, where conventional field monitoring is difficult. Satellite observations can be limited by snow and ice cover and steep terrain, while monitoring equipment has to operate in extreme cold and high-altitude conditions.

"We also lack mature models capable of reliably predicting the complete chain from glacier or rock collapse to debris flow, mudslide and downstream flooding," she said.

The disaster also revealed gaps in cross-border monitoring. The debris flow reached China from the apparent source in Nepal within minutes, leaving little time for information to be transmitted to communities downstream.

"After the disaster, we immediately contacted experts in Nepal, but they also lacked data from relevant weather stations to confirm the conditions at the site," Fan said.

The changing Himalayan environment has made cooperation increasingly important, experts said.

China and Nepal could jointly build high-altitude meteorological and hydrological monitoring stations, share satellite remote-sensing and seismic data and establish rapid cross-border disaster notification mechanisms, Fan said.

Such efforts could also expand across the Himalayas, bringing together China, Nepal, India, Pakistan and international research institutions to develop shared monitoring networks and early-warning technologies, she added.

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261 foreigners missing in disaster-hit Xizang

By **PALDEN NYIMA** in Gyirong, Xizang and **CAO YIN** in Beijing

A total of 261 foreign nationals remained unaccounted for after a massive mudslide hit a border port in Gyirong county, Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region, local authorities said on Sunday.

The foreigners, from 23 countries, include 104 from Nepal, 49 from India, 18 from the United States, 15 from the United Kingdom, six from Canada, six from Australia, four from South Africa and three from Russia.

The figures were announced at a news conference held by the regional government's information office, following joint searches and the cross-checking of information by authorities responsible for foreign affairs, public security, culture and tourism and emergency management.

After multiple rounds of inspections and population verification at the border port, no foreign tourists remained in Gyirong county, said Zhao Peng, vice-chairman of the regional government.

According to Zhao, who also serves as the deputy head of the disaster emergency and rescue command headquarters, the sudden and severe mudslide caused extensive damage to infrastructure and personnel records in the affected area, significantly hampering efforts to trace and verify information about those who are unaccounted for.

He said information on the unaccounted-for foreign nationals had been reported to their respective embassies. Two 24-hour English-language hotlines — 0086-891-6817165 and 0086-183-08026705 — have also been established for the families of the missing foreign nationals.

Foreign nationals currently registered in the county are primarily Nepali border residents, cross-border vehicle crews and Nepali individuals involved in international marriages, all of whom are safe, Zhao added.

> For Nepali border residents wishing to return to their home country, we will carry out transfer, transportation and customs clearance processes in a careful and orderly manner."
>
> **Zhao Peng,** vice-chairman of Xizang autonomous region and the deputy head of the disaster emergency and rescue command headquarters

"For Nepali border residents wishing to return to their home country, we will carry out transfer, transportation and customs clearance processes in a careful and orderly manner," he said. "For those who voluntarily choose to stay in Xizang, we will provide security and living support."

He emphasized that staff members will consistently respect the wishes and reasonable demands of the Nepali side, adhering to the principles of friendly consultation and prioritizing humanitarian needs.

A thorough evaluation will also be conducted to assess the departure needs of foreign tourists in Xizang, Zhao said, adding that authorities will facilitate their exit through ports in Lhasa, Burang and Zhangmu while ensuring their safe and smooth departure.

Additionally, communication with embassies in China will be maintained and strengthened to report work progress in a timely manner, he added.

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Clearing the way



Officers of the Chinese People's Armed Police Force clear debris and inspect damaged sections of G216 national highway in Gyirong county, Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region, on Sunday.
WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

China dispatches supplies, rescuers to render aid

By **ZHAO JIA**
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China delivered 50 metric tons of emergency relief supplies to Nepal on Sunday and dispatched nine tunnel rescue experts to assist with rescue operations following a deadly mudslide on Wednesday.

According to the Chinese embassy in Nepal, two Y-20 transport aircraft operated by the People's Liberation Army Air Force carrying 13,200 relief supplies arrived at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu on Sunday morning.

The supplies included tents, blankets, sleeping bags, compressed food items and first-aid kits. They will be distributed in disaster-hit areas to help meet the basic living and emergency medical needs of those affected.

Four Chinese tunnel rescue experts and their equipment arrived in Kathmandu with the supplies, while five others had already reached the disaster area by helicopter from Gyirong county in China's Xizang autonomous region on Saturday and begun working at a hydropower station.

> **13,200**
>
> items of relief supplies arrived in Kathmandu on Sunday morning aboard two PLA Air Force Y-20 transport aircraft, according to the Chinese embassy in Nepal.

The delivery of relief supplies and the expert missions marked the latest progress in implementing China's assistance package for Nepal, which Foreign Minister Wang Yi said during a phone call with his Nepali counterpart Shisir Khanal on Saturday included emergency cash assistance and humanitarian aid.

Wang said a sudden glacier collapse in the China-Nepal border area had triggered severe mudslides, causing significant casualties and leaving people missing on both sides.

He described it as the most serious cross-border disaster between the two countries in recent years, adding that the complexity and difficulty of the rescue and relief operations were unprecedented.

Wang said a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee had called for emergency aid to Nepal's disaster-hit areas and international rescue cooperation, noting that it was an important political decision reflecting China's friendship with Nepal.

China has also shared important information with Nepal, including imagery, satellite and hydrological data from the disaster-hit area, as well as early-warning information on upstream barrier lakes, Wang said.

Regarding Nepali citizens stranded on the Chinese side, Wang said China had made proper arrangements for them and would help them return to Nepal as soon as possible.

He thanked Nepal for its efforts to rescue and evacuate Chinese citizens in need, expressing hope that the Nepali side would continue such efforts.

In the face of the disaster, Wang called on China and Nepal to stand firmly together, work together to overcome the difficulties and demonstrate their traditional friendship across the Himalayas through concrete actions.

Khanal expressed sincere gratitude for China's emergency humanitarian assistance.

He said that although both Nepal and China had been affected by the disaster, China had overcome its own difficulties to convey sympathy and provide assistance to Nepal at the earliest opportunity, fully demonstrating the high level of Nepal-China relations.

Nepal will continue to work closely with China and make every effort to rescue Chinese nationals who remain trapped or missing, while working together to locate and rescue all missing foreign nationals, Khanal said.

He added that Nepal is ready to strengthen cooperation with China and further advance the strategic partnership between the two countries through post-disaster reconstruction and efforts to prevent and mitigate disasters, including responses to climate change.

Figures released by Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority showed that workers had recovered 734 human remains from mudslide-hit areas as of 9 am local time on Sunday, with 2,498 people still missing.

Netizens hail officers stranded at Gyirong Port

By **CAO YIN**
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Thousands of netizens have left messages of support on the social media account of the local border inspection station in the Xizang autonomous region, after a mudslide originating in Nepal hit Gyirong Port in Shigatse on Wednesday, leaving personnel out of contact.

The official WeChat account of the Xizang general station of entry and exit border inspection, which oversees Gyirong Port, said on Saturday that it had been inundated with messages, prayers and good wishes from netizens across the country since Wednesday.

The post also featured a short video of officers at Gyirong Port. As of Sunday afternoon, the video had received about 130,000 likes, been forwarded over 11,200 times and had about 12,000 comments.

One netizen, with the username "Nanshanxianke", commented on the video: "They (the station officers) guard the nation's gateway with their lives." Others responded with prayers, saying, "May a miracle be with them, and may they all return safely."

"They are the pillars of their families. This is a tragedy for so many households," wrote a netizen named "Hezhouhuaer".

Another user, "Wuxibancaijiejie", posted a photo of a young woman in uniform sitting on a sofa, with a caption that read: "We are all waiting for you to come back. You have never made us worry during your more than a decade of service at the border. We believe you will return safely this time too. Your 1-year-old son calls out 'mom' every day."

Netizen "Yanjun" wrote: "Tears welled up in my eyes. Though we are strangers to one another, our hearts are connected. You are the people I respect the most."

The station concluded the post with an appeal for hope: "We seek no grand ode to heroism — only a miracle that endures. May it come, and may our fellow officers return safely."

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COMMENT

Editorials

Strengthen genuine partnerships through dialogue, cooperation and concrete results

In response to the evident need for a more just and equitable global governance system, President Xi Jinping put forward the Global Governance Initiative at last year's "Shanghai Cooperation Organization Plus" Meeting in Tianjin. The theme of this year's SCO Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan — "Together Toward Sustainable Peace, Development and Prosperity" — and its agenda highlight that the organization can help put the GGI into practice.

Xi is attending the SCO Summit 2026 and paying state visits to Kyrgyzstan and Egypt from Sunday to Thursday. The SCO's thriving development over the past 25 years demonstrates the appeal of a new type of international relations based on multilateralism and cooperation rather than unilateralism and bloc confrontation. The steady development of China's relations with Kyrgyzstan and Egypt over the decades shows how genuine partnerships can translate into tangible benefits for people.

The symbolic value of the Bishkek summit lies in underscoring the model of global governance the SCO represents. Sovereign equality, the rule of law, multilateralism, people-centered development and concrete actions are not abstract principles. They can be tested and demonstrated through security cooperation, connectivity, trade, technological innovation, cultural exchanges and improved livelihoods, as shown in the development of relations between China and Kyrgyzstan.

Over the 34 years since the establishment of diplomatic ties, their relationship has withstood the test of a changing international landscape, maintained sound and stable development throughout, and reached the high level of a comprehensive strategic partnership for a new era.

As Xi said upon his arrival in Bishkek on Sunday, China-Kyrgyzstan cooperation has ushered in a "golden period" of rapid development.

The development of the bilateral relationship, which is defined by good-neighborliness, friendship and shared prosperity, is measured not simply in trade volumes or infrastructure projects, but in better connectivity, greater opportunity and closer human ties. Two-way visits exceeded 400,000 last year, and 30 pairs of sister provinces and cities enjoy close ties, cementing the foundation for lasting friendship.

As founding members of the SCO and members of the Global South, the two countries share an interest in upholding international fairness and justice, opposing unilateralism and bloc confrontation, and promoting an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

Kyrgyzstan's election as a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council provides another opportunity for the two countries to strengthen coordination within the UN and promote a more just and equitable global governance system.

This year is the start of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30). Kyrgyzstan is implementing its National Development Program until 2030 and making all-out efforts to build a "New Kyrgyzstan". Pursuing mutual benefit and win-win results is essential for the enduring vitality of their cooperation. The two neighbors should take a long-term view, focus on high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, and continuously upgrade practical cooperation in not only trade, investment, connectivity and green mining but also the digital economy, clean energy, artificial intelligence and other emerging fields.

Xi's visit to Egypt will also inject vitality into China-Egypt relations. This year marks the 70th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. The two countries have developed a comprehensive strategic partnership through political trust, economic cooperation and people-to-people exchanges.

China stands ready to work with Egypt to deepen cooperation in economy, trade, military, AI and other sectors, enhance coordination on multilateral affairs, and jointly build a China-Egypt community with a shared future in the new era. The two countries share extensive common ground in international and regional affairs and shoulder significant responsibilities in maintaining international and regional stability.

As evidenced by the development of China-Kyrgyzstan and China-Egypt relations, differences in history, culture, social systems and stages of development should be a source of dialogue and cooperation.

The growth of the SCO likewise shows that countries can manage their differences through dialogue, pursue common interests through cooperation and build trust through concrete results. By carrying forward the Shanghai Spirit, deepening cooperation and translating the GGI's principles into action, the SCO can make new contributions to regional peace, stability and prosperity.

US unilateral economic coercion hegemonic

In an attempt to tighten the noose on Iran's economic lifeline, the United States administration launched "Operation Economic Outcast: Total Isolation of the Iranian Regime", seeking to sever the country's financial connections around the world. Yet one of the grave consequences of this aggressive restrictive measure is the collateral damage it inflicts on the global economy. By weaponizing the US financial prowess and targeting any entity that allegedly does business with "blacklisted" Iranian companies, the US seems ready to turn a regional conflict it started, along with Israel, into a global economic disruption and a potentially existential threat to the very "rules-based" order it claims to uphold.

Kameng Trading Ltd, a Hong Kong-registered company, has become the latest Chinese victim of the US administration's escalating enforcement drive, after the US Treasury Department announced on Friday it would sanction the company over alleged "money-laundering" ties to an Iranian institution — claims that, as ever with such US allegations, have not been substantiated. The move comes only days after the US imposed a fresh round of Iran-related sanctions against multiple Chinese entities. The US administration has also hinted at possible sanctions against major Chinese financial institutions over their alleged "links" to Iran.

The reckless moves by the US constitute a flagrant abuse of extraterritorial jurisdiction, and are in blatant violation of international law and the basic norms governing international relations. These measures not only threaten to disrupt global energy markets and exacerbate inflation, but also hurt countries that are not party to the US-Iran conflict. The punishment the US metes out against third parties is about the US leveraging its control over the global financial system to force other countries into doing what it wants.

The Chinese government has expressed firm opposition to these unilateral and unlawful sanctions, and has made it clear that it will take all necessary measures to resolutely protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese entities.

Over six months after the US and Israel launched "Epic Fury" against Iran, the promised "quick victory" has failed to arrive. Not a single preset goal — regime change or the dismantling of Iran's nuclear and missile programs, has been met. The White House's prediction that the war would last only "four to six weeks" now stands as proof of strategic miscalculation, shattered by a protracted stalemate that has exposed the limits of the US' military reach. Faced with this impasse and confronted with mounting domestic discontent, the US administration has reverted to its old standby of maximum economic pressure. Yet this coercive approach will likely meet the same dead end as the military campaign that preceded it.

Iran has already endured US sanctions for decades, and not been brought to its knees under external pressure. If anything, each new round of restrictions only reinforces its "defiance". Washington's calculus — that squeezing the Iranian people with sanctions will spark a popular uprising — comes at a high cost. The immediate result will be deeper suffering for the Iranian people, and along with that, more resentment toward the US.

To coerce other countries into unquestioningly following the US' lead, the US administration is threatening to cut off disobeying nations from the dollar system, a move that will only accelerate the global push for de-dollarization.

History shows that the more the US imposes unilateral sanctions, the more likely it is to incentivize the rest of the world to build work-arounds, such as creating alternative payment systems, developing parallel financial infrastructure, or conducting trade in currencies other than the dollar. The US is therefore hastening the de-dollarization of the global economy with its economic attack on Iran, undermining the very foundation of its own financial hegemony.

The US cannot bomb or sanction Iran to shape it to its liking. A true resolution to the hostilities demands a strategic pivot from coercion to diplomacy. Dialogue, not isolation, offers the only viable path to resolve the conflict. Military options breed endless cycles of retaliation; and sanctions punish civilians and harm the world economy. Negotiation is the harder choice, yet it is the means to deliver peace and avert another cycle of conflict.

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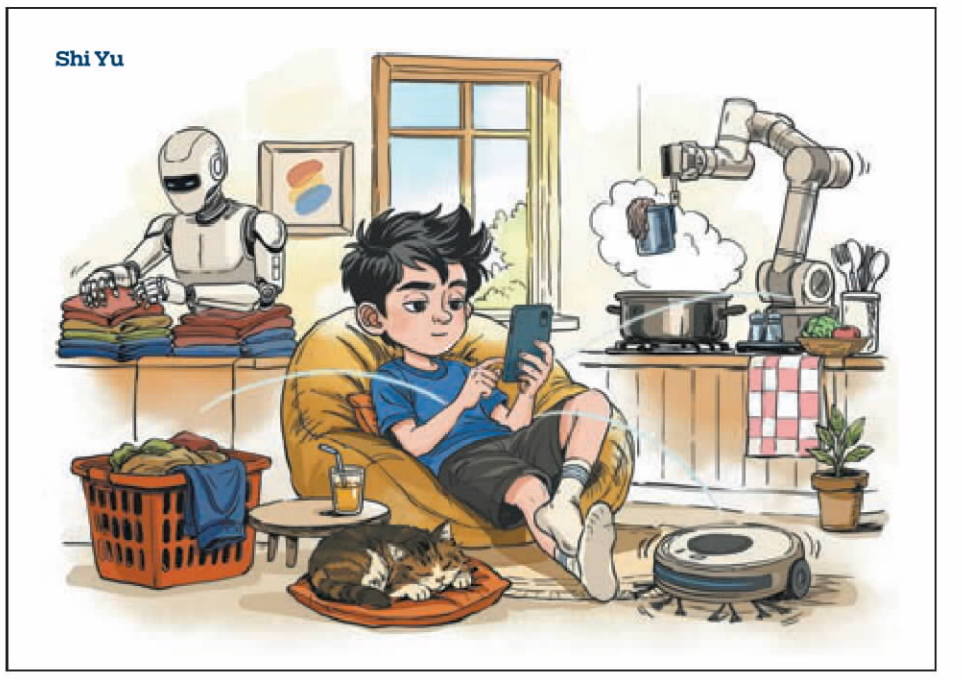

Opinion Line

Mudslide disaster grave warning the world can't afford to ignore

The speed at which a glacier can become a disaster was revealed high in the Himalayas, at an elevation of roughly 5,200 meters, when a glacier on the Nepalese side of the China-Nepal border fractured, unleashing a cascade of rock and ice. But what began as an ice avalanche soon became a high-speed debris flow and then turned into a catastrophic mudslide. By the time it reached Gyirong Port in China's Xizang autonomous region, it was hurtling at roughly 50 meters per second — about 180 kilometers per hour. The entire sequence from the initial collapse to the devastating arrival of the mudslide at Gyirong Port took only about seven minutes, leaving no time for prewarning and causing heavy casualties.

Scientists have long warned that glaciers around the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and the broader Himalayan region — the so-called Third Pole and the largest body of ice outside the Arctic and Antarctic — are becoming increasingly unstable as the planet warms. Glaciers are extraordinarily sensitive to temperature changes. Human-induced warming has been the primary driver of widespread glacial retreat since the 1990s. This continued melting does not merely make glaciers smaller but also destabilizes them, markedly increasing the likelihood of ice, rock and water moving together. As the climate warms, such glacial chain disasters are becoming more frequent, more widespread and more destructive.

The glacier is, in this sense, more a messenger than a culprit. The years from 2015 through 2025 were the 11 hottest on record. Global greenhouse-gas emissions reached a record high, while glaciers worldwide lost an estimated 408 gigatonnes of mass in 2025 alone — equivalent to filling five Olympic-sized swimming pools every second of the year. The Himalayas are among the regions that suffered the greatest losses.

Yet, when such disasters occur, responsibility is often discussed as though emissions were neatly confined within national borders.

They are not.

A smartphone assembled in Asia does not become environmentally benign because its eventual buyer lives in California. National emissions inventories generally count pollution where production occurs, even if production serves consumption elsewhere. The result is a peculiar accounting system in which wealthy societies consume carbon-intensive goods while much of the associated pollution appears on somebody else's ledger. For instance, while the US' territorial energy-related carbon dioxide emissions reached roughly 4.9 billion metric tons in 2025, its consumption footprint is significantly higher, revealing the carbon cost of outsourcing production.

This matters because the climate crisis is fundamentally a question of cumulative emissions. The US alone is responsible for roughly one-fifth of all cumulative carbon dioxide emissions since 1850, with the European Union accounting for about 12 percent. Taken together, developed nations have emitted 60 to 65 percent of all greenhouse gases while representing less than 15 percent of the world's population.

The developed economies have benefited enormously from more than two centuries of carbon-intensive industrialization. They cannot plausibly present themselves as innocent bystanders when the consequences of their prosperity manifest in poorer and more vulnerable parts of the world.

Nor is climate finance charity. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities recognizes a basic fact: countries share a common interest in stabilizing the climate, but they do not share identical histories or capacities. The Paris Agreement explicitly requires developed countries to provide funds and technological support to developing nations. The pledge made in 2009 to mobilize $100 billion annually by 2020 was met two years late. Even now, the new target of $300 billion per year by 2035 remains a fraction of the $2.4 trillion that UN experts estimate developing countries actually need every year.

This makes the upcoming COP31 meeting in Antalya, Turkiye, more than just another diplomatic gathering. It should be a test of whether climate promises can evolve into practical solidarity. The conference is expected to address climate finance, the transition away from fossil fuels and measures for building climate-resilient societies.

Will wealthy countries provide developing countries the finance and technology needed not merely to reduce emissions but also to survive the consequences of warming that are already unfolding? The old answer — that everyone is responsible, therefore everyone is equally responsible — is morally convenient but scientifically inadequate. A glacier does not know where a factory is registered. Carbon dioxide does not carry a passport.

The mudslide along the China-Nepal border should therefore be seen as a warning from our warming planet. The question at COP31 is whether the world's wealthiest economies will heed this warning and acknowledge that helping vulnerable countries confront the consequences is not generosity, but part of the bill for a crisis from which they have benefited for generations.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Deeper China-ASEAN ties can boost regional growth

Editor's note: *This year marks the fifth anniversary of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. China News Service spoke to Xu Liping, a professor of the National Institute of International Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, to discuss the outcomes of this collaboration and the opportunities presented by China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30). Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol is expected to accelerate institutional opening-up, enabling both sides to play a more active role in shaping international rules in emerging sectors such as the digital economy, green economy and e-commerce supply chains.

The Global South countries should cooperate across multiple levels and channels to reform and make global governance more equitable. This involves promoting reform of the United Nations Security Council and increasing the influence of the Global South in the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization.

New multilateral mechanisms, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, offer the Global South a fresh model of cooperation based on equality and non-bloc confrontation, while the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank addresses gaps in the current financial system by funding infrastructure development.

The China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement and its subsequent upgrades have ensured steady bilateral cooperation. As both sides accelerate their modernization efforts and connectivity networks take shape, the region has become one of the world's fastest-growing and most promising unified markets.

Since establishing dialogue relations in 1991, China and ASEAN have continuously upgraded their ties. To date, China has reached agreements with eight ASEAN member countries to build a community with a shared future, fostering growing political trust. For the past six years, China and ASEAN have remained each other's largest trading partners, with annual bilateral trade exceeding $1 trillion.

ASEAN countries are key partners in the Belt and Road Initiative. Infrastructure projects such as the Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville Expressway, the Siem Reap Angkor International Airport, the China-Laos Railway and the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway have significantly enhanced local connectivity. The Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone in Cambodia and the China-Malaysia industrial parks in China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and Pahang, Malaysia, have boosted industrialization in the region.

China's 15th Five-Year Plan calls for expanding high-standard opening-up, providing fresh impetus for deepening China-ASEAN cooperation. By emphasizing further opening up of the country's service sector, the plan will create new opportunities for service-sector workers on both sides. It also highlights high-quality development and the growth of new quality productive forces, opening up new avenues for cooperation in high-tech industries, especially artificial intelligence, the low-altitude economy and the green economy.

Furthermore, the plan stresses investment in human capital, which will enhance bilateral cooperation in human resources, including the joint cultivation of high-tech talent and cooperation in vocational education.

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VIEWS

Djoomart Otorbaev

Marking a new stage for SCO

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization will celebrate its 25th anniversary with a summit in Bishkek on Sept 1, following preparatory events on Aug 31, a date that holds special significance as Aug 31 is Kyrgyzstan's Independence Day.

Since its founding in Shanghai in 2001, the SCO has grown to a scale that was hard to imagine 25 years ago. The SCO now has 10 member states: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, Iran and Belarus.

Together they cover about 36 million square kilometers and are home to more than 3.4 billion people. The organization therefore represents one of the world's largest concentrations of territory, population and economic potential.

For much of its early history, the organization was primarily a security mechanism. The fight against terrorism, separatism, extremism, drug trafficking and transnational crime formed the core of its institutional development.

That function remains essential, but the theme of this year's summit, "25 Years of the SCO: Together for Sustainable Peace, Development, and Prosperity", highlights the broadening of the expanded group's focus from security to economic development across Eurasia.

Recent SCO decisions have established new specialized structures, including the Universal Center for Countering Security Challenges and Threats, the Anti-Drug Center, and mechanisms for dealing with information security and organized crime.

But the economic dimension is impossible to separate from security and it has come to the fore. A railway, energy pipeline, digital network or payment system can be as strategically important as a security agreement. This is where the Bishkek summit becomes a test of the organization's maturity.

The expected Bishkek Declaration will provide the political framework for the next stage of SCO development.

Other documents under preparation concern security cooperation, information security, combating illegal drugs and the functioning of specialized institutions.

Yet the most consequential question may be economic.

Kyrgyzstan has placed transport connectivity, financial cooperation and digitalization among the priorities of its chairmanship. The proposed SCO Development Bank is particularly important. When established, the bank could eventually provide a mechanism for financing infrastructure and investment in the SCO region without relying exclusively on Western financial institutions.

This does not mean that the SCO should attempt to create an isolated economic bloc. Such an approach would contradict the interests of most member states, which pursue multi-vector foreign policies and maintain extensive relations with Europe, the United States, Japan and other economies.

Three concepts should define the SCO's next stage: connectivity, pragmatism, and autonomy.

Connectivity means more than constructing railways. It requires compatible customs procedures, digital documentation, logistics platforms, energy networks, telecommunications, and financial settlements. The China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway is particularly significant because it can reshape Central Asia's economic geography.

It is not simply another railway; it can connect China more directly with Central Asian and, subsequently, European, Middle Eastern, and other markets.

The same idea holds for the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route. Unlocking Central Asia's full potential requires faster border procedures, reliable cargo insurance, digital customs systems, predictable tariffs and solid physical infrastructure.

Pragmatism is equally important. The SCO contains countries with different political systems and strategic interests. Yet these differences need not prevent its members from pursuing common interests and practical cooperation.

The third concept is autonomy. SCO members are increasingly interested in reducing vulnerabilities created by excessive dependence on external financial and technological systems. This trend includes expanding settlements in national currencies, greater use of the yuan, developing alternative payment infrastructure, and the proposed SCO Development Bank.

At the May 2026 meeting of SCO finance ministers and central bank governors in Bishkek, participants discussed national-currency settlements, financial digitalization and new mechanisms for financial cooperation.

China occupies a special position in this transformation. Over the past two decades, China's role in Central Asia has changed fundamentally. Chinese companies now participate in the construction of roads, railways, energy projects, telecommunications, electric transport, digital commerce, and advanced manufacturing.

This transformation is visible in everyday life. Chinese electric buses have entered the public transport systems of Central Asian cities. Chinese electric vehicles increasingly dominate new-car imports. Chinese smartphones, digital platforms and consumer electronics have become ordinary features of urban life.

The Belt and Road Initiative is central to this process. Its particular importance for Central Asia is geographical: the region's greatest historical disadvantage — its landlocked position — can become an advantage if Eurasia develops efficient continental transport corridors.

China's broader international role also matters for the SCO. Beijing has increasingly combined infrastructure, finance, technology and diplomacy. The China-SCO Artificial Intelligence Application Cooperation Center, whose construction plan was unveiled at the China-SCO Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Forum in Tianjin in May 2025, highlights the growing technological dimension of China's engagement with the organization.

The SCO should nevertheless resist the temptation to define itself as an anti-Western alliance. That would weaken rather than strengthen it. Its members have no common interest in bloc confrontation.

The more powerful message is constructive: Eurasia needs additional institutions capable of protecting trade, financing infrastructure, managing supply-chain risks and facilitating technological cooperation.

This is particularly important in an era of geopolitical volatility. The SCO's next task, therefore, should be to build resilience through payment and clearing mechanisms, liquidity arrangements, cargo insurance, transport coordination, energy cooperation and digital-security systems that allow commerce to continue when external financial or political pressures increase.

The organization is not replacing the existing world order. Nor should it claim to. Its significance is more practical.

For Kyrgyzstan, the Bishkek summit is more than just a diplomatic gathering. It tests whether a relatively small Central Asian country can bring together leaders from 10 major Eurasian nations and turn symbolic gestures into concrete agreements.

For the SCO itself, the anniversary marks a significant milestone in its development.

Twenty-five years ago, the organization was founded with a focus on regional security. Today, at 25, its goal is broader: to transform geographic closeness into economic ties, turn differences into practical cooperation, and leverage economic influence to build lasting institutions.

If Bishkek succeeds in driving this change, the summit will be remembered not only as an anniversary but as an important step toward shaping the future of Eurasian collaboration for the next twenty-five years.

The author is a former prime minister of the Kyrgyz Republic.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Gulzada Kuvanychbekovna Turdubaeva

Helping to break the ice on climate cooperation

Climate change is no longer a distant environmental concern, but has become a matter of water and food security, particularly for countries like Kyrgyzstan.

With more than 90 percent of Kyrgyzstan being mountainous, its glaciers and snowfields play a critical role in sustaining river systems across Central Asia. The World Bank describes these high-elevation glaciers as the "Water Tower of Central Asia", underscoring their importance to regional agriculture and hydropower.

But the changing climate is putting this system under strain. Kyrgyzstan is experiencing more frequent and intense storms, landslides, floods, droughts and heat waves, while rising temperatures are increasing pressure on irrigation and agricultural productivity.

This is why climate cooperation deserves a more prominent place on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization agenda.

The organization is already moving in this direction. Environmental protection has become an established area of cooperation, supported by regular meetings of environmental authorities and expert mechanisms.

One promising area is joint environmental and glacier monitoring. Climate risks do not respect national borders, while climate data is often collected and processed nationally.

The 2024 Joint Communiqué of the SCO Council of Heads of Government called for accelerating the work of the Special Working Group on Climate Change.

Such a mechanism would allow countries to maintain control over national data while agreeing on common indicators, technical standards and procedures for exchanging selected information.

China, with its advanced capabilities in remote sensing, satellite observation, digital technologies and environmental monitoring, could make contributions to such cooperation.

A second priority should be establishing early warning systems for regional disasters. Mountain ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to cascading risks. Rapid snow and glacier melt can lead to floods and mudflows, while changing precipitation patterns and prolonged dry periods can strain agriculture and water systems.

The SCO could develop an interoperable early-warning network linking meteorological, hydrological and emergency-management institutions.

Cross-border information exchange is particularly valuable in river basins and mountain areas where hazards can affect neighboring territories.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

Technology exchange for climate adaptation is another crucial area. Climate cooperation should not be limited to measuring the problem.

It should help countries adapt their economies and infrastructure to evolving conditions.

Cooperation between China and Central Asian countries can be particularly significant. Kyrgyzstan is already investing in modernizing irrigation, improving water measurement and monitoring, strengthening water regulation and enhancing agricultural resilience.

The SCO could provide a platform for countries to share such experiences and connect technological solutions with local needs. Rather than treating climate technology as a one-way transfer, cooperation should encourage joint research, pilot projects, training and localization of technologies.

The protection of mountain ecosystems and glaciers is also vital. Kyrgyzstan has particular experiences and interests in this area.

International cooperation has supported efforts to strengthen monitoring of glaciers, snow cover and mudflows, as well as sustainable landscape management and regional cooperation among Central Asian countries.

The SCO could build on these efforts by creating a network of mountain research institutions and analytical centers.

Climate resilience is an investment in regional development. Investment in resilient water systems, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and green technologies can create new economic opportunities.

For the SCO, this creates a natural connection between environmental cooperation and the organization's broader economic agenda. Climate-resilient infrastructure can support connectivity. Efficient water use can strengthen food security.

Thus, climate cooperation should not be viewed as a separate environmental track. It can become a cross-cutting component of the SCO's work on development, connectivity, agriculture, energy, science and technology.

The SCO is well positioned to contribute because its member states combine substantial scientific, technological and financial capabilities with diverse environmental conditions and practical experience.

The question is no longer whether climate issues belong on the SCO agenda, but whether the organization can turn existing environmental cooperation into a practical system for building regional resilience.

For Kyrgyzstan, glaciers are a reminder that environmental security and human security are inseparable. For the SCO, climate cooperation offers an opportunity to turn a common vulnerability into a new pillar of practical partnership.

The author is a chief expert of the Department of International Cooperation at the National Institute for Strategic Initiatives under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Hu Qimu

The hidden cost of permanent daylight saving time

An hour may seem trivial, but in Washington it has triggered a significant political debate. The US leader is advocating for the Sunshine Protection Act, which aims to implement daylight saving time throughout the year, thus ending the ritual of adjusting clocks twice a year.

Supporters of the move see an obvious benefit: no more fiddling with clocks, more daylight after work and, perhaps, more time for shopping, dining and recreation.

It is an appealing proposition, but also an incomplete one.

The fundamental question is not whether US citizens would like an extra hour of evening light, but who benefits from that hour and who bears the cost.

Daylight saving time was not designed as a permanent fixture. Germany introduced it during World War I as an emergency measure to conserve fuel and electricity. Other nations soon followed.

The logic was straightforward: shift an hour of daylight from the morning, when many people are asleep or beginning their day, to the evening, when they are more likely to need artificial light.

After the war ended, the clocks moved back. The idea returned during World War II and persisted in some countries long after the emergency that created it had passed.

This history matters because daylight saving time is fundamentally a bargain with geography. It makes more sense at higher latitudes, where there is a significant difference between summer and winter daylight. Near the equator, the gains are minimal.

In a country as vast as the US, the same hour holds different meanings across regions.

Permanent daylight saving time may indeed spare millions of people the twice-yearly ritual of resetting their clocks.

Consider the consequences when Washington moves the clock forward, and labels it a national solution. In Florida, a later sunset in winter would mean an extra hour for restaurants, retailers, golf courses and tourist attractions.

But in the northern parts of the country, that same hour gets deducted from the morning. The sun rises later, leaving children waiting for school buses in darkness and workers commuting before daylight.

The US previously tried this experiment during the 1973-74 oil crisis, when President Richard Nixon enacted a law putting the country on year-round daylight saving time, partly to reduce energy consumption. Public enthusiasm initially ran high, but quickly waned due to concerns about dark winter mornings, particularly for school children.

The experiment was abandoned well before its intended conclusion, serving as an important reminder that a seemingly simple national policy can have very different implications depending on the location.

This encapsulates the problem with the politics of the clock: there is no national sunrise. But there are substantial economic interests on both sides of the argument.

Retailers, restaurants, bars and leisure businesses naturally favor more daylight after working hours, because an extra hour of sunshine encourages people to spend time and money outside their homes, benefiting a consumption-driven economy.

At the same time, technology and financial companies support a fixed clock because it eliminates the technical challenges of biannual changes in trading systems, databases, scheduling software and global operations.

However, some of the costs are not easily quantified on a balance sheet. Sleep specialists have long argued that if seasonal clock changes are eliminated, permanent standard time is preferable to permanent daylight saving time, as morning light is crucial for regulating the body's circadian rhythm.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine, for example, has called for year-round standard time rather than year-round daylight saving time.

This distinction is crucial. The issue is not merely the inconvenience of adjusting clocks twice a year, but also whether convenience should come from permanently moving social schedules away from the sun.

Farmers face a different problem altogether. Livestock and crops do not adhere to clocks or congressional mandates. Agriculture relies on daylight, weather and biological cycles, irrespective of whether Washington decrees that 7 am should be treated as 8 am.

None of this implies that permanent daylight saving time is inherently flawed. Rather, it underscores its political aspects.

Every time policymakers adjust the clock, they redistribute a resource that cannot be manufactured: daylight. Some get more of it at the end of the day; others get less at the beginning. One industry gets a longer window for consumption; another must adapt to the adjustment. Some commuters gain brighter evenings. Others lose brighter mornings.

Therefore, the debate should not be reduced to whether US citizens are tired of adjusting their clocks. They are, but the more important question is what kind of society they want their clocks to serve.

Permanent daylight saving time may indeed spare millions of people the twice-yearly ritual of resetting their clocks. But it cannot alter geography, human biology or the sun. An hour gained by one part of the US is an hour taken somewhere else.

The clock may be set, but the debate over who pays for the hour will continue.

The author is a professor of the Maritime Silk Road Institute, Huaqiao University.
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GLOBAL VIEWS

ANTHONY MORETTI

Roots of rapport

Without question, people who work together can change the world, even if only a small part of it

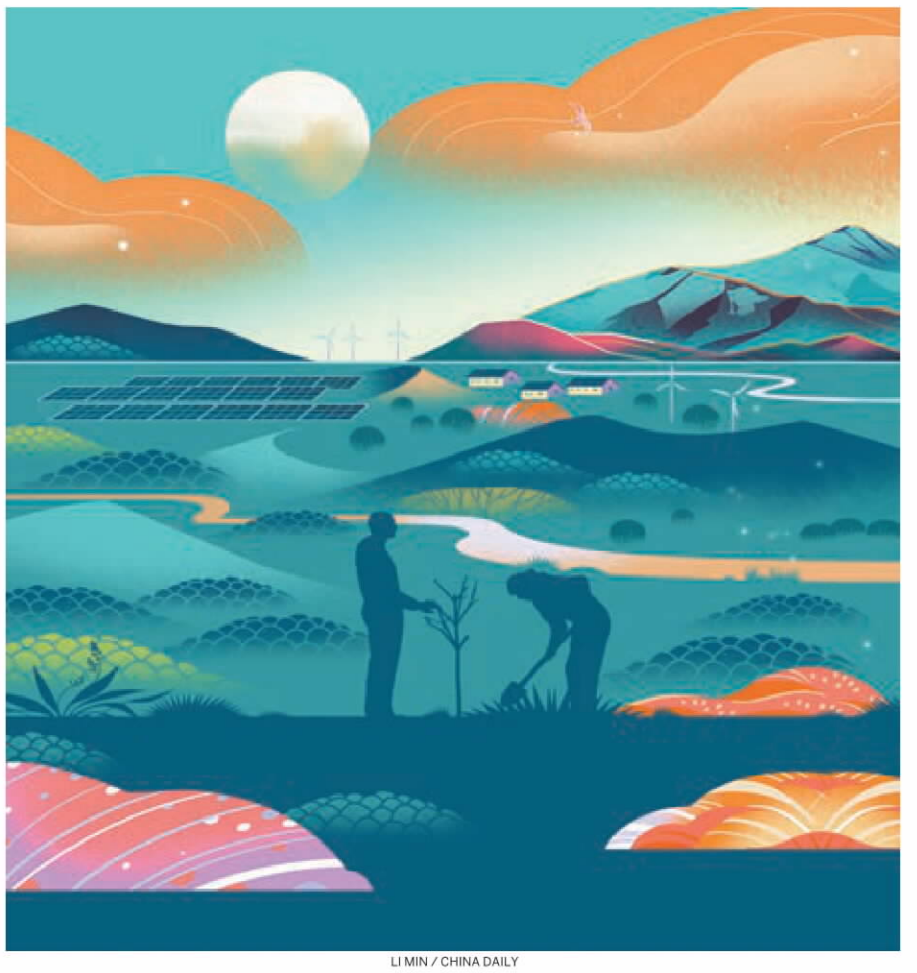


Ronald Sakolsky is not famous in the United States. But to one woman in China, he is one of the most important people in the world. And their friendship, which spans 27 years, should inspire anyone who believes in the power of people-to-people exchanges.

The story begins in 1999 when Sakolsky was teaching English in Luoyang, Henan province, and he watched a news report about a woman named Yin Yuzhen. She was recognized as a fierce champion in the fight against desertification and someone who was eager to see as many trees as possible planted in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, which was her home, in order to improve the environment and people's lives. Inspired by her efforts, Sakolsky raised $5,000 to assist Yin. That could have been the end of the story as he eventually returned to the US.

But in fact, it was just the beginning. Even though he planted none of the trees, his generosity led to what are now more than 50,000 trees in the area. One Chinese woman motivated one US man. And look at the results.

Communication was not as convenient in the late 1990s as it is today, and that meant the pair quickly lost track of each other. But fast forward to 2026 and thanks to modern technology, Chinese netizens found Sakolsky, and he and Yin soon began to converse. Almost immediately, plans were put in motion so that he could see the contribution he had made to improving the region — and, of course, to see his friend one more time.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

Sakolsky and Yin met again on Aug 23. Photographs and videos captured upon his arrival at the airport in Ordos, the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, show the absolute joy both felt upon seeing one another again after 26 years. They cried. They hugged. They posed for pictures. He called her "the hero" of this story because she made a promise 27 years ago and she kept her promise to foster the planting of trees. Sakolsky said that the two should now be thought of as "brother and sister".

> I hope that one day I might bring a group of students to China, a country that I have never been to. Should such a trip happen, one of the key ingredients would be seeing the sites and perhaps meeting influential people.

Before his flight to China, Sakolsky said that he and Yin "communicate through the heart and we always have". That is a powerful reminder to not only US citizens, but also billions of non-Chinese-speaking people worldwide: The bonds of connection with the Chinese people can be made in many ways. Perhaps it is through education, sports or music. Maybe it results from research partnerships, video games or photography. No matter how they happen, those bonds are more valuable than ever in the 21st century because ordinary people can consistently take actions to build bridges even when some in political circles insist that building walls is the right way to conduct international relations.

Yin is, as Sakolsky suggests, a "hero" for her tireless work to improve the quality of the natural environment around her. That service can encourage more people from China, the US and beyond to take part in afforestation and environmental protection. Think of it this way: Yin might never make it into a history book, but for generations the people near her home will positively remember her. She had a dream that first attracted a US teacher and soon ignited the same positive energy in countless others. But none of that would happen if people-to-people exchanges were not in place. The doors of friendship must always be kept open.

Literally and figuratively more trees need to be planted, and the work to improve the climate in and around the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and around the world must continue. Related to this, as some governments challenge the need to invest in green technologies, China has blazed a trail most notably through photovoltaics and electric vehicles to combat climate change. Each tree makes a difference. Each piece of green technology makes a difference.

I hope that one day I might bring a group of students to China, a country that I have never been to. Should such a trip happen, one of the key ingredients would be seeing the sites and perhaps meeting influential people. But another important component is meeting Chinese people who are seeking to make the world a better place. Yin Yuzhen most definitely is.

The author is an associate professor at the Communication and Organizational Leadership Department at Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania, the US. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily or Robert Morris University.

JIANG XIANCHENG

Friendship across frontiers

A small donation has grown into a forest, testifying to the enduring strength of China-US people-to-people bonds



The very land that US friend Ronald Sakolsky helped rejuvenate is now a thriving forest and ecological garden. It stands as a living testament to how transnational people-to-people bonds can advance the common interests of humanity. A $5,000 donation led to more than 50,000 trees flourishing amid the sands. That reads almost like a fairy tale, doesn't it? Yet this is a documented fact. It is the realization of a dream nurtured by Sakolsky, a teacher from the United States, and a promise kept by Chinese farmer Yin Yuzhen over decades.

In 1999, while teaching in Henan province, Sakolsky was moved by a television report about Yin's relentless fight against encroaching sands, or desertification. Inspired by her determination, he raised $5,000 over the following two months to support her tree-planting efforts. In May 2000, Sakolsky traveled to the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and met Yin for the first time. The funds he had raised helped Yin purchase and plant saplings, which over the following decades grew into a forest of more than 50,000 trees.

What Yin accomplished was anything but easy. The Mu Us Sandy Land, where her forest stands, covers some 42,200 square kilometers. Once severely affected by desertification, the region has undergone a remarkable ecological transformation through decades of sustained efforts by generations of people such as Yin. Such has been the transformation. Chinese media described it by saying the Mu Us Sandy Land is close to "disappearing" from the map, as the once-barren landscape has made way for lush greenery and more sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

On Aug 23, Sakolsky returned to China and met Yin again after 26 years. The following day, standing in the forest, he saw the tree they had jointly planted 26 years ago, now a towering giant. It stands as a living testament to how a friendship across frontiers can redefine the ecological frontier between desert and forest, inspiring people across diverse nations to unite in the global cause of environmental sustainability.

The story demonstrates a cultural value that gives people-to-people exchanges their enduring power: a commitment to keeping one's word. For 26 years, Yin held that promise close to her heart, driven by a simple desire to show Sakolsky in person that the Chinese people keep their word. As the ancient Chinese proverb goes, "A promise carries the weight of a thousand gold pieces". This enduring commitment carried Yin through the 26 years before she met Sakolsky again.

It is the very same spirit that propels China's growing contributions to a greener planet, as well as to wider affairs of global development and governance. In recent years, China has successively launched the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative — all dedicated to addressing humanity's common concerns. These efforts have steadily bolstered China's global credibility.

As highlighted in a Pew Research Center survey released in July, China's international image has markedly improved. Its standing is particularly strong across middle-income nations, where many people view China as a reliable partner and a contributor to global peace and stability.

The story also offers another powerful lesson: The Chinese people deeply cherish the goodwill shown by friends from the US and around the world.

A parallel story of Sino-US people-to-people friendship unfolded in Kuliang, Fujian province. Beginning in the 1880s, a growing number of US residents settled in Fuzhou and gathered in Kuliang each summer to escape the heat. They built villas, hospitals, post offices and recreational facilities, while forging deep bonds with local residents and offering them sincere assistance. More than a century later, these cherished memories continue to blossom into new chapters of friendship. In much the same spirit, the story of Sakolsky and Yin stands as a new milestone — one that has inspired, and will continue to inspire, people from diverse nations to unite in working toward a better shared future for all humanity.

Indeed, this story reinforces our conviction that Sino-US people-to-people friendship remains indispensable. During their Beijing summit in May, the leaders of China and the US agreed to pursue "constructive strategic stability" as the new orientation for bilateral ties. Fostering closer people-to-people interactions to advance state-to-state relations is a cause China has always supported. By May, the five-year initiative to invite 50,000 young US citizens to China for cultural exchanges and studies had reached its target two-and-a-half years ahead of schedule. Sino-US people-to-people exchanges not only cultivate mutual trust but also enable shared achievements. Both nations face common challenges — climate change, artificial intelligence governance and cross-border pandemic preparedness — all of which demand the wisdom of cooperation.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

The story also invites reflection on how international communication can foster cross-border friendship in a changing media landscape. In 1999, it was broadcast television that first connected Sakolsky to Yin, a woman he had never met. More than two decades later, social networking platforms have become the major gateway through which people encounter and share information. Yin's search for Sakolsky drew global attention and crowd-sourced assistance, ultimately facilitating their second meeting.

Since Sakolsky's return to China in August, social networking platforms are filled with heartwarming clips documenting their journey. This vividly demonstrates that in the digital age, human connections can cross the barriers of time, space and language, allowing uplifting emotions to be shared universally.

Yin and Sakolsky's shared legend offers a unique lens for audiences in the US and across the globe to recognize the immense efforts behind ecological restoration, as well as the enduring value of transnational people-to-people friendship. Broader interactions and joint efforts between the people of China and the US in priority domains — such as environmental protection, cultural exchanges, and AI governance — remain highly anticipated. Meanwhile, transnational social media platforms hold immense potential to carry these stories across linguistic, cultural and national frontiers, ultimately fostering global friendship and mutual trust.

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WORLD



Above: Rescuers inspect a flood-hit area and damaged structures along the Trishuli River in Devighat, Nuwakot district, Nepal, on Saturday. RAJESH KUMAR SINGH / AP
Left: Rescuers use an earthmover to carry a victim to safety after flash flooding along the Trishuli River in Nuwakot, Nepal, on Wednesday. NIRANJAN SHRESTHA / AP

Experts warn cascading risks could become more frequent

Warming to affect patterns of freezing and thawing, weakening mountainsides

By YANG GAO in Toronto
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Rescue teams continued searching for survivors on Sunday after a devastating glacier-triggered flood swept through the China-Nepal border region, while experts warn that a combination of interacting hazards in a warming Himalayan environment could make such disasters increasingly difficult to predict.

The disaster struck on Wednesday after a high-altitude glacier collapse on the Nepali side sent a massive volume of rock and ice into a river, triggering a fast-moving mudslide and flooding downstream.

The United States Geological Survey determined on Wednesday that glacial collapse and debris flow caused subsequent catastrophic impacts downstream.

Benjamin Horton, dean of the School of Energy and Environment at the City University of Hong Kong, said the disaster in Nepal could be an example of a "compound event" in which different hazards interact to produce a more complex and damaging disaster.

The cascading effect was what made climate-driven changes in high mountain regions particularly concerning, he told Reuters.

Simon Cox, chief scientist at the Mountains to Sea program at Earth Sciences New Zealand, told Reuters that climate change is "generating conditions that can destabilize high-mountain rock and ice".

That could make collapses and cascading hazards of the kind seen last week more frequent, Cox said.

Experts have cautioned against describing climate change as the sole, immediate trigger for Wednesday's collapse, but said rising temperatures and melting glaciers probably played a role.

Warming can reduce ice support on steep slopes, boost meltwater, and alter patterns of freezing, thawing and rainfall, which can weaken mountainsides and make large collapses more likely in some locations, Cox said.

Dorothy Heinrich, a researcher at the University of Reading in England, told Agence France-Presse that such floods are among the hazards posed by a warming planet in the region.

"There is high confidence of more heat waves, glacial retreat, permafrost reduction, these sorts of things that can drive things like landslides and glacial outburst floods," Heinrich said.

Limits revealed

In addition, experts said the speed at which the disaster unfolded highlights the limits of conventional flood warning systems.

Hatim Sharif, a hydrologist at the University of Texas at San Antonio, told AFP that what struck him was the absence of rainfall beforehand.

"That defeats essentially every operational flood warning system in the world," he said.

By the time the mud flow becomes visible, it is too late to escape on foot or by vehicle, Sharif said, because mud and water moving at high-speed form a lethal combination "like liquid concrete".

"Running will not help," he said, estimating that the only option is to climb at least 6 meters up a hill.

A possible long-term remedy would be river level gauges that relay changes to authorities in real time, giving residents 20 to 30 minutes of warning, Sharif said.

However, the immediate danger has not disappeared.

The barrier lake above the mudslide-hit region has basically drained, forming a flowing state of the river channel, China's Ministry of Water Resources said on Sunday, citing drone footage and reports from emergency response teams.

Rescuers were pushing deeper into the disaster-hit area, while authorities worked to clear damaged roads and maintain emergency communications.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

Nepal cautions against fresh flooding as death toll rises

DHADING, Nepal — Authorities in Nepal warned of possible fresh flooding on Sunday and urged residents in flood-affected districts to remain on high alert after water levels rose in the Bhotekoshi River.

Flood warning notices were sent to people's phones early on Sunday as rescue crews worked to clear a major highway connecting Kathmandu to one of the areas worst hit by Wednesday's catastrophic floods.

Nepal's disaster agency said on Sunday that the death toll had climbed to 781 with 2,502 missing.

In Dhading, one of the worst-hit regions, some residents began returning to ruined homes to see what can be salvaged.

Residents sat in homes with walls washed away by the floods, shoveling sludge-like mud and rubble off balconies or window frames. Others scanned the ground for items they could pick out of the mud and rinse off. One man had returned for his chickens, which he found alive. He tied them up and put them in the cabin of his truck.

"Everything is finished. Nothing is left. Not even our home," Sharmila Tamang, a Dhading resident who was trying to salvage items from her home, told The Associated Press.

At a key power plant that was severely damaged by the floods, workers started inspecting the facilities on Sunday to survey the destruction. The plant serves more than 20,000 people across four districts.

In the town of Galchhi, a group of residents sought higher ground on a nearby bridge and watched as the river roared by. Some pointed to enormous rocks washed downriver during the earlier floods, while others standing on a suspension bridge were warned off with whistles.

Along the river, homes, vehicles and farm tractors could be seen jutting from the thick gray-brown sediment that enveloped entire villages in the worst-hit flood areas. Parts of rice terraces along the riverside had dropped into the river after landslides hit them.

Large concrete and smaller suspension bridges were destroyed, leaving communities on the other side of the river with less easy access.

"Those who are there are now stuck there. Those who are here are stuck here. It's going to be very difficult," said Sattan Singh Tamang, 47, who was working near a bridge when Wednesday's floods came.

The flash floods started after a glacial collapse high in the Himalayan region. Scientists who studied satellite images said bedrock underneath the glacier had collapsed, taking part of the glacier with it. The rockfall was so extreme that it registered as magnitude 5.2.

The rocks and melted water then swelled the rivers in the valleys below, causing a torrent of water that swept buildings, bridges and earth downstream.

Homes and businesses affected by the floods were still without electricity on Sunday, as twisted power line poles and wires lay tangled in the mud.

Prithvi Highway is a crucial supply route for food, fuel and other goods entering Kathmandu from other parts of the country. While most of the highway is operational, other parts still face repair challenges.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Iran says MoU with Washington in interests of Tehran

TEHRAN — Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Saturday that the peace memorandum of understanding signed between Iran and the US is in the interests of Iran, West Asia and the world.

At a ceremony in Tehran, Pezeshkian said that with the MoU's implementation, the United States and Israel will not be able to cause chaos, aggression and insecurity in the region, and regional states will be able to pursue the path of stability and development, according to a statement published by his office.

The president highlighted the need for foiling the "enemies' sinister plots" through the promotion of unity and solidarity among Muslim states.

Iran did not start the war, he said. "We do not welcome war, but will stand strongly against any aggressor, and no power can force a nation that is standing with all its might and will into surrender."

On Sunday, Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei urged Muslim countries to recognize their "true enemies", understand their plots and confront them.

In a written message marking the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad, Khamenei said the solution to the problems of the Islamic world lies in maintaining unity, friendship, and cooperation in the pursuit of goodness and virtue.

"My strong and repeated advice to the rulers of Islamic countries, especially those in the West Asia region and the Persian Gulf, is to recognize your true enemies, understand their plan, and confront them," he said.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned in a social media post on Saturday that "major" efforts are underway to manipulate global energy markets for personal gains and prolong the US-Israeli war against Iran.

On June 18, the US and Iran signed the MoU on ending the war in the region on all fronts. Under the MoU, they were scheduled to hold negotiations within 60 days to reach a final agreement, but the fate of the talks remains unclear following the escalation between the two countries last month.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi reiterated on Saturday that the Strait of Hormuz would not open until the US meets its agreements under the MoU, Iran International English reported, citing Iranian media.

"The Strait of Hormuz remains closed, and any vessel passing through the strait does so in coordination with Iran," he said. "We will continue our own defensive measures and are prepared for any scenario."

XINHUA — AGENCIES

Japan's commitment to rule of law tested amid US sanctions on ICC

By HOU JUNJIE in Tokyo
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US sanctions on Tomoko Akane, president of the International Criminal Court and a Japanese judge, followed by Tokyo's restrained response, have stirred controversy in Japan, putting the country's professed commitment to the rule of law to a practical test.

Critics say the episode highlights tensions between Japan's alliance with the United States and its attempt to stick to legal principles in diplomacy.

Japan joined the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 2007 and has since been a major supporter and financial contributor to the ICC, with strengthening the "rule of law" becoming a long-standing pillar of its diplomacy.

The ICC, however, has also sparked controversies over some of its actions, with calls for it to uphold the principle of complementarity, exercise its powers prudently in accordance with the law, and guard against politicization and double standards.

Hiroshi Shiratori, president of the Japan Political and Legal Studies Association and a professor at Hosei University in Tokyo, said Japan is facing an important "crossroads": whether to side with its US ally for political reasons and accept what he called Washington's "trampling on the rule of law", or remain committed to what it regards as "international law".

The United States sanctioned Akane and another ICC official on Aug 18, accusing them of being "directly engaged in efforts by the ICC to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute officials whose government has not consented to ICC jurisdiction".

In recent years, Washington has sanctioned ICC judges and prosecutors over investigations involving US personnel and arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defense minister Yoav Gallant.

In July, the US administration intensified pressure on the court in a campaign aimed at weakening its ability to operate.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi initially called the US sanctions "very unfortunate", drawing criticism that Tokyo's response was too restrained.

A week later, Takaichi said the US action was "incompatible with Japan's position" and that Tokyo had pressed Washington "at various levels until the last moment" not to sanction Akane.

Shiratori said calling the sanctions "very unfortunate" did not amount to criticism of Washington. If the measures were incompatible with Japan's position, Tokyo should criticize the US more strongly, he added.

In the longer term, he warned that failing to firmly support the ICC and oppose what he described as Washington's disregard for "international law" could leave Japan being seen as prioritizing its US alliance over its international legal stance.

Tokyo has remained cautious over US pressure on the court. Last year, it did not join a statement by 79 ICC member states opposing US sanctions. Then-prime minister Shigeru Ishiba said Japan was following developments with "serious concern".

Calls for a clearer stance have grown since the latest sanctions targeted Akane. A cross-party group of lawmakers has urged the government to protest and demand that the sanctions be lifted.

Little political cost

Ukeru Magosaki, former director-general of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's International Intelligence Bureau, said the criticism of Washington had failed to gain traction because most Japanese prioritize coordination with the US. As a result, the government faces little domestic political cost for making concessions to the US.

Japanese diplomacy once centered on coordination with international organizations, Western countries and Asian nations while emphasizing "international law", Magosaki said. Over time, however, coordination with the US has become the overriding priority.

Japan now emphasizes "international law" when it aligns with US interests but tends to remain silent when the two conflict, he said.

Although Japan and the US have channels for policy coordination, there is little room for dialogue through which Tokyo could persuade Washington to change its position, he said.

On Wednesday, Akane urged Tokyo to use its relations with Washington and diplomatic influence to explain its stance on the ICC and help prevent further US pressure.

Shiratori warned that if Japan yields to US pressure to the point of being unable to defend its own citizen, while changing its position for political reasons, it risks losing public trust and diplomatic influence.

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BUSINESS

JOIN THE CONVERSATION; FOLLOW US ON X · CHINA DAILY

Traditional strengths power chip-sector forays

Chinese companies tap expertise, R&D to open new growth avenues

By LI JIAYING
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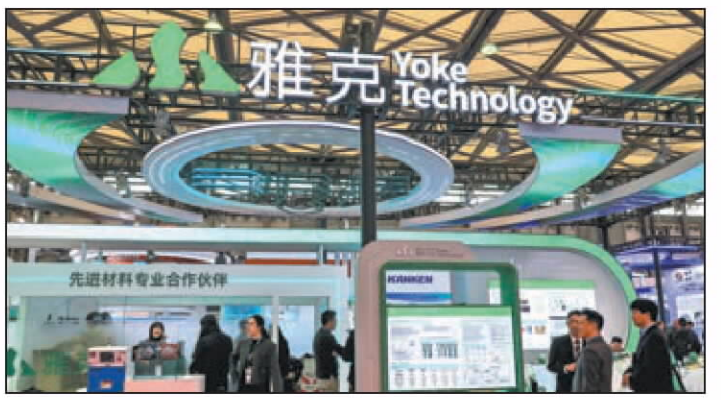
A worker encapsulates chips with a microscope at a semiconductor enterprise in Haikou, Hainan province, on Jan 22. YUAN JINGZHI / FOR CHINA DAILY





Middle: Visitors get information at the exhibition area of Yoke Technology during the SEMICON China 2026 expo in Shanghai on March 26. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Above: Employees are busy on the intelligent production line of a semiconductor manufacturing company in Jiujiang, Jiangxi province, on Feb 2.
WEI DONGSHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

For Hubei Dinglong, a business built on printer toner is increasingly being reshaped by materials that polish and pattern silicon wafers.

The Wuhan-based company reported 3.66 billion yuan ($544 million) in revenue in 2025, with semiconductor material and chip business contributing 57 percent of the total, after growing 37.3 percent year-on-year. Revenue from printing consumables, once its defining business, fell 13 percent to 1.56 billion yuan, according to its annual report.

Dinglong's shift began with an internal question: Could the chemistry used to make printer toner particles be redirected toward chipmaking?

"The opportunity came when our toner team found that previous experience in high-purity inorganic synthesis, surface modification and colloid chemistry could be applied to CMP (chemical mechanical planarization) slurry's nanoscale abrasive particles," said Zhu Shunquan, general manager of the company.

CMP materials have long been a weak link constraining China's advanced chip manufacturing. Zhu said the main bottleneck in developing domestically produced CMP slurries lies in the supply of abrasive particles, a key upstream raw material that accounts for as much as 70 percent of total slurry costs.

The global supply of such materials, however, has long been dominated by a handful of international companies, which have erected formidable market barriers and created closed supply-chain ecosystems through close joint-development arrangements and exclusive agreements, he noted.

"This structural imbalance has long left domestic CMP slurry producers with formulas but without the essential abrasive particles needed to put them into production, making it difficult to achieve stable mass production and independently improve high-performance products," Zhu added.

Against this backdrop, Dinglong moved into the CMP slurry business in 2021, targeting research and development toward four core abrasives: high-purity silica, ultra-pure silica, alumina and ceria.

Zhu said producing these abrasive particles in-house could give researchers more control over particle size and surface properties, allowing materials to be adjusted for a customer's process.

To date, the company has overcome technical barriers in alumina abrasive particles, a field previously dominated by a single global supplier. Its product has entered mass production at a major domestic manufacturer, with monthly deliveries now running into hundreds of drums, the company said. It has also completed the development of a ceria-based CMP slurry for more advanced memory chips, which is undergoing a key qualification process before being introduced into mass production.

Notably, one of the company's proprietary CMP slurries had even outperformed an incumbent supplier's product in a key defect-control metric. "It delivered better scratch control than the incumbent product, helping us secure repeat orders from customers," Zhu said.

Dinglong said it has invested more than 1.4 billion yuan in slurry and abrasive-particle operations. In Xiantao, Hubei province, it built annual capacity for 10,000 metric tons of particles and 20,000 tons of slurry.

Dinglong's transformation story is part of a wider change in China's traditional manufacturing sector. As artificial intelligence development lifts demand for chips, fine-chemical producers, equipment makers and even a consumer outdoor brand are using old skills or acquired technology to find a place in the semiconductor supply chain.

No crossover appears more unlikely than Toread's, a Beijing-based consumer brand well known for its outdoor apparel and equipment. Since 2021, however, the company has positioned itself as an "outdoor plus chips" player.

Since adopting such a dual-track strategy, Toread has built a broad semiconductor portfolio through acquisitions, business integration and continued in-house R&D.

Its four principal product lines now cover touch-control integrated circuits through South Korean electronics manufacturer G2 Touch, Mini and Micro LED display-driver ICs through Beijing Xinneng, fingerprint-recognition chips through Shenzhen-based Betterlife, and intellectual property for AI model compression through Shanghai-based Tongtu Semiconductor.

The company said the strengths of the individual businesses were becoming increasingly visible. G2 Touch's single-layer On-Cell touch-control chips have entered the supply chains of major global brands, including Samsung and Ferrari, giving the business a presence in automotive displays and high-end consumer electronics. Betterlife's fingerprint-recognition chips, used in smart locks, have long ranked among the global market leaders and serve major device makers including Huawei and Xiaomi.

Tongtu Semiconductor, meanwhile, has developed a full-stack AI data-compression technology that the company said can reduce video data to one-fifth of its original size, cut intermediate data generated by large models by 50 percent, and compress model parameters by 30 percent.

During the first half of this year, Toread's chip business generated 359 million yuan in revenue, up 212.83 percent year-on-year and accounting for 38.6 percent of its total revenue. The increase was driven in large part by the consolidation of Betterlife and Tongtu, which were added to Toread's financial statements in January.

Toread is also exploring ways to build links between its established outdoor business and its newer chip operations. In March, the company unveiled a second-generation powered exoskeleton weighing 1.8 kilograms and capable of recognizing more than 10 movement modes, alongside a smart hiking shoe equipped with sensors, gait-analysis algorithms and an AI agent that provides personalized guidance.

The group said its outdoor business could provide product settings and sales channels for such smart hardware products, while its semiconductor businesses could contribute capabilities in sensing, visual interaction and edge AI.

Elsewhere, two other traditional manufacturers took a more industrial route into the semiconductor supply chain: they acquired specialized overseas businesses, retained their engineering expertise and gradually connected those capabilities with production and customers in China.

Beginning as a producer of flame retardants, Jiangsu Yoke Technology moved into semiconductors in 2016, when it completed the acquisition of a 96.28 percent stake in South Korea's UP Chemical, gaining access to semiconductor precursor technology and establishing customer relationships.

Precursors are high-purity chemicals used to deposit thin films on wafers. Building on the acquisition, Yoke became one of China's leading suppliers to have achieved domestic substitution of semiconductor precursor materials, while also expanding into other segments including photoresists and related reagents, electronic specialty gases and spherical silica powder used in chip packaging.

The electronic material sector generated 5.08 billion yuan in revenue for Yoke in 2025, accounting for nearly 59 percent of its total and increasing 12.7 percent year-on-year. Semiconductor chemical materials contributed 2.11 billion yuan, while photoresists and related reagents generated 1.96 billion yuan, according to its annual report.

Some of those products have begun reaching advanced memory applications. "We have products in stable supply for customers' HBM production," Shen Qi, chairman and general manager of Yoke, said at the company's annual results briefing in May. HBM, or high-bandwidth memory, is a type of computer memory designed to provide both high-bandwidth and low power consumption.

Zhengzhou, Henan province-based GL Tech has applied a similar approach to the equipment used in semiconductor packaging and testing.

Founded in 1994, GL Tech initially made monitoring systems for coal mines and other industrial facilities. It entered semiconductor equipment through a series of overseas transactions, acquiring the UK's Loadpoint Ltd in 2016 and Israel-based Advanced Dicing Technologies afterwards.

The deals gave GL Tech technologies covering precision dicing machines, air-bearing spindles and cutting blades. The company then set up a subsidiary in Zhengzhou, sent Chinese engineers to work with teams at Loadpoint and ADT, and adapted the acquired technologies for domestic production.

Long road behind unlikely industrial leaps

REPORTER'S LOG
By Li Jiaying

From a manufacturer of printer-toner making materials that polish silicon wafers to an outdoor clothing brand assembling a chip portfolio, the changes look abrupt, even improbable.

After the stark contrasts in business functions first caught my attention, I looked into the companies' histories and that made the evolution behind the changes clearer.

At first glance, their stories resembled a familiar tale of companies chasing a fast-growing sector. However, the dates and technical records told a different story — each leap was anchored in an older competence, and every new product had to survive the grind of trial, failure, adjustment and customer scrutiny.

Hubei Dinglong began developing CMP pads in 2012 and secured its first order in 2017. Its first order for a 12-inch CMP pad came in 2019. A company filing said qualification of a single pad model could take at least six months to a year even when testing proceeded smoothly.

Outdoor apparel and gear company Toread adopted its "outdoor plus chips" strategy in 2021. About five years later, chips accounted for 38.6 percent of its revenue in the first half of 2026.

GL Tech acquired the United Kingdom-based Loadpoint in 2016. Its domestically developed dicing machines began achieving batch sales in 2021, another five-year journey.

Qin Hongjian, chief financial officer of Jiangsu Yoke Technology, said in 2025 that once primarily a flame-retardant producer had spent 10 years completing its transformation into a diversified semiconductor materials supplier.

Taken together, those timelines changed how I understood the phrase "from zero to one". The starting point is rarely the day a company announces a new strategy. The breakthrough comes when a product passes qualification, enters a customer's production line and performs consistently enough to be ordered again.

That makes a comment by Zhu Shunquan, general manager of Dinglong, especially apt.

"In semiconductor materials, there are no shortcuts and no 'overtaking on a curve'," Zhu said in a recent interview. "The slowest path is, sometimes, the fastest."

The slowness comes from the industry itself. A material or machine may work in a laboratory and still be far from a production line. Customers require lengthy qualification, stable batches and proof that a supplier can protect yield and deliver consistently. One successful order is a technical milestone, but repeat orders show that manufacturing has caught up with invention.

Company disclosures show the scale of investment behind the transitions. Dinglong said it had invested more than 1.4 billion yuan ($208.18 million) in CMP slurry and abrasive-particle operations, while GL Tech said research and development spending had remained above 12 percent of revenue for five consecutive years, with technical personnel accounting for 47 percent of its workforce.

China's wider investment in research also helps explain why more of these transitions are emerging. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics show that the country's R&D spending rose from 2.4 trillion yuan in 2020 to 3.9 trillion yuan in 2025, while R&D intensity increased from 2.36 percent to 2.8 percent of GDP.

Industrial upgrading rarely happens in a single leap. These companies had spent years transferring knowledge, absorbing acquired technology and passing customer tests before new businesses began to reshape their revenue.

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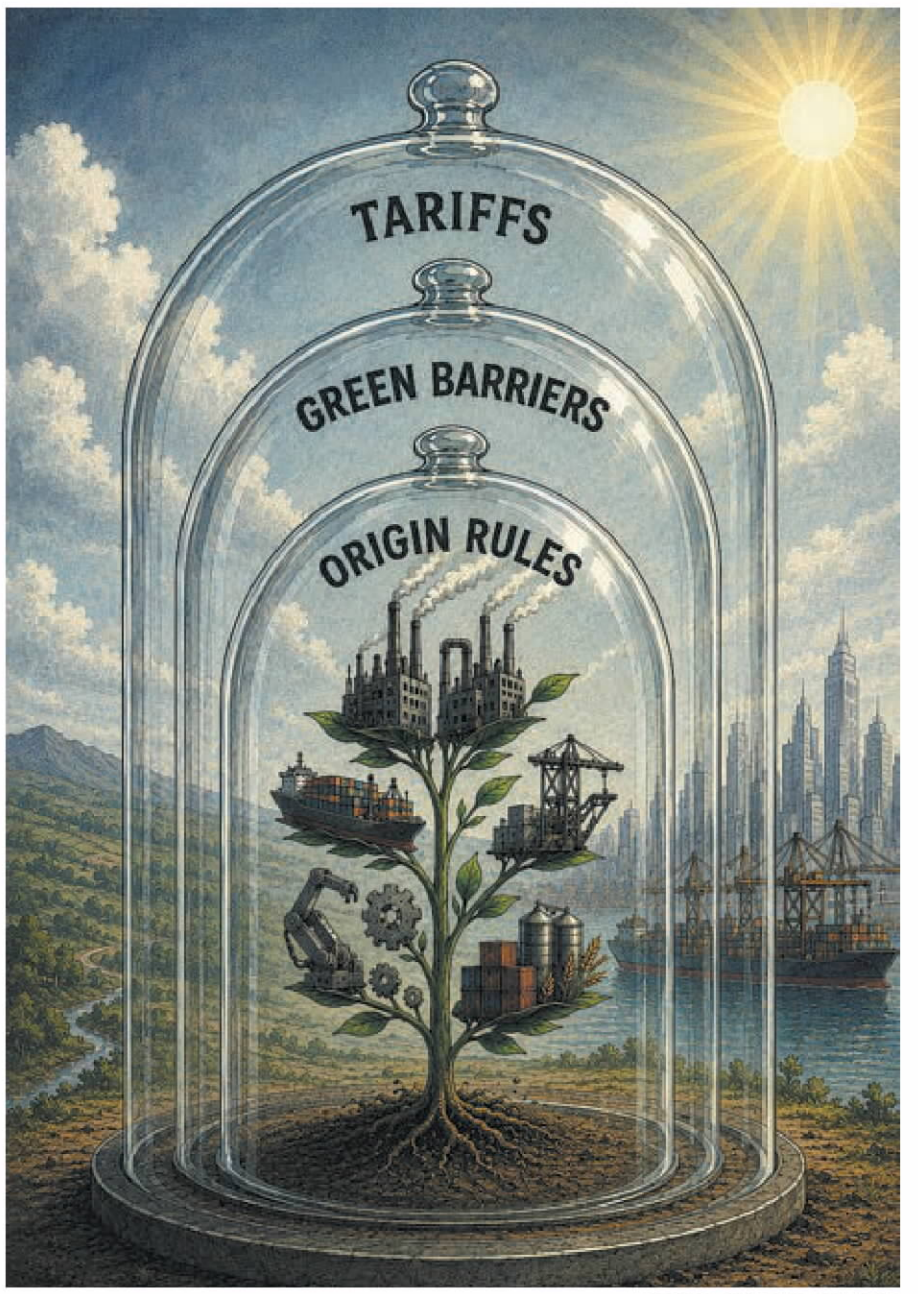
BUSINESS

Why the 'China squeeze' argument does not add up

EAGLE EYE

By Shao Yujia, Jing Rui and Chen Xi



AI PRODUCED BY CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

The claim that China is "squeezing" developing countries out of manufacturing opportunities is built on flawed assumptions, selective use of data and questionable methodology, resulting in conclusions that are misleading and at odds with the realities of global trade.

In May, the Washington-based Peterson Institute for International Economics published a report titled "China's mercantilist squeeze on developing countries". Its central argument is that even as China moves toward higher incomes and more technologically advanced industries, it retains an unusually large share of global exports in labor-intensive manufacturing.

The report argues that this has cost low and middle-income economies hundreds of billions of dollars in exports and large numbers of jobs, making it harder for them to follow the traditional path from low-cost manufacturing to advanced industrialized status.

It goes further, attributing China's competitiveness to policy distortions rather than fair competition, and suggests Beijing should voluntarily make room for economies in lower-end manufacturing.

The report's conclusions do not stand up to scrutiny. They are built on a zero-sum view of global trade, selective use of data and country samples, and questionable benchmarks that disregard productivity differences and profound changes in the global economy.

Modern global value chains rarely operate so neatly. Over the long term, a country's export growth can generate demand elsewhere through higher incomes, supplies of intermediate goods and overseas investment. In many labor-intensive industries, China and other developing economies increasingly function as complementary parts of the same production networks rather than simple substitutes.

The textile and garment industry illustrates this. The United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database shows that in 2024 more than 60 percent of fabric imports into Vietnam, Indonesia, Colombia and Thailand came from China.

Data from the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission show that China has become the largest supplier of machinery, raw materials and accessories to Bangladesh's textile and garment industry. These inputs support a ready-made garment sector worth about $47 billion and have helped Bangladesh become the world's second-largest clothing exporter after China.

Competitiveness cannot simply be reclassified as "excess" whenever one producer performs better than its rivals. Nor should productivity gains, supply-chain efficiency and industrial clustering automatically be treated as evidence of unfairness.

Nor do broader trade figures suggest that developing economies have simply been crowded out. According to UN Trade and Development, global trade surpassed $35 trillion for the first time in 2025, rising 7 percent from a year earlier. Developing economies' share of global exports increased from 29 percent in 2000 to about 46 percent in 2025. Even excluding China, their combined share rose by 6.1 percentage points.

The report's definition and measurement of China's supposedly excessive share of low-skilled manufacturing are also fundamentally flawed. It acknowledges that China's share of global low-skilled exports has declined since 2015, but argues that conventional customs statistics understate China's position. Using value-added trade calculations, it puts China's share at 64 percent.

Yet that number is highly sensitive to the comparison group. The calculation excludes developed economies with substantial textile, leather and footwear industries, including Italy and Portugal, and compares China primarily with developing countries. Recalculations using the report's own underlying data show that including developed-country producers would reduce China's share of value added in low-skilled manufacturing from 64 percent to 49 percent.

More fundamentally, the report's benchmarks for determining what China "should" export are difficult to justify.

One benchmark assumes that a country's share of global exports in labor-intensive manufacturing should broadly correspond to its share of the world's low-skilled labor force. Exports above that level are treated as excessive. On this basis, the report estimates that China has displaced about $110 billion of exports in garments, textiles, leather and footwear and roughly $365 billion across all low-skilled sectors.

But workers are not interchangeable units of production. Labor productivity varies enormously across different economies. China's manufacturing wages are already several times those in countries such as Bangladesh and India. If Chinese factories can remain competitive despite paying substantially higher wages, productivity, infrastructure, industrial clustering, supply-chain efficiency and business organization must form part of the explanation.

The 1960s were characterized by higher tariffs, expensive shipping, limited international production networks and no cross-border e-commerce. China industrialized in an era of much deeper global integration, sophisticated supply chains and technology-enabled manufacturing. Comparing export penetration across these two periods fails to take into account the fundamentally different economic structures that have evolved.

The report also gives insufficient weight to the sources of China's competitiveness. It notes that wages in China's garment industry are about five times those in Bangladesh and four times those in India. Yet Chinese manufacturers have retained significant market share through automation, flexible supply chains capable of handling small and rapidly changing orders, dense industrial clusters, efficient logistics and digital platforms such as cross-border e-commerce.

China has helped developing countries address infrastructure bottlenecks through overseas construction and development projects, transferred manufacturing capacity through investment, technology cooperation and training, and built overseas economic and trade cooperation zones that support industrial clusters.

A pattern is emerging in which China supplies intermediate goods, machinery and components, partner economies undertake processing and assembly, and finished products are sold around the world. Rather than eliminating industrialization opportunities, such networks can lower the initial cost of building manufacturing capacity and shorten the time required for developing economies to join global supply chains.

Against this backdrop, attributing the broader industrialization difficulties of developing countries principally to Chinese exports overlooks constraints closer to home, including inadequate infrastructure, electricity shortages, substandard ports, weak business environments and inconsistent economic policies.

It also overlooks barriers imposed by advanced economies themselves. Carbon-related trade measures, stringent rules of origin and other regulatory requirements can raise the cost of entering rich-country markets for low and middle-income economy exporters.

Global monetary tightening can compound those pressures by triggering capital outflows, currency depreciation and heavier debt-service burdens, leaving governments with fewer resources for infrastructure and education.

Competitiveness cannot simply be reclassified as "excess" whenever one producer performs better than its rivals. Nor should productivity gains, supply-chain efficiency and industrial clustering automatically be treated as evidence of unfairness.

Developing countries therefore need more than another economy being told to surrender manufacturing market share. They need better infrastructure, access to technology and finance, functioning supply chains, and a more open and transparent international trading environment.

The debate ultimately comes down to how global development is understood. If manufacturing is a fixed pie, and trade is a zero-sum game, China's gains must indeed be somebody else's losses. But the experience of the past two decades points to a more complex reality: global trade has expanded, developing economies have increased their export share and production has become increasingly organized through, and structured around, cross-border networks.

The challenge is not to decide which country should voluntarily produce less. It is to ensure that more developing economies acquire the infrastructure, skills, investment and market access needed to produce more themselves. On that test, the claim that China must "make room" for the Global South mistakes the nature of both modern manufacturing and economic development.

The writers are assistant research fellows at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.
The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Why 'creative destruction' is no longer enough; the case for creative transformation

MAIN STREET

By Richard Li-Hua

Joseph Schumpeter's "creative destruction" has ruled business strategy for a century. Innovate or die. Disrupt or be disrupted. The old must burn so the new can rise. But look at the world's biggest electric vehicle market today. Something different is happening, and it demands a new playbook.

BYD, now the world's largest EV maker, did not achieve dominance by destroying its past. It began as a battery company in 1995. For two decades, it mastered electrochemical engineering. When the EV revolution arrived, BYD did not abandon its factories or dismiss its workforce. It repurposed its core competence, and its battery expertise became the engine of its automotive quantum leap.

Last year, Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based BYD sold more electric vehicles than Tesla globally. It did not disrupt its heritage. It transformed it.

The same pattern holds for CATL, the world's largest battery producer. CATL did not dismantle existing supply chains to build something entirely new. It embedded itself within the global automotive ecosystem and pushed the technological frontier forward while harmonizing with its many partners. Today, one in every three EVs worldwide is powered by a CATL battery.

These are not stories of destruction. They are stories of transformation.

For decades, Western business orthodoxy has insisted on a binary. You are either an innovator who destroys incumbents, or you are an incumbent awaiting destruction. This framework has shaped corporate strategy, investment criteria and antitrust policy.

But it contains a critical blind spot. It assumes that progress requires the annihilation of existing capabilities, institutional memory and productive ecosystems. Tradition is treated as baggage and heritage is seen as a burden. In an age of climate crisis, supply chain fragility and geopolitical fragmentation, this assumption is proving dangerously costly.

Here is where China Harmonious Innovation offers a different lens.

At its core lies a simple but powerful idea. Innovation need not be a zero-sum collision between old and new. Instead, it can be a symbiotic evolution where existing strengths are preserved, upgraded and integrated with emerging technologies.

This is not conservatism masquerading as strategy. It is the recognition that the most sustainable competitive advantages often reside in the adaptive recombination of established capabilities with new knowledge. I call this "creative transformation" rather than "creative destruction".

The distinction is strategic, not semantic.

Creative destruction externalizes costs. It writes off factories, dismisses workforces and abandons institutional knowledge in the name of efficiency.

Creative transformation, by contrast, internalizes continuity. It asks a different question — what existing assets, relationships and competencies can be reconfigured to meet new market needs and demand?

BYD's battery expertise was not a legacy liability to be discarded. It was the foundational asset that enabled its automotive quantum leap. China's manufacturing ecosystem was not an obsolete industrial relic to be disrupted by software platforms. It was the substrate upon which a new generation of smart hardware enterprises could flourish.

This has profound implications for innovation economics.

For too long, the field has been dominated by an obsession with the new combination that annihilates the old. But what if the more powerful economic force is the new integration that elevates the old?

What if the firms defining the next industrial era are not those that burn bridges, but those that build them? It connects legacy industries to digital infrastructure, marries traditional craftsmanship with artificial intelligence, and aligns environmental sustainability with commercial viability.

The evidence is accumulating worldwide.

In Germany, industrial firms pursue Industry 4.0 not by dismantling their *mittelstand* (medium-sized businesses) manufacturing base, but by digitizing it. In Japan, Toyota transitions to electric mobility while preserving its *kaizen* (continuous improvement) production philosophy. In India, the Unified Payments Interface payment platform did not destroy existing banking infrastructure. It harmonized with it, creating a hybrid system that scaled faster than any pure-disruption model could have accomplished.

The future belongs not to the destroyers, but to the harmonizers.

This reframing carries direct consequences for economic theory.

Paul Romer — co-recipient of the 2018 Nobel Prize in Economics — who transformed our understanding of endogenous growth, demonstrated that ideas are non-rival. Romer argued that the non-rivalry of ideas is ultimately behind the rise in living standards over various lengths of time. Ideas can be shared without being depleted. If ideas compound through sharing, then the model that maximizes value creation is not one of competitive annihilation, but of collaborative accumulation.

Innovation need not be a zero-sum collision between old and new. Instead, it can be a symbiotic evolution where existing strengths are preserved, upgraded and integrated with emerging technologies.

Edmund Phelps, awarded the 2006 Nobel Prize in Economics, argued that innovation thrives in societies encouraging grassroots creativity rather than top-down displacement.

Both insights point toward an innovation model that is inclusive, cumulative and harmonious.

In other words, not throwing out the proverbial baby with the bathwater.

The question for business leaders is therefore not whether to innovate, but how to innovate without unnecessary destruction.

In an era of constrained resources and climate imperatives, the luxury of burning down the old to make way for the new is diminishing. The most resilient organizations will be those that treat their histories not as liabilities, but as platforms for improvement and even metamorphosis.

As we approach the 50th anniversary of China's reform and opening-up, the world needs an economic narrative that transcends the theology of disruption. China Harmonious Innovation is not a rejection of market dynamism. It is a refinement of it.

The future belongs not to those who destroy creatively, but to those who transform harmoniously.

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CULTURE



Tourists visit the Jingdezhen Imperial Kiln Museum in Jingdezhen on Aug 16, following the official inscription of Jingdezhen's Handicraft Porcelain Industry Sites in Jiangxi province on the UNESCO World Heritage List in July. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A dedication to guardians of porcelain

Recently released book celebrates Jingdezhen's achievements as it attains world heritage status and also serves as a guide to the historic city, reports **Yang Yang**.

On July 25, the Jingdezhen Handicraft Porcelain Industry Sites in Jiangxi province were inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, marking them as the world's first World Heritage site dedicated entirely to porcelain and ceramics.

A book, *Cidu Hui* (*Porcelain Capital Illustrated: A Visual Guide to the Culture and Life of Jingdezhen*), was recently released as the city's first comprehensive illustrated guide.

The creative team from Jingdezhen Information Design Studio, China National Geography and Ciduhui Studio spent years visiting 45 core heritage sites, meticulously hand-drawing 72 traditional porcelain-making processes, detailing kiln architecture, and providing a year-round guide to local market delicacies.



Cidu Hui (*Porcelain Capital Illustrated: A Visual Guide to the Culture and Life of Jingdezhen*) is launched at PageOne Bookstore in Beijing in August as Jingdezhen's first comprehensive illustrated guide.

Liu Zili, a Jingdezhen native and the founder of Taoxichuan Ceramic Art Avenue, describes *Cidu Hui* as a "wormhole through time and space" leading to the porcelain capital. It not only portrays porcelain and old buildings but also conveys the enduring dedication of generations of guardians of the porcelain industry, he says.

The book's cover design features the iconic blue-and-white Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) plum vase from Jingdezhen. Inside, it captures the vibrant lives of kiln workers, artisans and newcomers.

Divided into five sections — heritage, porcelain, towns, architecture, and experiences — it connects the city's history from ancient imperial kilns and major state-run porcelain factories to the modern blend of local and migrant artisans, serving both as a professional resource on UNESCO's World Heritage List and as a travel guide for the public.

Wei Weijia, the book's initiator and chief planner, shared her 10 years of life and work experience in Jingdezhen, as well as the process of creating the book at its Beijing launch event in early August.

In 2016, Wei, who had just graduated from Cambridge University with a master's degree in architecture and urban studies, first came to Jingdezhen to work on urban renewal projects. At that time, the city was much less developed than it is today.

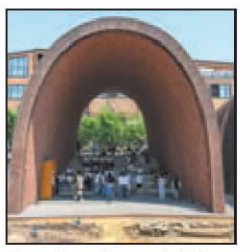
Over the past 10 years, friends have often asked her for advice on visiting the city, such as where to go and how to buy porcelain. This sparked the idea of creating a book that organizes the city's culture into a readable, engaging and easy-to-understand guide for everyone.

In late 2024, when she learned that Jingdezhen was applying for world heritage status in 2026 for its handcrafted porcelain heritage, she began planning the book to showcase the city from all angles, not just its porcelain.









From top: Cover of *Cidu Hui*. Artists from Germany carry the fired ceramics in Jingdezhen. Tourists visit an ancient kiln. The Jingdezhen Imperial Kiln Museum. ZHOU MI / XINHUA

After spending a decade in Jingdezhen, Wei offers a fresh perspective as an outsider drawn to the city in the book's "Experience" section, which highlights the lively urban life, featuring streets, markets, food, and the coexistence of artisans, locals and young creators.

"This book captures Jingdezhen in the 2020s. The city has a glorious history, but its modern life is just as vibrant, filled with lively interactions and ongoing creativity," she says.

This modern life is also what Zhang Jie, an urban planner and professor at Tsinghua University who leads urban renewal projects, such as the Taoyangli historical and cultural district and the Taoxichuan cultural and creative district, is glad to see in Jingdezhen.

"The true success of Taoxichuan is seen in the lights shining through factory windows late at night — people are living, creating, and interacting there," he says.

Speaking of the unique value of Jingdezhen as a World Cultural Heritage site, he says, unlike any other city, Jingdezhen has thrived for 1,000 years on its porcelain industry. While Venice's glass industry had a brief period of success, Jingdezhen's craftsmanship continues to thrive, with tens of thousands of artisans still engaged in handmade production. "This makes it one of the most vibrant examples of living industrial heritage worldwide," he says.

The book illustrates how Zhang and his team have transformed the city over the past 15 years.

Reflecting on the transformation of areas like Taoxichuan and Taoyangli, Zhang notes that, unlike many industrial heritage sites that become mere tourist attractions, Jingdezhen's renewal efforts focus on the real needs of the residents, veteran artisans and young creators. Instead of large-scale demolitions, they have preserved the original structures of old kilns and factories, allowing history to be a part of everyday life, he adds.

Zhang also emphasizes the "cultural and green integration" approach in urban renewal. This involves using existing factory structures to minimize new material consumption and employing recyclable materials, such as kiln bricks, to promote low-carbon practices. This strategy preserves historical continuity while meeting the lifestyle needs of modern youth.

"This approach, which balances heritage protection with youth development, offers a valuable model for urban renewal projects nationwide," he says.

Since Jingdezhen's handmade porcelain heritage is a complete, regionally dispersed chain, with production and life deeply intertwined, illustration requires a different approach, says Song Zhuangzhuang, co-founder of DDH Studio and executive producer of the book.

Apart from the chapters about Jingdezhen, the team also dedicates a whole chapter to porcelain, compiling vast amounts of glaze colors, dynastic reign marks, and hand-drawn diagrams of the 72 porcelain-making processes, he explains. Additionally, the large-format pages allow for horizontal comparison of hundreds of porcelain patterns, enabling readers to understand the complex ceramic techniques visually.

He notes that in today's world of fragmented information, *Cidu Hui* invites readers to engage in immersive reading. Through two-dimensional hand drawings, it integrates scattered heritage sites and craft knowledge, clarifying the intrinsic connections between landscapes, minerals, kilns, and human habitation.

"This makes the complex knowledge of world heritage accessible and readable," he says.

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Libraries reach grassland herders by horseback

By BAI SHUHAO and **MAO WEIHUA**

Writer Li Juan once described life on the summer pastures deep in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region as a season when "the days grow longer, and the afternoons seem to stretch endlessly."

Each spring and summer, when the grasslands turn green, herders across Xinjiang pack up their families and drive their sheep and cattle into the mountains in search of fresh pasture. They spend three or four months there before descending to the towns as the weather chills. The seasonal migration, known as *zhuanchang*, is a way of life shaped by the rhythms of the grasslands.

For months, many herding families live in portable yurts high in the mountains, without television or internet. Their days can be quiet and repetitive: tending livestock, milking animals, and sitting around talking together.

Three years ago, however, the routine in parts of Shawan in Tacheng prefecture, Xinjiang began to change. The city's library launched a program known as the "Library on Horseback," sending volunteers into three mountainous areas with books strapped to horses. The program reaches roughly 1,000 herders, according to Liu Shuya, an official with the Shawan Library.





Top: A volunteer hands books to a herder. **Above:** A Shawan Library staff member recommends books to herders. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"Is it free?" Tangnuer Nuerdawulieti, a staff member at the Xigebi township library in Shawan, is often asked when she arrives in the mountains with books and is quickly surrounded by curious herders.

Yes, she tells them. The books are part of a free public program.

"The policies are really good now," some herders respond.

Children, meanwhile, are usually the most eager readers. During the summer vacation, they have more time to browse through the books, often making a beeline for picture books and other titles that catch their eye.

Xigebi is home to about 1.83 million *mu* (about 122,000 hectares) of pastureland, and about 60 percent of its residents are from the Kazak ethnic group. The books delivered by volunteers include titles in both Chinese and Kazakh, ranging from novels and health guides to practical books on raising livestock.

About every two weeks, volunteers carry 200 to 300 books to two or three locations where herders tend to gather, rotating the collection each time.

The narrow mountain trails make horses the most practical means of reaching the pastures.

Horseback riding is common in Xinjiang, Nuerdawulieti says. Motorcycles are also used, but not everyone knows how to ride one. She herself can ride a horse but not a motorcycle. And the gentle horses she rides make the journey less bumpy.

Nuerdawulieti usually travels with three or four colleagues. They drive as close to the pastures as possible, then switch to horseback, loading the books into saddlebags. From there, the volunteers ride for another 40 to 50 minutes before reaching their destination.

Along the way, friendly herders sometimes offer directions or help carry the books.

The scenery is part of the reward. Under blue skies and drifting clouds, cattle and sheep graze across the summer grasslands. The volunteers and local residents sometimes sit together on the grass for informal reading sessions, and share books they have recently read or tell stories.

"The people they can talk to daily are very few, so they are especially happy to see us," says Guo Jianhong, who works with Nuerdawulieti at the township library.

Recently, Guo told a group of herders about a tourist whose car had become stuck in the mud. A local man helped pull it out and refused payment, waving away the money the tourist offered.

The herders enjoyed the story, Guo says, because it reflected what they see as the straightforward and generous character of the Xinjiang people.

After three years, Liu says, the program has begun to change lives in the mountain communities in small but visible ways. Children seem increasingly interested in books and more willing to express themselves. Some herders have also begun to change long-established eating habits after reading health-related books, including reducing their reliance on diets heavy in beef and mutton to avoid digestive problems.

"It's rewarding to see the books actually being read," Liu says.

Nuerdawulieti feels the same. After spending most of her life in the township, she had not read a physical book for a long time. But in the mountains, she discovered that books could be treasured in another way.

For her, the most satisfying moment comes when a book finally reaches a herder's hands.

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Top: The Shawan Library in Tacheng prefecture in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region organizes cultural performances in rural areas. **Above:** Library volunteers deliver books on horseback along a mountain pasture trail in Xigebi, Shawan.

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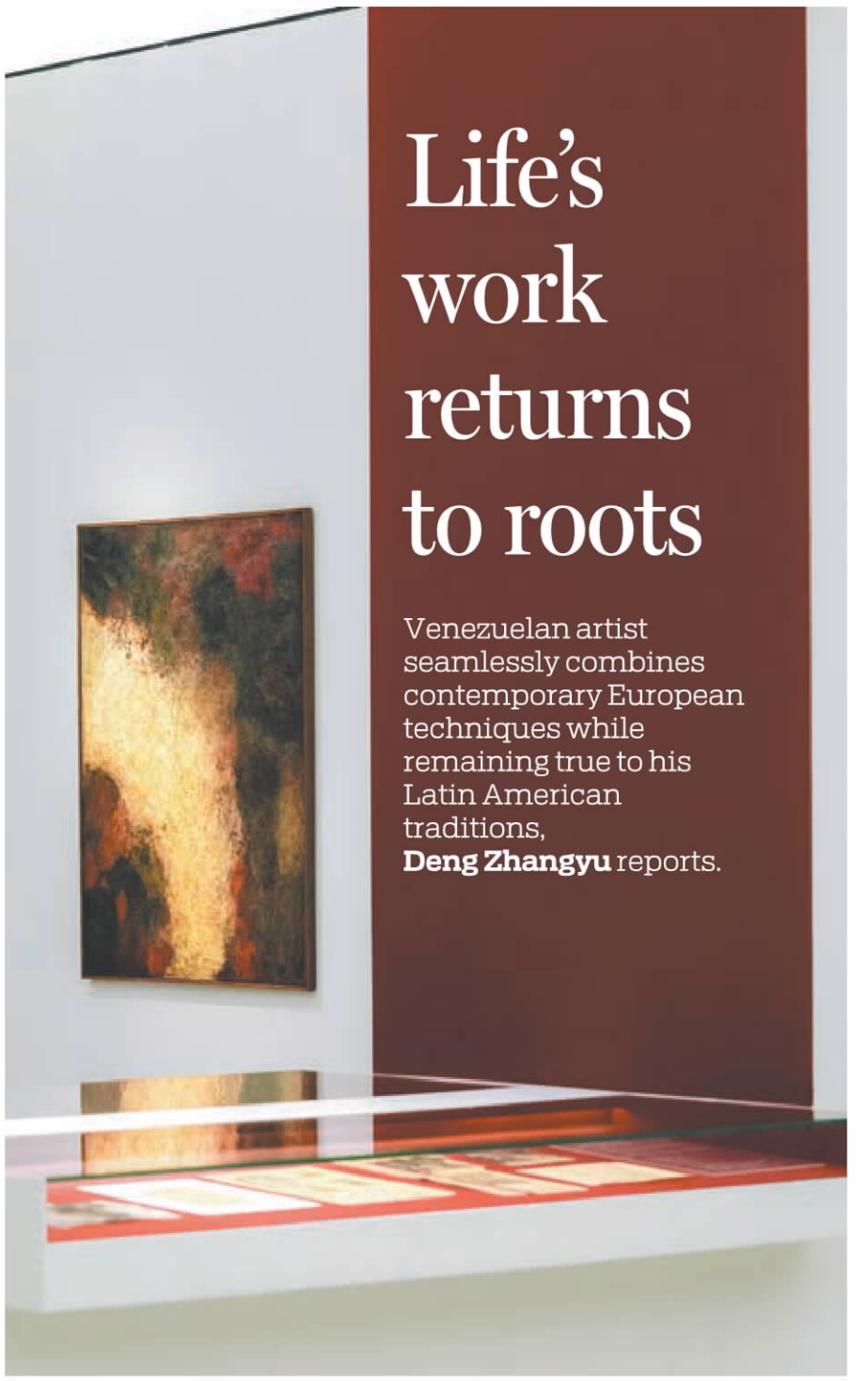
CULTURE



Venezuelan artist Oswaldo Vigas' show at the Guangdong Museum of Art in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, presents a selection of monumental works spanning the artist's seven-decade career, including his paintings (from left) *Gesticulating*, *Genesis*, *The Encounter* and *Inciters*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Life's work returns to roots

Venezuelan artist seamlessly combines contemporary European techniques while remaining true to his Latin American traditions, **Deng Zhangyu** reports.



Vigas' paintings feature intense and vivid colors, such as *Germination I* displayed at the show.

Walking into the Guangdong Museum of Art in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, one immediately notices intense, vivid colors in the works of Venezuelan artist Oswaldo Vigas. The elongated, distorted figures on the canvases are human, yet not quite — they appear as life forms imagined from plants, stones and ancient totems. This is one of China's first large-scale exhibitions of Vigas, a towering figure in Latin American modern art.

Vigas' retrospective exhibition *Reality Is What I Imagine* showcases a selection of monumental works spanning the artist's seven-decade career, offering a comprehensive view into his life's work — an ongoing process of questioning and reimagining the world through the living heritage of his homeland.

The exhibition is jointly curated by Gabriela Rangel, a Venezuelan curator based in the United States, and Jiang Jun, a curator from China. Together, they have created a platform for cross-Pacific dialogue, contributing to the ongoing narrative of the contemporary Global South. The show will run through Nov 22.

Vigas was born in Valencia, Venezuela, in 1923, and studied medicine in his early years. At 26, he joined the artist collective Free Art Workshop in Caracas. In 1953, he went to Paris to study art.

During this period, he encountered the most avant-garde artistic language of European modernism. He connected with eminent modernist figures such as Pablo Picasso, Wifredo Lam, Victor Vasarely, Jesus Rafael Soto, and Alejandro Otero.

Vigas passed away in Caracas in 2014.

Throughout his life, he devoted himself to addressing a single question: when the standards of modern art are mainly derived from major cities in Western culture, such as Paris and New York, how can an artist from Latin America express modern art while remaining true to his own traditions?

In Jiang's view, the exhibition's Chinese curator, Chinese artists who went to Paris to study art in the 20th century face this very question. And when those Chinese artists returned home, they were challenged by the same topic: after learning from the West, how do you come to understand your own tradition anew?

"Vigas' creative path merged international language with the indigenous spirit of South America. He moved fluidly between the Western art system and local culture, drawing on multiple sources while remaining true to himself," says Jiang.

The artist did not merely occasionally borrow a few motifs from ancient art; instead, he made "returning to his homeland sources" a lifelong method.

Wang Shaoqiang, director of the Guangdong Museum of Art, says: "He neither blindly followed the universal narrative of European modernism, nor clung to a nostalgic, provincial imagination. Rather, he carved out a completely new creative form between the two."

The exhibition traces the artist's stylistic evolution in chronological order across four periods. From 1942 to 1952, while Vigas was in Caracas studying medicine, he experienced a stylistic awakening. He delved deeply into pre-Columbian myths and imagery, creating the iconic *Brujas* (witches) series that would run throughout his entire artistic life — figures that exist between human, beast, plant, and mineral forms, embodying a traditional worldview and ancestral wisdom.

During his time in Paris, Vigas engaged in diverse cultural exchanges, which prompted him to reflect on his Latin American identity while also absorbing the influence of his contemporaries. Jiang explains that the works from this period first bring to mind Mondrianesque geometric structures. Still, their graphic sources may also point to ancient Venezuelan ruins, rock paintings and primitive stone carvings.

In the 1960s, Vigas returned to Venezuela and reintroduced human figures, animals, Latin American mythology, and folklore into his works, while continuing to use the modernist formal language he had mastered.

Catherine Kwai, founder of Kwai Fung Hin Art Gallery, a co-organizer of this exhibition, believes that Vigas truly matured only after experiencing the West and returning to his roots.

"His artistic language is highly international, yet it preserves a very strong local culture, and the combination does not feel traditional or closed off," says Kwai.

In the artist's last two decades, his paintings became increasingly simple, with more direct lines. Animals, humans, and certain unnameable life forms reappeared. At times they resemble monsters casually drawn by children; at other times, they evoke figures on cave walls from tens of thousands of years ago.

According to Kwai, in Vigas' later years, the artist achieved a kind of freedom in which he no longer needed to prove anything — he became like a child, full of playfulness and humor.

Jiang says that introducing Vigas' works to a Chinese audience fosters a cultural synthesis that reflects both global and localized perspectives.

Vigas' son, Lorenzo Vigas, says that his father had always admired China and was an enthusiastic student of Chinese history and traditional culture.

"My father felt that there is a connection between Asia and South America that people have not truly recognized. Through observing and studying ancient Chinese traditions, he could see many commonalities with Latin American traditions."

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Visitors at Vigas' painting *Yare* created in 1952 when he experienced a stylistic awakening.



American Object in Three Blocks (right) was created in 1956 when Vigas studied art in Paris.

Window into appraiser-painter's creative world opens in Beijing

By **DENG ZHANGYU**

What does a lifetime of studying the greatest paintings in Chinese history do to an artist's own creativity? For Yin Guanghua, it produces paintings that carry the quiet weight of centuries. Yin, now 81, is both a leading connoisseur of ancient Chinese painting and an accomplished literati artist whose works are known for their refined, classical elegance. Decades of appraising masterpieces from dynasties past have sharpened his eye and nourished his brush.

The artist's solo show, *Grand Views of Taihu Lake,* opening on Aug 25 and running until Sept 11 at the Guardian Art Center in Beijing, allows audiences to see this fusion of scholarship and artistry. The show presents more than 80 landscape and flower-and-bird paintings by the artist along with over 100 pieces from his personal collection of ancient calligraphy, paintings, and scholar's studio objects, offering a rare window into the cultural soil that nurtured his creative world.

Yin was born in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, a city that neighbors Taihu Lake, one of China's most storied waterways and a perennial favorite among classical landscape painters. The scenery that inspires Yin's paintings comes straight from this Jiangnan (the area south of the lower Yangtze River) water-town region: scattered ponds, rolling low hills, and a shifting mist that softens the landscape.

In his works, a small hill, a lone boat, a humble house, a single tree, or a piece of rock becomes the vehicle for a serene and expansive mood.

Curator Qiu Ting, dean of the Chinese Painting Academy at the China Academy of Art, says that Yin's scenes and artistic conception grow from his life beside Taihu Lake.

"He has a deep, lived understanding of the landscape. Long-term observation and meditation on these views slowly crystallized into his own personal painting language, fusing external nature with the inner heart," says Qiu.

"For Yin, Taihu Lake is not just the scenery of his hometown. It is the spiritual home where he settles his mind and lodges his feelings," Qiu adds.

Yin's flower-and-bird paintings take a similarly considered approach. Rather than chasing ornate details, he grounds his work in close observation of plants and animals, blended with traditional freehand painting techniques. Whether he's depicting everyday produce like taro and pomegranates, flowering camellias, or birds of prey and waterfowl, he captures the essential spirit of his subjects with striking precision.



Connoisseur and painter Yin Guanghua's solo show *Grand Views of Taihu Lake* at the Guardian Art Center in Beijing presents more than 80 landscape and flower-and-bird paintings, including painting of Taihu Lake (left) and red pomegranates (right). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Yin often notes the weather and season on his paintings. These small annotations tuck quiet fragments of daily life into his brushwork.

The exhibition also presents a substantial selection from Yin's personal collection of ancient art, including works by master artists in ancient times such as Dong Qichang, Qiu Ying, and Zhu Da (also known as Bada Shanren). Alongside these paintings are the objects of a classical scholar's study — brush pots, seals and Yixing (Jiangsu) teapots in purple clay. Together, they trace the lineage of taste and tradition that has shaped Yin's aesthetic.

For Yin, reading, appraising, researching, and painting form a continuous cycle of enrichment. "Connoisseurship sharpens one's judgment of beauty, and that accumulated learning eventually sinks into the painting itself," says curator Qiu.

Yin's art journey began early. At 16, he studied landscape painting under Qin Gulin and later learned freehand flower-and-bird painting from the celebrated master Zhu Qizhan. In 1995, he held a solo exhibition at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing — a significant milestone for any Chinese artist.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Yin has served as a long-time appraiser for China Guardian Auctions, authenticating and researching countless national treasures that have passed through the market. His expertise has been instrumental in confirming works attributed to legendary calligraphers including Wang Xizhi and Song Dynasty (960-1279) scholar Zeng Gong.

Wang Yannan, vice-chairman of China Guardian Auctions, has known Yin for years. "Ancient painting appraisal is an enormously complex discipline requiring an immense accumulation of knowledge. Yin is very well-read and knows the lives, habits and experiences of artists through the ages in remarkable detail. He has devoted his entire life to studying ancient art, and he is a rare traditional literatus in our time," she says.

Wang adds with a chuckle: "He knows very well about the lives of ancient painters. Yet, in his daily life, he is quite absent-minded, often getting lost on his way out. His mind is always absorbed in painting and scholarship."

Through his years of appraising and authenticating the works of masters, Yin has mastered both the essence and the lineage of traditional brushwork — knowledge he has also shared through published works on connoisseurship. These rich experiences and broad artistic horizons now flow steadily into his own painting, lending it an aura of profound antiquity and refined taste.

The exhibition, rooted in the theme of Taihu, offers a complete portrait of a scholar-artist's daily life and lifelong pursuit. Through the ancient past, he nourishes his brush; through reading and study, he cultivates his mind; and through landscape, he finds his place in the world.

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LIFE

Beyond the flying fists

Jackie Chan's enduring appeal brings fans together as filmmakers consider where Chinese action cinema goes next, **Bai Shuhao** and **Tian Xuefei** report in Harbin.



The closing ceremony and honorary awards gala of the 7th Jackie Chan International Action Film Week is held at Harbin Ice and Snow World on Aug 12. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



From left: The jury for the "Iron Man" honorary awards of the 7th Jackie Chan International Action Film Week. A fan gifts Jackie Chan a painting depicting all his roles. A couple from Malaysia travels to Harbin to meet Jackie Chan. BAI SHUHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Malaysia rarely sees typhoons. So when Typhoon Dolphin struck Shanghai recently, a Malaysian couple experienced one for the first time.

Their flight was delayed, then rescheduled. After they finally boarded, the plane returned to the airport. They spent 30 hours stranded before eventually getting seats on a replacement flight to Harbin in Heilongjiang province.

They had traveled thousands of kilometers for one reason: to see their idol, Jackie Chan.

"As the plane was taxiing, I was still very nervous. I was afraid it would be canceled again," says Low Ai Ying. "The moment we left the ground, I grabbed my husband's hand, and tears just fell."

The couple are Chinese Malaysians whose families trace their roots to Fujian province in southeastern China. Growing up, they had access to just one Chinese-language channel, and Jackie Chan's movies seemed to be on constant rotation.

"He was probably the only choice. But we never got tired of watching him. Chinese people really loved Jackie Chan."

To Low, Chan's films were brave and authentic. Whenever he was beaten up on screen, she says, she would wince along with him. More important was his persistence in making films, which gave her strength during difficult periods in her own life.

The couple met through their shared love of Chan's movies. Whenever one of his new films is released in Malaysia, they still make it a point to go to the theater.

This time, they traveled to attend the seventh Jackie Chan International Action Film Week and the inaugural Sun Island Film Week, held in Harbin.

In mid-August, fans from around the world gathered in the "Ice City," where China's first movie theater was established, to celebrate the past and consider the future of Chinese action cinema.

At a meeting with fans, Chan gave an update on his health. He said he had just returned from Azerbaijan, where he was filming a new movie, when a high-pressure jet of water from a fire hose accidentally knocked him into a pillar, fracturing his shoulder blade.

"I'm fine. I can go back to work as normal," he says with a laugh. "If I don't film, it actually hurts more."

It is the kind of attitude that has carried him through much of his career. He jokes about an old saying: "Once you go to the hospital, you'll find out you're sick. If you don't go, you're fine."

At the event, Chan greeted fans from across China and 17 other countries, switching between regional Chinese dialects and foreign languages. This year marks his 42nd year in the film industry.

He recalls his early days as a young stuntman. While filming *Water Margin*, he played a minor water demon soldier. Because he is not a strong swimmer, he nearly passed out on set.

"Five decades have passed so quickly," he says. He still finds it difficult to believe that he is making movies and that so many people continue to like him.

Among those fans is Ben Lewis, from Britain, who founded a small Jackie Chan fan club in Europe with about 30 members. His favorite Chan film is *Armour of God*, which he first watched as a child, when Chan was still, in Lewis's words, a "young man".

"Before CGI, before special effects, before Western films were doing this, he was already doing his own stunts," Lewis says.

Even in his 70s, Lewis adds, Chan continues to do what has defined his career.

For Lewis, the appeal of Chan's films lies partly in their lightness. They are comedies as much as they are action films.

When Chan fights, he is rarely trying to hurt someone. He is trying to protect himself. And he gets hurt, too. Viewers can see the pain he experiences and the physical cost of the fight.

That vulnerability is part of what sets Chan apart, says Stanley Tong, who directed Chan in films including the *Police Story* franchise, *Rumble in the Bronx* and *The Myth*. Tong sees it as part of a broader distinction between Chinese and Western action cinema.

More than a fight

"We talk about chivalry and martial ethics," Tong says.

The point is not to use violence simply to win, but to use force to resolve hatred.

"In Western movies, if someone points a gun at another person, they can be portrayed as a hero," Tong says. "Chinese movies are different."

He points to Bruce Lee's films from the early days of martial arts cinema. If an opponent is unarmed, or has been knocked down and can no longer stand, the hero stops fighting.

In the 1970s, Lee's films became a global phenomenon. Tong entered Hong Kong's action-film industry around that time and had the opportunity to meet Lee once.

His earliest impression of action cinema comes through one of Lee's characters: an Asian man, principled and justice-minded, willing to stand up against the powerful despite great personal risk.

Years later, when Tong began directing films such as *Rumble in the Bronx*, Hollywood's vision of the action hero had become increasingly familiar: the polished hero, the expensive car, and the beautiful woman.

Tong did not think simply importing that formula onto Chinese characters made sense. The more important question, he says, is: "Why are we fighting?"

When *Rumble in the Bronx* premiered, audiences cheered Chan's stunts. But Tong believes what moved them was not simply seeing Chan leaping through the air. It was his sense of dignity and moral courage.

"Bruce Lee's films use hand-to-hand combat to express a sense of national spirit. Chan adds cars and explosions. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* brings the *wuxia* genre to global audiences, with warriors flying over rooftops and moving through the air. More recently, films such as Wu Jing's *Wolf Warrior* incorporate military themes."

The subjects of Chinese action films have continued to evolve, Tong notes, but an emphasis on loyalty, emotion and the moral courage of ordinary people has remained.

As artificial intelligence and other technologies reshape filmmaking, Tong believes they cannot fully reproduce the feeling of watching someone actually fight, jump and put their body at risk.

"When you see an actor really giving something of himself, you naturally feel respect for that person," he says.

The film week also honored action films and filmmakers from China and abroad, presenting 16 "Iron Man" awards to performers and industry figures.

The ceremony took place amid heavy wind and rain. Ti Lung, the veteran Hong Kong actor who received a lifetime achievement award, thanked the storm.

"I want to thank the heavy rain," he said, looking at the audience, many of whom remained seated despite being soaked. "I saw so many people sitting there as steady as a mountain."

He invoked a classical Chinese line about righteousness carried on a great wind, then addressed his fellow stunt performers: Do not worry about the future. Face whatever comes, whether fortune or hardship.

Fan Jianxiong, a longtime Jackie Chan fan and admirer of Chinese action cinema, stood in the rain for the entire three-hour awards ceremony.

For years, he says, people have questioned whether Chinese action cinema has a future beyond the generation of Chan, Jet Li and Donnie Yen.

"On the surface, perhaps it looks that way, but Chinese filmmakers have never stopped persevering."

In Harbin, he was struck by the story of Xie Miao, who won the award for Best Action Actor for *The Furious*. Xie began as a child actor and, at age 9, appeared alongside Jet Li in *My Father Is a Hero*.

When he returned to the film industry as an adult, opportunities were limited. He worked in television and online films and still keeps going.

His recent performance, Fan says, is a reminder of what has sustained Chinese action cinema: performers willing to put their bodies on the line and people willing to keep going even when the industry offers little certainty.

"Only Chinese people can make action films with distinctly Chinese cultural characteristics," Fan says. "As long as there is a group of actors and filmmakers who keep persevering, Chinese action cinema will not lose its continuity."

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Online Scan the code to watch the video.

Chinese musical voices resonate across Italian summer nights



The Wuxi Symphony Orchestra performs at the 74th Ljubljana Festival in Slovenia's capital on Aug 20, featuring traditional Chinese instruments like the *suona* (right). Their European tour included five performances in Slovenia, Austria, and Italy. PHOTOS BY ZELJKO STEVANIC / XINHUA

ROME — Under the stars on Tuesday night, the powerful, expressive sound of the *suona* played by soloist Zhang Qianyuan filled an open-air amphitheater in the Italian town of Tuscania. The vibrant notes of the traditional Chinese wind instrument evoked the ancient Silk Road heritage of Dunhuang, in northwest China's Gansu province, while the violin, cello, trumpet and harp added layers of Western orchestral color.

The performance was part of the second movement of *Flying Apsaras*, an original symphonic suite by the Wuxi Symphony Orchestra. As part of the Tuscania Summer Festival 2026, about 70 musicians performed for more than 200 Italian audience members, presenting a concert that blended Chinese musical elements with Western symphonic traditions.

In addition to *Flying Apsaras*, the orchestra performed renowned Western works, including Giuseppe Verdi's *The Sicilian Vespers* and Johannes Brahms' *Symphony No. 1*. The event was organized by the nonprofit social promotion association The Arts Crossroad Association.

"*Flying Apsaras* was composed by our orchestra's music director Li Shaosheng. It tells the story of humanity's journey from curiosity about the unknown universe to space exploration, as well as China's rapid development in aerospace technology. It celebrates the Chinese spirit of space exploration," said Wu Ximing, chairman of Wuxi Symphony Orchestra Co., Ltd.

Wu explained that the inclusion of traditional Chinese elements was intended to help international audiences better understand the cultural message behind the work. The *suona* part in the second movement and the vocal performance by Chinese tenor Xue Haoyin in the fifth movement were both designed to highlight the Chinese identity of the composition.

By combining traditional Chinese sounds with Western orchestral expression, *Flying Apsaras* offered Italian audiences a different perspective on contemporary Chinese music.

For Chieko Hata, president of The Arts Crossroad Association, the young age and dedication of the Wuxi Symphony Orchestra's musicians were among the main reasons why the orchestra was invited.

"One of the most attractive things about this orchestra is that the average age of its members is only 28," Hata said. "I really think that Chinese musicians have a very strong work ethic. They practice hard and always want to become better."

She added that the orchestra's spirit aligned with the festival's mission of supporting young musicians.

"We thought this orchestra could also inspire Italian and European young people, showing them that music belongs to everyone and that young musicians can perform at an exceptionally high level while still enjoying what they do," Hata said.

The concert drew an enthusiastic response from local audiences. The amphitheater's original stone seating soon filled, prompting organizers to add temporary chairs. Even then, some spectators stood outside the railings to watch the performance. One mother even brought her baby daughter to experience her first concert.

"I saw the orchestra perform here yesterday for the first time, and it gave me a feeling of peace and tranquility," said local audience member Marta Scriboni. "After last night's concert, I immediately bought a ticket for tonight, and I came back again with great enthusiasm."

Tuscania Mayor Fabio Bartolacci said the concert represented more than just a musical event.

"This event has an important impact from cultural, tourism, and, of course, economic perspectives," Bartolacci said. "As a very welcoming town, we hope this marks the beginning of a long-term cultural journey and a lasting relationship between the music coming from China and the artistic heritage represented by our town."

The Wuxi Symphony Orchestra's European tour included five performances in Slovenia, Austria and Italy. The Tuscania concert marked the final stop of the tour.

XINHUA

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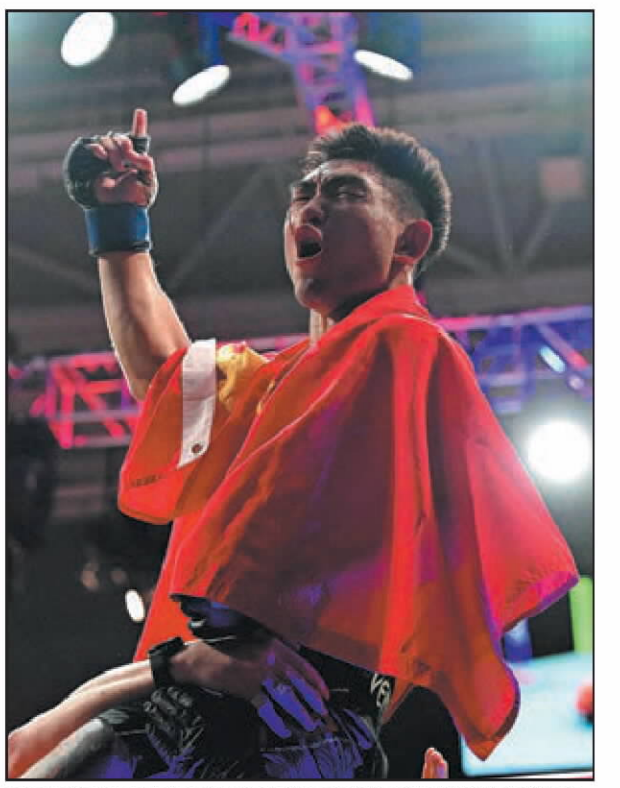
SPORTS

MMA





Left: A crowd of 16,188 fans, the biggest-ever for a UFC Fight Night in Asia, cheered on China's Song Yadong against Russia's Umar Nurmagomedov in their men's bantamweight bout during the UFC Fight Night at Oriental Sports Center in Shanghai on Saturday. **Right:** Song Yadong celebrates the biggest win of his UFC career, a stunning second-round knockout of former title challenger Nurmagomedov. AFP

Song stuns world in massive UFC upset

Second-round knockout win over Nurmagomedov in Shanghai opens the door to a title challenge

By **SUN XIAOCHEN** in Shanghai
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The Ultimate Fighting Championship couldn't have asked for a better finish than the way Song Yadong left Shanghai in a frenzy on Saturday night after winning, arguably, the biggest fight of his career so far.

The Chinese bantamweight contender didn't take long to cap off the UFC's Shanghai Fight Night in the greatest possible way for the home crowd, after he secured a massive knockout victory over Russia's former title challenger Umar Nurmagomedov in their main event bout at Oriental Sports Center and took a giant step closer to a shot at the division's world championship belt, currently held by another Russian fighter, Petr Yan.

After spending the first round against Nurmagomedov cautiously testing the dangerous grappler by trading punches and kicks, Song came back in the second stanza with a grin on his face, signaling it was about time to go all in.

Less than two minutes later, he made the most out of what appeared to be a fleeting chance when Nurmagomedov went for a takedown, throwing a right uppercut at the Russian's neck and knocking the betting favorite out cold to ecstatic cheers from the partisan crowd.

"Who's next?" Song shouted out loud in his post-fight interview in the Octagon immediately after the win — one which could place the currently sixth-ranked contender next in line for a title challenge.

And Song minced no words about that.

"Give me the title shot!" Song demanded, to a standing ovation from over 16,000 spectators.

"Maybe not tonight, not tomorrow, or not next month, but I guarantee you guys that I will be the UFC's first men's world title winner from China".

The 28-year-old Song, who trains at the Team Alpha Male club in Sacramento, California, has now won three of his past four fights, with his lone blemish being a narrow defeat to former titleholder Sean O'Malley in January. His career win-loss record has been improved to 24-9, including 13 victories in the Octagon since making his UFC debut in 2017, also in Shanghai.

From an obscure teen prospect nine years ago to a legitimate title threat now, Song has refused to slow down.

"Nine years ago, I was just trying to prove I belong in the UFC," Song said of his triumphant first bout at the 2017 Shanghai Fight Night, where he submitted India's Bharat Khandare in the first round.

"Nine years on, as its strongest Chinese representative, I will have to prove that I am the world's strongest in this division."



China's Song Yadong catches Umar Nurmagomedov with a left hook during their bantamweight bout at the UFC Fight Night in Shanghai on Saturday. XINHUA

> "Give me the title shot! Maybe not tonight, not tomorrow, or not next month, but I guarantee you guys that I will be the UFC's first men's world title winner from China."
>
> **Song Yadong,** after his stunning UFC upset win

Despite often being seen as the underdog since he broke into the division's top 15, Song never has lost faith in himself, owing much to the solid, and oftentimes tedious, preparatory work that his coaching team, led by UFC Hall of Famer Urijah Faber, helps put him through.

Faber, a former bantamweight title contender from the United States, believes Song is right there near the top, with his only recent losses coming against former champ O'Malley and current belt holder Yan, both via unanimous decision.

"If you looked at those fights, those guys were scared of Song," Faber said. "They were running, they were avoiding and they were trying not to get beaten up.

"Those guys know that you do not want to fight Song Yadong. Song is the best fighter in the world (right now)."

Also standing tall for his country in UFC's heavy divisions, China's Liu Ce, in an earlier men's light heavyweight bout, introduced himself to the UFC in explosive style, landing a thunderous right to send his Brazilian opponent Levi Rodrigues Jr face first onto the canvas at the 2:28 mark in the second round, clinching the Chinese contingent's first win on the main card on his Octagon debut.

Flyweight striker Sumudaerji, who hails from the Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture in Sichuan province, kept up the winning momentum, claiming victory in his rematch against Alex Perez of the United States via unanimous decision, after their first meeting in Macao three months ago ended in a "no contest".

As the third UFC event held in China over the past 12 months, the sold-out Shanghai showpiece stood as another strong testament to the increasing appetite for MMA in China, with Saturday's spectator turnout of 16,188 setting an all-time attendance record for a Fight Night in Asia, as well as a venue record at Oriental Sports Center.

The appearance of 12 Chinese fighters, including those featured on the card of Friday's Road to UFC tournament, spoke volumes about the country's growing presence in the sport's top echelon.

Kevin Chang, UFC's senior vice-president and head of Asia, hinted that a more prominent UFC "numbered" fight, featuring title deciders, is likely to be held in China soon.

"Tonight, it blew our minds, just exceeded all expectations as far as the fan support and the level of competition," he said in the post-fight news conference.

"Every time we do something like this, we get closer and closer to that."

The strong appeal of UFC events in China comes down to the long-term commitment to talent development and the promotion of MMA culture, Chang added, citing the journey from signing the country's first UFC fighter, the now retired trailblazer Zhang Tiequan in 2012, to boasting an active roster of 21 Chinese fighters.

"It shows how far we've come," he said. "It's just been a really great ride and we look forward to seeing what the next chapter will hold for us."

Maheshate makes winning return, as Meng books RTU final berth

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**

Despite coming back on short notice, China's mixed martial artist Maheshate made the most out of his return to the Octagon, closing out the first day action of UFC Fight Night Shanghai with a thrilling submission win.

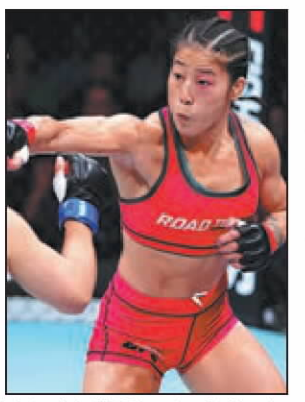
Waived by the Ultimate Fighting Championship a year ago after back-to-back losses, Maheshate, who hails from Ili Kazakh autonomous prefecture in Xinjiang, did not expect to get an immediate second chance to prove himself on the world's highest-profile MMA stage.

Not until he was given one on Friday, and did so in an unexpectedly stunning fashion.

Added to the card a week ago to fill in for his compatriot Taiyilake Nueraji, Maheshate couldn't have done a better job in Shanghai, as he submitted grappler Darrius Flowers of the United States with a first-round guillotine choke in their lightweight main event, announcing his comeback in style.

"I think I am a way more mature MMA athlete now than I was during my first stint with the UFC," said the 26-year-old striker, who earned his first UFC contract in 2021 as a winner on the Dana White's Contender Series.





Left: China's Maheshate aims a punch at Darrius Flowers during their lightweight UFC bout on Friday in Shanghai. **Right:** Meng Bo of China in action against Machi Fukuda of Japan during their strawweight Road to the UFC semifinal, held as part of UFC Fight Night Shanghai, on Friday. ZUFFA LLC

"I was too young when I first signed up with the UFC, and didn't make wise enough decisions (in picking opponents).

"I fight with more poise now, and I don't get panicked or feel too much pressure when facing tough situations during fights," said Maheshate, who completed his first spell with UFC with a 2-4 win-loss record.

Approached by the UFC to replace Taiyilake, who had to withdraw from the Shanghai card due to a sudden injury, Maheshate is very likely to have agreed to a minimum three-fight contract with the Las Vegas-based promotion.

He opted not to set his sights too far, or his hopes too high, this time around.

"I don't know how far I can go on my return. I just love this sport, and my priority will be working as hard as I can in training on a daily basis and only focusing on the next fight," said the product of Enbo Fight Club in Sichuan province.

Maheshate and Flowers opened the fight cautiously by pawing at one another in space, before the American veteran initiated the clinch and wrestled an off-balance Maheshate to the floor.

But Flowers left his neck exposed while trying to advance his position, offering Maheshate the opportunity to pounce and clamp onto an arm-in choke that left Flowers panicking, tapping out with a hand and a foot after just two and a half minutes.

Maheshate's quick finish salvaged what would have been an otherwise disappointing showing for Chinese fans on Friday night, where only one other home fighter managed to win their semifinal bout in the Road to UFC tournament.

In the co-main event, rising middleweight contender Yilizhati, another Chinese fighter from Xinjiang, had to settle with a split draw in his UFC debut against Tre'ston Vines of the US after three scramble-filled rounds.

In an earlier featherweight RTU semifinal, Chinese wrestler Ahejiang Ailinuer, who's also of the Kazakh ethnic group, was submitted by Australian grappler George Mangos with a rear naked choke midway through the second stanza of their bout.

Women's strawweight striker Meng Bo was the only Chinese fighter to advance victorious from the RTU semifinals, after the 30-year-old veteran outlasted Japan's Machi Fukuda via a split decision to reach the division final and keep her hopes of joining the UFC lineup alive.

Once a top prospect in the early stages of women's MMA in China, Meng, who handed UFC two-time strawweight champion Zhang Weili her only defeat to a compatriot early in 2013, has had her career ascent stalled by inconsistent results and injury woes over the past decade.

She's kept knocking, though, until the door to the biggest stage finally creaked open.

"This victory means everything to me," said Meng, who's improved her career win-loss record to 24-8.

"I've persisted and waited for this UFC opportunity for years. I've experienced losses and doubts in my career, and I've even questioned whether I could still stand in the Octagon and fight for my dream. Tonight, I proved to myself and everyone that I belong here."

Each season's division winners of the RTU talent selection tournament, launched in 2022 specifically for the Asia-Pacific market, earn official, multi-bout contracts with UFC.

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MODERNIZATION FOR ALL

Kazakhstan experiences China speed

Astana's light rail shows how Belt and Road cooperation helps to advance modernization

By ZHAO JIA in Astana, Kazakhstan
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When the first phase of Astana's light rail transit system opened on May 16, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev took a ride on the new line and expressed thanks to the Chinese government and Chinese builders in Chinese, quoting the ancient proverb, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step".

"I felt very proud," said Ji Chenglong, executive manager of the Astana light rail transit project at China Construction Sixth Engineering Bureau Co. Ji arrived in Astana with his team in July 2023. Working through winter temperatures as low as -40 C, they adapted materials and construction methods to local conditions and overcame the challenges of building an urban rail system in extreme cold.

The project applied Chinese standards and technologies across design, construction, equipment and operations, including fully automated self-driving trains and intelligent dispatching.

Ji said that average daily ridership has exceeded 70,000, well above the design-stage projection of 25,000. During construction, the project created more than 2,000 local jobs, while the project team conducted ongoing technical exchanges and provided on-the-job training tailored to the project's needs, he added.

"Seeing more and more residents enjoy the convenience brought by the light rail has deepened my understanding that infrastructure is not simply about steel and concrete. It is an important means of improving people's lives and promoting development," he said, adding that this is the true meaning of Belt and Road cooperation.

Ji said he still remembered that President Xi Jinping once said the ultimate goal of the Belt and Road Initiative is "to explore new ways for countries from near and far to achieve common development and to open up a 'path of happiness' that benefits the whole world".

The Astana light rail is a vivid example of that path taking shape in Central Asia, Ji said. "From a light rail line to a modern city, and from engineering cooperation to closer bonds between peoples, Belt and Road cooperation is not only a path of connectivity, but also a path of common development, friendship and cooperation, and greater well-being for the people," he said.

Askar Umarov, head of the Central Communications Service under the Kazakh president, said he believes that Kazakhstan and China are at a critical stage of development and revitalization, and are companions on the path to modernization.

See ***Relations,*** *page 3*



Liz Gill, a freelance journalist from the United Kingdom, experiences the craft of making Dongba paper in Lijiang, Yunnan province, in September. WANG JIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

TOURISTS FOLLOW PAPER TRAIL TO NAXI CIVILIZATION

Thousand-year-old craft of making Dongba sheets is finding its way around the world

By YANG FEIYUE and **LI YINGQING** in Lijiang, Yunnan

In Lijiang in southwestern Yunnan province, paper is crafted to endure. Handmade Dongba paper, once reserved for recording the sacred scriptures of the Naxi people, is now earning a place in the luggage of travelers from around the world.

A growing number of domestic and international visitors have left the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Old Town of Lijiang with Dongba paper products tucked into their luggage — notebooks filled with travel memories, postcards inscribed with ancient pictographs bearing blessings, and handmade paper lamps whose soft glow will follow them home.

Some visitors share their finds on social media, posting photos of the paper's fibrous texture and the enigmatic characters adorning it, introducing this centuries-old craft to a wider audience.

The alchemy of Dongba paper begins in the mountains surrounding Lijiang. It is traditionally made from the bark of the Wikstroemia shrub, which grows at elevations above 2,000 meters. The bark is soaked, softened, pounded into pulp, meticulously spread onto bamboo screens and then sun-dried — a process repeated dozens of times.

See ***Craft,*** *page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Migrant crisis



Migrants wait to collect food and water being distributed by Red Cross volunteers in Ceuta, a Spanish enclave in North Africa, on Monday. The autonomous city is grappling with a humanitarian crisis following mass crossings of nearly 60,000 migrants on foot and by sea from Morocco last week. Around 80 migrants reportedly died during the attempts. PEDRO NUNES / REUTERS **See story, page 4**

Beijing firmly opposes Japan's defense white paper

By LI SHANGYI in Beijing and **HOU JUNJIE** in Tokyo

China voiced firm opposition on Tuesday to Japan's newly released defense white paper, accusing Tokyo of hyping up the so-called "China threat" to justify expansion of its own military capabilities.

Chen Xi, a spokesman for the Chinese Ministry of National Defense, said the white paper is filled with false narratives and exaggerates a so-called "security crisis in the surrounding region".

Describing Japan's move as a case of "a thief crying 'stop thief'", Chen said the white paper serves as a pretext for its own military expansion. "We are strongly dissatisfied with and firmly oppose this move," he added.

Japan released on Tuesday the roughly 600-page white paper, titled "Defense of Japan 2026", which continued to portray the regional security environment as "increasingly severe".

The report claimed China's military developments "present an unprecedented and the greatest challenge" for Japan, and alleged that the Chinese mainland's military activities around Taiwan have become increasingly frequent.

The white paper retained the wording of its 2025 edition, claiming that the international community is facing its greatest challenge since World War II and has entered a new era of crisis.

In response, Chen said Japan's ruling authorities have continued to uphold the banner of an "exclusively defense-oriented policy" while accelerating revisions to its three key security documents, steadily increasing defense spending and developing long-range strike capabilities.

Japan has also promoted the weaponization and militarization of space and portrayed the expansion of its defense industry as a driver for economic growth, Chen said. He added that Tokyo is attempting to embed military expansion and war preparations into the country's institutions, economy, industries and public discourse.

Chen warned that Japan's "new militarism" has become a growing concern, posing a serious challenge to the postwar international order and a genuine threat to regional peace and stability. "The Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and serves as the political foundation of China-Japan relations. It is a red line that cannot be crossed," he said.

The spokesman urged Japan to deeply reflect on its history of aggression, stop interfering in China's internal affairs, refrain from misleading the Japanese public and the international community, and avoid going further down the wrong path of "remilitarization".

Experts based in Japan said the country's continued military build-up has become a source of regional instability. Makoto Ito, director of the Japan Institute of Constitutional Law, told China Daily that Japan's security environment would improve if it remained committed to diplomatic and security stances that reassure its neighbors.

Ito noted that Japan's security and defense policies in recent years have deviated from its pacifist Constitution. "And yet, these policies continue to be advanced and are communicated to the public through official documents such as the defense white paper," he said.

Kumiko Haba, a distinguished professor at Josai International University in Tokyo, told China Daily that the administration of Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is moving in an extremely dangerous direction, warning that it could evolve into a government prepared to wage war.

Haba said the current Liberal Democratic Party government has prioritized strengthening military capabilities, reopening debate on the three nonnuclear principles, expanding the defense industry and seeking to reinforce the Japan-United States alliance.

Japan's defense spending has been rising steadily, and it is already moving ahead of schedule toward the target of reaching 2 percent of the nation's GDP.

In March, Japan deployed its land-based Type 25 anti-ship missile in Kumamoto prefecture. With an upgraded 1,000-kilometer range, the missile far exceeds Japan's territorial defense requirements and possesses clear offensive capabilities. In April, Japan fully lifted restrictions on the export of lethal weapons.

Haba said that Japan is seeking to align itself with the US' agenda by abandoning its identity as a peace-oriented country and moving toward participation in war in pursuit of a new phase of national development.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

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Nation matching steps with UN to renew multilateralism

WORLD WATCH
By Siddharth Chatterjee

The United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 2758, restoring the lawful seat of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations, on Oct 25, 1971. In doing so, it restored one-fourth of humanity to the world's foremost multilateral institution, making the UN whole. Fifty-five years on, that decision endures as a defining milestone in the evolution of the international order.

The anniversary arrives at a sobering moment. Armed conflicts grind on across several regions, geopolitical rivalry is growing, trust among major powers has frayed, and humanity faces a convergence of challenges — climate change, pandemics, food insecurity, technological disruption and widening inequality — that no border can contain.

Seen across the span of 55 years, the story of China and the UN is one of remarkable evolution. A country that reentered the organization cautiously in 1971 has become one of its central pillars. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China is today the second-largest contributor to both the regular and the peacekeeping budgets of the United Nations. Among the Council's permanent members it deploys the most peacekeepers, with more than 50,000 Chinese personnel having served under the blue helmet from Africa to the Middle East. Some have given their lives for international peace and security.

What began as a restored seat has grown into sustained engagement across the UN's agencies — on public health and pandemic response, climate and biodiversity, agriculture and food security, digital cooperation and humanitarian relief. Through South-South cooperation, the Global Development Initiative and expanding partnerships, China increasingly shares its experience, technology and resources in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Multilateral cooperation is a vaccine reaching a remote village before an outbreak spreads. It is former child soldiers trading rifles for schoolbooks. It is a farmer planting a drought-resistant seed, or a family receiving shelter in the hours after catastrophe.

Such outcomes are possible only when governments, organizations and communities act through institutions that command global legitimacy.

Serving as UN resident coordinator in China gave me a rare vantage point from which to view China's partnership with the UN. What struck me was not merely the scale of China's engagement but its readiness to work through multilateral channels on challenges reaching beyond its borders. When the global health crisis tested every health system on Earth, I watched China reach out to many nations at once, delivering vaccines and sharing clinical experience and non-pharmaceutical interventions with countries across the Global South. The most consequential moments seldom made headlines. They took the form of patient collaboration — between Chinese ministries, UN agencies and international partners — to strengthen health systems, advance the green transition and modernize agriculture.

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INSIDE
Protectionist measures could harm EU's interests
Global Views, page 8



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INDEPTH

Is El Nino's economic risk too hot to handle?

Experts say 'climateflation' to impact bank rates, food output

By YANG GAO in Toronto
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Tourists pose for a selfie on Westminster Bridge on July 29 in London, England, as a fourth consecutive summer heatwave was gripping southern England.
BEN MONTGOMERY/ GETTY IMAGES

Across the globe, the looming "super El Nino" is sparking warnings from economists, planners and experts about its potentially devastating impact on economies and societies.

A key area of the Pacific Ocean used to measure the strength of El Nino last week reached its warmest and most intense level ever recorded for the 15th week since it formed, which is early in its lifetime, scientists at Columbia University reported.

The El Nino weather event won't peak for several months and is expected to last through to spring 2027. The United Nations' World Meteorological Organization cautioned on Friday that it will likely trigger extreme heat, drought and rainfall well into next year.

The WMO warned of the strong chance of drought and wildfires in Indonesia, India and other parts of Asia, south and east Australia, chunks of South America and southern regions in Africa. Other areas, including much of the United States and fire-struck Southern Europe, will receive above average rainfall, the agency said.

"This El Nino, developing against the backdrop of unprecedented ocean heat and rising temperatures, provides governments and communities with a window of opportunity to anticipate risks and act before impacts unfold," said WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo.

For many economists, however, the consequences are already becoming evident. Investors and policymakers are increasingly concerned that climate shocks could reinforce inflationary pressures already facing economies around the world.

"Heat kills — both lives and livelihoods," said Gernot Wagner, a climate economist at Columbia Business School.

"And it is often rather small changes in the average that lead to large threshold effects," he said.

He cited research showing that "only one additional day above 32 C in any given year lowers annual payroll by 0.04 percent".

"That may seem like a small effect. It is not," Wagner told China Daily. "One hot day in any given year shows up in annual productivity statistics, and El Nino only exacerbates these effects."

Wagner said the impacts extend well beyond labor productivity.

"'Climateflation' is a real phenomenon, and one that can already be measured," he said.

"Single heat waves lead to often large spikes in prices of individual agricultural products, which reverberate throughout the economy," he said.

Emerging economies at risk

The weather phenomenon, which typically occurs every two to seven years, could take a heavy toll on emerging economies, pushing up food prices and slowing growth.

Emerging markets are particularly vulnerable as households spend a larger proportion of their income on food, experts said. Also, agriculture plays a big role in their economies, raising the risk that central banks will have to keep policy tighter for longer.

"We came into this year with many central banks thinking they had space to cut. And now we see central banks stopping cutting, and some of them are hiking (rates)," Gillian Edgeworth, a fixed income portfolio manager at Wellington Management, told Reuters.

"I don't think we're moving to a world where there's rapid rate cuts in emerging markets in the second half of the year."

India is among the most vulnerable economies as it depends heavily on the annual monsoon, which typically delivers nearly 70 percent of the country's rainfall.

The country's meteorological department has warned rainfall could be the lowest in more than a decade, threatening crop yields and raising the prospect of higher food prices.

With inflation above the central bank's 4 percent target, analysts warned a super El Nino could force it to tighten monetary policy. However, a revival in monsoon rains late last month accelerated planting of summer crops across much of India, sharply reducing an earlier sowing deficit caused by lower rainfall.

Across much of Asia, higher energy and fertilizer costs are already weighing on external balances and economic growth, complicating central banks' efforts to stabilize currencies and contain inflation.

Central banks in the Philippines, Indonesia, South Korea, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have already hiked interest rates at least once this year.

"El Nino is just going to make inflation more sticky," said Gary Tan, equity portfolio manager at Allspring Global Investments.

"People are forecasting rate hikes for the second half of the year, especially for the ... Asian countries, which are kind of the most impacted by El Nino such as India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand," he said.

In South America, Colombia is among the Latin American economies most exposed to El Nino-related weather shocks, as below-average rainfall can hit food supplies and electricity prices.

The country's reliance on hydropower makes reservoir levels a key inflation indicator. Low water levels can force greater use of costlier thermal generation, pushing up electricity prices and inflation.

Analysts warn a severe El Nino could keep Colombian monetary policy restrictive for longer.

Peru's central bank has warned that inflation could exceed its target this year and growth could suffer, citing high oil prices and El Nino's impact on fishing and agriculture.

Argentina, by contrast, may benefit from higher rainfall, which could support grain output, export revenues and foreign-exchange inflows. Central banks in Brazil, Mexico and Chile are expected to take a wait-and-see approach as they assess any impact on inflation and growth.



Commuters wade through a flooded area on July 9 in Noida, India.
SUNIL GHOSH / HINDUSTAN TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES



A man helps clear debris from the backyard of a damaged house after a tornado on July 28 in Appleton, Wisconsin, the United States. REUTERS

Africa vulnerable

An impending super El Nino is likely to inflict a combined $10 billion to $20 billion hit on affected African countries and trigger mass migration from hard-hit areas, the African Development Bank's top climate expert told Reuters.

As well as the threat to food and water security, government finances and banking sectors could also be undermined if disasters damage infrastructure and leave cash-strapped countries struggling to repay the connected loans.

"Just this event is going to reduce heavily affected countries' GDP by one to two percent on average, which is about $10 billion to $20 billion across the continent," said Anthony Nyong, the ADB's director for climate change and green growth.

The development bank's most recent forecast in May, which did not take into account a super El Nino, predicted Africa as a whole would see 4.2 percent economic growth this year, rising to 4.4 percent in 2027, assuming the conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran eases.

Governments in Africa were also getting snared in what Nyong described as the "climate finance trap", where they lack the resources to respond to crises and are forced to raid health, education or infrastructure budgets to meet costs.

The 2023-24 El Nino caused severe drought in Southern Africa and heavy rains or flooding in East Africa. These conditions led to widespread crop failures, surging food prices and record-breaking sea-level spikes along the continent's coastlines.

The ADB has estimated Africa's farmers are already facing nearly $330 million in lost income this year, while fishing industries could also be hit hard due to rising sea temperatures and storms.

"When these shocks happen, countries take two steps back," Nyong said. "We don't want our countries to slide into poverty."

He said the ADB stood ready to restructure projects to help countries manage El Nino's impacts and it would work with them to tap additional multilateral support such as the Green Climate Fund, the world's largest dedicated climate fund.

Humanitarian pressures would add to the problems, Nyong said. The bank has identified Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Mali, Burundi and even Nigeria as countries that could face particularly severe impacts.

"When this El Nino comes there is going to be mass migration," he said, adding that the price of maize — a key food staple in many affected countries — was expected to double. "You are not going to stay put, you are going to move," he said.

The African Union Commission has called on its members to step up preparedness for the expected impact of El Nino.

"The 2026-27 El Nino event is projected to be the strongest since 1950. This is not a distant possibility. It is an imminent risk that demands immediate preparation at national, regional and continental levels," Moses Vilakati, AU commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment said on Thursday in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, while opening the extraordinary session of a special technical committee looking at the weather pattern.

Many regions of the continent are likely to experience severe droughts, devastating floods, prolonged heat waves, disruptions to food production, water shortages, disease outbreaks and increased humanitarian needs.

"These impacts will not only affect vulnerable households; they will also place considerable pressure on national economies, public finances and regional stability," he said.

"This is neither speculative nor unprecedented. We have already witnessed the devastating consequences of delayed action," he warned, citing the 2023-2024 El Nino that affected millions of people in Africa.

Strengths, weaknesses

As climate risks become more synchronized across regions, globalization has created new vulnerabilities, Wagner, the climate economist at Columbia Business School, said.

"The more globalized — and hence specialized — our supply chains become, the higher the vulnerability of such extreme events, whether heat, droughts, floods, or other weather extremes that, due to climate change, are increasingly correlated," he said.

That growing correlation, he said, is changing the economics of risk itself.

"Single extreme events are costly. Correlation due to climate change makes them all the more costly," he said.

He compared the problem to insurance.

"The way to ensure against individual extreme events is by hedging — one flood or wildfire in one region may be bad, but others will be fine.

"With climate change, that is increasingly no longer the case — droughts and floods and other extremes the world over are suddenly connected, correlated with each other. Hedging away from extremes in one place is increasingly no longer possible," he said.

The solution, Wagner argued, lies in both adaptation and emissions reductions.

"Invest, invest, invest — in resiliency measures, of course, but also in cutting greenhouse gas pollution in the first place. Only by cutting additional carbon dioxide going into the atmosphere to zero will we be able to stabilize global climate over the long term," he said.

While many economists warn that El Nino could contribute to higher food prices, agricultural scientist Walter Baethgen argues it should not be seen solely through the lens of a possible disaster.

"My view of El Nino is different from the most popular one," said Baethgen, a senior research scientist at Columbia University's International Research Institute for Climate and Society. "I see El Nino as an opportunity."

The weather event is valuable because it is one of the few major climate phenomena that can be forecast months in advance, giving governments, humanitarian agencies and farmers time to prepare, he said.

Baethgen said seasonal forecasts allow farmers to make informed adjustments that reduce risk instead of radically changing production.

"It's a smart way of using this information," he said, describing how producers may shift part of their acreage toward crops favored by expected weather conditions without abandoning diversification altogether.

He also challenged the widespread perception that El Nino necessarily leads to global food shortages.

Wetter conditions often improve crop production in parts of the US and southeastern South America, while drier weather can reduce harvests in regions such as southern Africa, Australia and parts of Asia.

"It's not bad everywhere. For some things, it's very good," he said, adding that "the negative impacts ... are typically compensated by positive impacts in other regions."

Because agricultural gains and losses often occur simultaneously across different agricultural production regions, Baethgen said the relationship between El Nino and global food prices is far more complicated than many assume.

"El Nino is one of many factors affecting world food prices," he said. Geopolitical events, energy prices and fertilizer costs can sometimes have an even greater influence on global markets than climate alone, he added.



A firefighter works to extinguish an advancing wildfire near Formariz in Zamora province, Spain, on July 29. REUTERS

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TOP NEWS

Institution: Increasing engagement highlighted

From page 1

When catastrophic floods inundated Pakistan in 2022, I launched an emergency appeal from Beijing alongside Pakistan's then ambassador to China. China was among the first countries to respond with timely assistance, supporting both immediate relief and longer-term recovery.

Similarly, after the earthquake that devastated Myanmar in 2025, the Chinese government, together with the UN in China, quickly mobilized emergency humanitarian assistance and relief for those affected.

Such actions epitomize China's increasing global engagement, which extends beyond economic development to encompass humanitarian solidarity. They also reflect China's commitment to South-South cooperation and its willingness to work through the UN to address global challenges. Effective multilateralism rests not on rhetoric but on the discipline of showing up, again and again.

Every great test facing humanity is a shared one. No nation, however powerful, can halt a pandemic, stabilize the climate, govern emerging technologies or deliver the Sustainable Development Goals on its own. That truth does not render the UN less relevant; it makes it indispensable.

As is dialogue. In the end, every conflict arrives at a negotiating table. The only question is how much suffering precedes it. To press for political solutions is not weakness but the highest form of strategic wisdom.

Nowhere was this clearer than in Beijing in March 2023, when China helped Saudi Arabia and Iran restore diplomatic relations after seven years of rupture — an agreement to reopen embassies and revive dialogue between two rivals whose estrangement had fueled conflicts across the Middle East. Few had anticipated a breakthrough; fewer still had expected it to be brokered in the Chinese capital. Such efforts reflect a principle woven into the very fabric of the UN Charter — that durable peace is never imposed by force, but built through diplomacy, mutual respect and perseverance.

Fifty-five years after Resolution 2758, the question before us is no longer one of representation but of responsibility. The true measure of leadership lies not in the power to shape events alone, but in the willingness to strengthen the institutions through which all nations may shape them together.

Our shared future depends not on retreating from multilateralism but on renewing it — with confidence, with courage and with common purpose. In an age of fracture, that remains humanity's surest hope.

The author served for nearly three decades with the United Nations, most recently as UN resident coordinator in China (2021-26). He is currently CEO of Global Neighbours, a Vienna-based think tank, and a distinguished visiting professor at Tsinghua University.

Religious rites



Monks make offerings to Panchen Erdeni Chos-kyi rGyal-po on Monday at Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, the capital of the Xizang autonomous region. Panchen Rinpoche, a leader of Tibetan Buddhism, who is also a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body, arrived in Lhasa on Thursday and began his first Buddhist activity in Xizang this year on Monday. JIGME DORJE / XINHUA

Drones deliver convenience to sailors

By **CHEN MEILING** in Beijing and **LIU KUN** in Wuhan

Twelve-year-old Liu Ziqi celebrated her birthday aboard a ship docked in Yichang, Hubei province, recently. What made the day memorable was a specially delivered birthday cake, a first for the young girl.

Liu's parents operate a cargo vessel that ferries goods between Shanghai and Chongqing, and the girl has lived on board with them since she was a baby.

"She celebrates every birthday on the Yangtze River. However, we have never been able to go ashore and buy a cake," said Liu Ge, her mother.

What made this year different was the low-altitude instant delivery service extended by local authorities to meet the needs of tens of thousands of crewmembers who operate the numerous vessels plying the river every day.

Liu Ge placed the order for the cake through an app. The delivery rider collected the cake from the shop and took it to the drone base. The drone pilot located the vessel using the Yangtze Beidou app. With the cake loaded in a basket, the drone lifted off and headed straight for the ship. "It's as efficient as ordering a takeout ashore," Liu Ge said.

The family's vessel remained docked in Yichang for three days as it waited for its turn to pass the Gezhouba Dam and the Three Gorges ship locks.

Earlier for supplies, the family had to depend on mobile "supermarket" ships, in which the number of products is typically limited and the price is often higher than in shops ashore.

"The other choice was to go ashore on public ferries that run on fixed schedules, or pay for a small vessel that cost 100 yuan ($14.8) for a round trip," the mother said, adding that the drone delivery service is fast, cheap and offers more choices when it comes to shopping.

Sailors plying on the route have been making the most of the service.

For Li Wenchuan, a 22-year-old sailor, the drone delivery was a godsend as he could get medicines for a stomachache quickly by paying a nominal fee of 10 yuan. Captain Fu Yibo replaced his vessel's storage batteries after having them delivered by the drone service. First mate Zhang Zhongkun ordered chilled milk tea, fried chicken and grilled skewers to cheer up his crew, something that would have been difficult to do in the past.

After months of trials, the low-altitude instant delivery service was officially flagged off in late July. Including the trials, more than 10,000 orders have been placed so far, with the number of daily orders ranging between 30 and 40, said Huang Yuhua, who is in charge of the drone comprehensive service base.

Yichang sits at the junction of the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze River, and hosts the Three Gorges Dam and Gezhouba Dam.

Data from Yichang maritime bureau shows that since March, around 700 vessels on average waited for lock passage each day on the Yangtze River's Yichang section. During peak periods, that number could rise to 1,000 vessels, carrying approximately 9,000 crewmembers.

Each day only about 70 to 80 ships can pass the locks.

Vessels typically wait seven to eight days to be granted passage. The maximum waiting time can stretch to 15 days during maintenance work and flood seasons. As sailors remain on board for a long time, buying fresh produce and spare parts becomes a challenge, Huang said.

"Traditional supply methods such as shuttle boats and supply vessels are time-consuming, and fresh produce tends to spoil easily. In addition, crewmembers face safety risks when taking small boats ashore to shop," he added.

The drone delivery service currently covers waters within approximately 3 kilometers. After cargo arrives at the takeoff and landing site and passes predeparture inspection, the maximum travel time for the farthest delivery takes about 80 seconds, Huang added.

Delivery fees are based on distance and weight, ranging from 10 yuan to 50 yuan. 5G-Advanced base stations are deployed along the river to ensure stable communication signals. When the drone reaches target waters, the pilot makes manual adjustments to identify the vessel name and accurately locate the waiting crewmembers.

Emergency medicine and critical supplies can be delivered to moving vessels. The drones can operate in light rain and snow. Deliveries are suspended when visibility drops below 200 meters or wind force exceeds Grade 7.

In the future, Huang said they would build a complete delivery system along the Yangtze River, establish an online shop, and add more takeoff and landing points for the drones.

"We do not merely treat sailors as passing visitors," said Zhu Hanhong, director of Yichang bureau of economy and information technology, adding that the delivery service extends the city's public services to the river.

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Sailors receive supplies from a drone at the Linjiangping anchorage in Wujiagang district, Yichang, Hubei province, on July 27. LIN XIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Craft: Paper's durability surprises travelers

From page 1

"Unlike industrial paper, where uniformity is the goal, Dongba paper keeps the traces of nature," said Zhang Jian, a product designer who runs a Dongba paper workshop in the old town.

Plant fibers remain visible across the surface, creating subtle textures and organic patterns. No two sheets are ever alike.

"Every sheet has its own character," Zhang said. "We try to preserve the natural qualities of the raw material. The fibers themselves are what make the paper beautiful."

For centuries, Dongba paper was used by Naxi priests to record religious scriptures in a pictographic writing system that remains central to Naxi cultural heritage. Its natural resistance to insects and aging has helped preserve those texts for generations.

Today, the same durability has become part of its modern appeal.

"We used to see foreign tourists occasionally. Now we see them every day," said Zhang, who has spent nearly 23 years giving this thousand-year-old craft a modern makeover.

Turning Dongba paper from a religious material into everyday products was not easy.

Zhang spent his early years experimenting with ways to make the traditional paper suitable for modern life. Today, his workshop produces a range of cultural products, from journals and bookmarks to decorative pieces featuring Dongba script.

Han Yuchen, who oversees sales and outreach of Dongba paper sales, believes that its appeal goes beyond mere portability.

"Many visitors are surprised when they hear that such a delicate-looking paper can last for hundreds of years," he said. "They want to know more about how it is made."

Postcards are often the first thing overseas visitors pick up, followed by notebooks and paper lamps.

Featuring images of Lijiang's scenery alongside Dongba characters, postcards can be personalized with handwritten blessings before being sent home. The paper's natural texture gives the writing a warmth that mass-produced cards cannot replicate, Han said.

Dongba paper lamps have become an unexpected hit. Made by folding a single sheet of Dongba paper into a lampshade, they emit a soft glow that reveals the natural fibers. Each lamp has its own pattern, shaped by the plant material itself.

"Many European and US visitors say the texture fits beautifully with their home decoration," Han noted. "They like the feeling of bringing something natural and handmade into their homes."

Notebooks are another favorite. One best-selling journal, roughly A5-sized with raw edges and a leather cover, sells for more than 180 yuan ($27). Though pricier than standard notebooks, they serve as a premium repository for personal memories.

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Chinese AI models gain favor overseas

Alibaba unveils latest Qwen version as businesses embrace cost-effective tech

By **CHENG YU**
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Alibaba Group has launched its 2.4-trillion-parameter Qwen3.8-Max model that can analyze 200-page financial reports and process more than 100 hours of video content, putting it directly among the world's top-tier large language models.

Several sources told China Daily that Alibaba's latest Qwen model has entered the "deep testing" phase in Tesla's vehicle systems in China and is expected to be used for Tesla's in-car platform soon.

The development comes as more and more companies from the United States adopt Chinese artificial intelligence models, which they believe offer frontier-level performance at substantially lower costs.

In the latest Arena benchmark rankings, one of the most widely followed third-party evaluations of AI model performance, Alibaba's Qwen models ranked just behind US-based Anthropic's Claude series.

Alibaba said that Qwen3.8-Max is expected to become open-source next week, following the release of Qwen3.8-27B, further expanding access for developers building AI applications.

Qwen3.8-Max's application programming interface pricing in China has been set at 12 yuan ($1.67) per million input tokens and 36 yuan per million output tokens, with cached input tokens priced at 1.5 yuan per million tokens.

International pricing is also significantly lower than comparable frontier models, with input and output costs respectively at about 40 percent and 24 percent of Anthropic's Claude Opus prices.

Chinese AI models have been continuously gaining traction overseas. According to OpenRouter data, weekly usage of Chinese LLMs stood at 14.1 times that of US models as of July 27, marking the 13th consecutive week that Chinese models ranked first on the platform in terms of weekly token consumption.

Late last month, Coinbase CEO Brian Armstrong said the cryptocurrency company had adopted China-developed AI models, including Zhipu AI's GLM-5.2 and Moonshot AI's Kimi K2.7, as default tools for engineers through an internal AI gateway. Through model switching, intelligent routing and caching optimization, Coinbase has cut its AI costs by nearly half.

San Francisco-based AI startup Lindy switched from Claude to DeepSeek-V4 in June, and said its API expenses had exceeded its entire payroll costs before the transition.

"It is not about low pricing anymore," said Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences. "Companies globally are increasingly weighing performance against cost, privacy, flexibility and suitability for AI agents and enterprise workflows."

Morgan Stanley said in a research note that Moonshot AI's Kimi K3, the full model weights of which became officially open-source on July 27, represented a broader trend of Chinese LLMs catching up with US leaders in model scale, performance and pricing.

Peng Jiahao, a researcher at the Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Research Institute, said: "The pace of AI development is increasingly moving in China's favor. But both Chinese and US AI models are still facing challenges in reaching short-term breakeven and the AI industry is still far from achieving widespread profitability."

Relations: Goal is to build projects with lasting value

From page 1

Umarov said that China's achievements in economic development, digital transformation, technological modernization and the implementation of long-term national strategies offer valuable practical insights for Kazakhstan.

China is an important strategic partner of Kazakhstan, and understanding the thinking behind China's domestic and foreign policies has significance beyond academic research, he said.

"The more deeply we understand China's decision-making logic and long-term development goals, the more effectively we can improve the quality and efficiency of our cooperation," Umarov said.

Manarbek Kabaziyev, deputy chairman of the board of the Foreign Policy Research Institute of Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry, said the next decade of Belt and Road cooperation should be evaluated not by the number of projects, but by whether they create lasting value, spur innovation and strengthen trust among countries.

Infrastructure is not an end in itself, he said, but a foundation for higher-level cooperation. Kazakhstan should build on improved connectivity to develop a future-oriented modern economy, with transportation corridors supporting not only trade but also closer industrial, investment and technological links.

Aliya Mussabekova, head of the International Security Department at the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the president of Kazakhstan, said bilateral economic cooperation has moved beyond traditional trade, with the focus expanding from infrastructure and resource development to manufacturing and high-tech industries. This shift is increasingly supporting the modernization of both countries.

China-Kazakhstan trade reached a record $48.7 billion in 2025, up 11 percent year-on-year, according to Chinese figures. Data from Kazakhstan's national investment promotion company shows that cumulative Chinese investment has exceeded $30 billion, with more than 8,000 Chinese-backed enterprises operating there.

Mussabekova said the two countries' development priorities also converge in digitalization and artificial intelligence. Kazakhstan has designated 2026 as its Year of Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence, while China has made digital development, technological innovation and AI national priorities, opening further opportunities in the digital economy, satellite and remote-sensing technologies and space communications.

Yet a lasting and stable strategic partnership cannot be built solely on economic indicators, she noted, saying that "long-term strength depends even more on mutual trust between the two peoples".

That trust is also being strengthened by closer people-to-people ties. A mutual visa-free agreement for ordinary passport holders took effect in November 2023, and Kazakh figures show that the number of Chinese visitors to Kazakhstan reached nearly 1 million in 2025.

Education cooperation is giving those ties a longer-term foundation. At L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, a Luban Workshop jointly established with China gives students access to AI, robotics and digital manufacturing.

Gulmira Bekmanova, vice-rector for digitalization at the university, said the workshop is "not merely a laboratory or a classroom" but a practice-oriented teaching platform where students learn both advanced technologies and how to apply them to real-world problems.

"The Luban Workshop has become an important symbol of Kazakhstan-China educational cooperation," Bekmanova said.

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WORLD

Ceuta crisis raises EU frontier concerns

By **JULIAN SHEA** in London and **HOU CHENCHEN** in Beijing

The interior ministers of the 27 European Union member states held a virtual meeting on Tuesday to discuss tightening up internal borders following the scenes at the Spanish enclave of Ceuta in North Africa over the weekend.

The EU's migration chief said on Tuesday the bloc successfully met a "test" of its border security and "resilience to disinformation" in the handling of a migrant rush into Spain's North African territory of Ceuta.

"These past few days were a test of our European resilience, a test of the security of our external borders," EU Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration Magnus Brunner told reporters following Tuesday talks with the bloc's interior ministers.

"Europe, I think, has definitely passed this test."

Member states recognized Madrid's "immediate and efficient" response, Spanish Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska told reporters on Tuesday.

The minister added that Madrid had worked as fast as possible to install a maritime barrier off Ceuta's coast.

As for Schengen Area issue, Marlaska said: "It is clear that in no way was the Schengen Area compromised in this crisis" as the North African enclave is not included in the agreement.

He added that "there was no possibility of any secondary movement" of migrants from Ceuta to continental Europe.

France's interior minister also said on Tuesday that EU ministers had agreed the Schengen Area was "not the problem" after calls to suspend Spain from the bloc following the influx of migrants.

As the meeting unfolded, another migration incident was playing out in the English Channel, underscoring the multiple border pressures Europe is facing.

French and British teams rescued 157 migrants who were trying to cross the English Channel after the engine of their boat caught fire, French maritime authorities said.

Helping hand

EU has offered Spain aid, including emergency financial assistance, to help strengthen the protection of the external border in Ceuta, said Brunner, EU migration chief.

He added that the events in Ceuta last week, when about 70,000 people came over the border from Morocco into the Spanish enclave, were fueled by criminal smuggling networks and social media disinformation.

The Euronews website reports that the incident happened after false rumors began to circulate on social media saying that the border was open, with others showing where coast guard patrols were active, and more suggesting places where people could swim across.

Media agencies said there is a specific local angle that goes some way toward explaining the sudden nature and scale of the crisis, however.

The BBC noted that for decades, there has been an unresolved territorial dispute between Morocco and neighboring Algeria over the Western Sahara region, which was previously under Spanish control, making for a diplomatically sensitive three-way relationship in the area.

The broadcaster commented that a similar, smaller influx into Ceuta took place in 2021 after a regional opponent of Morocco was allowed treatment at a Spanish hospital, and that the latest incident came just two weeks after Spain's prime minister paid a visit to Algeria. It also observed that the authorities in Rabat have "already shown readiness to deploy migration pressure as a retaliatory tactic against Spain".

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Happy birthday Bao Li



The Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute in Washington marks the fifth birthday of Bao Li, one of a pair of giant pandas who arrived in Washington in October 2024. The bear enjoyed a special panda-friendly "fruitsicle" cake made by the Zoo's Department of Nutrition Science on Tuesday morning, as crowds gathered at the David M. Rubenstein Family Giant Panda Habitat. SHA HANTING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Asian economies face risks to food security

Region sees challenges amid El Nino, Mideast energy supply shocks: Experts

By **PRIME SARMIENTO** in Hong Kong
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Asia's economies are staring down a double shock: a looming super El Nino threatens to deepen food insecurity just as the Middle East crisis drives up energy and fertilizer costs.

Analysts said a prolonged dry spell could slash crop yields and push food prices further out of reach for consumers already squeezed by surging inflation.

"The impact of El Nino is just among the many crises that we are facing at the moment," said Paul Teng, a visiting senior fellow in the Climate Change in Southeast Asia Programme at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore.

Teng said geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, which have driven global oil prices higher, are rippling through Asia's transport and farm sectors, fueling inflation across the region. The surge has been compounded by what he called a "fertilizer shock", as the Middle East is a major exporter of crop nutrients.

He said that rising fertilizer costs are forcing farmers to cut back either on usage or on the land they plant this season. The squeeze on inputs is expected to weigh on harvests in the next crop cycle, adding another layer of pressure to food prices.

"On top of that is El Nino, which is like adding oil to fire," Teng told China Daily, referring to the periodic weather pattern that is expected to intensify further from this month, heightening the risks of extreme weather.

Oil prices started skyrocketing soon after the United States and Israel began attacking Iran on Feb 28. The Asian Development Bank, or ADB, said as the crisis in the Middle East evolved, inflation also rose across the developing Asia-Pacific region.

Headline inflation in the region increased from 2.9 percent in January to 4.1 percent in May on the back of higher global energy prices, the ADB said in its latest economic outlook report published in July.

The Manila-based lender said that since March, governments across the region have introduced measures to limit pass-through to consumer prices, including fuel subsidies, tax cuts, price controls, releases from strategic petroleum reserves and energy conservation policies. But inflationary pressures persist, with higher logistics and fertilizer costs spiking food prices.

The ADB sees inflation across the region hitting 4.3 percent by end-2026, up from the 3 percent recorded in 2025.

'Ripple effects'

Japanese investment bank Nomura said in its latest report that El Nino may lead to trade protectionism in the coming months. It noted that in the past, countries like India, Indonesia and Vietnam have resorted to export restrictions or outright export bans to prevent surge in domestic food prices. But while these measures can help in reining in local prices, the export bans have "ripple effects" as prices go up for food importers, it said.

The World Meteorological Organization, or WMO, said in a July 31 report that El Nino continues to intensify steadily and is expected to dominate global climate patterns until October 2026. The WMO also forecast a positive Indian Ocean Dipole, or IOD — a climate pattern defined by differences in sea-surface temperatures that affects regional weather. An IOD can amplify regional climate impacts, including drought, floods and wildfire risks.

Khor Yu Leng, an economist at Segi Enam Advisors in Singapore, said the El Nino plus positive IOD combination presents a "higher-risk scenario" for Asian agriculture as this will reinforce dryness in most parts of Southeast Asia.

She said that rice is the "immediate flashpoint" because the Asian staple is a thinly-traded commodity and as such, weather disruptions and export controls can trigger outsized price spikes.

Khor said El Nino's impact on palm oil, a key cash crop, "tends to be more lagged, but potentially broader". She said El Nino-linked dryness reduces fresh fruit bunch yields several months later while extreme rainfall and floods can also disrupt harvesting and logistics.

Unlike rice, palm oil is deeply integrated into the global food, oleochemical — chemical compounds derived from natural fats and oils, typically of plant or animal origin — and biofuel supply chains. Khor said this is why tighter palm oil supply can spill quickly into edible oils and energy markets.

She also cited corn as the "hidden protein inflation story" because Asian countries rely on imports from Brazil and Argentina. If El Nino hits South American corn harvest, Khor said Asian livestock raisers have to deal with higher feed costs.

China's electric buses fuel Baku's green transport

BAKU — "When I began driving electric buses, I could immediately tell that they were very different from the buses I had driven before. They run quietly and smoothly, with hardly any noise or vibration. Most importantly, they are environmentally friendly," said Nurlan Salmanli, a 34-year-old bus driver in Baku.

Salmanli previously drove buses powered by compressed natural gas. Ahead of COP29 in 2024, 160 BYD electric buses imported from China entered service in Baku, the Azerbaijan's capital, replacing the conventional buses on the routes he operated.

"Passengers really like them, especially older people and families with children. These modern buses make public transport in Baku more convenient and comfortable, and help reduce noise on the streets. I hope to see more buses like these in the future," Salmanli said.

Salmanli's experience reflects a broader transformation taking place in Baku's public transport system as Azerbaijan accelerates its transition toward greener mobility. According to BYD, an electric bus traveling 90,000 kilometers a year can save about 27,000 liters of diesel and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 66 tons annually.

Data released by the Azerbaijan Land Transport Agency in spring 2026 showed that about 2,350 buses operate in Baku each day, including more than 300 BYD electric buses. Some of these buses were assembled locally at the Azerbaijan Energy Automotive Factory, or AEAF, in the Sumgayit Industrial Park, about 30 km northwest of Baku.

"I have been involved in the AEAF project since its early stages. When the first bus rolled off the production line, we felt very happy and proud. It was the beginning of a new stage for our factory and our team," said Orkhan Gambarov, the factory's deputy director for production.

The factory was established through a joint initiative of the Azerbaijan Business Development Fund, SARDA Group and BYD. Its first locally assembled 12-meter BYD electric bus was delivered in September 2025.

According to Gambarov, major components are delivered to the factory, where assembly, quality control and the necessary inspections are carried out. To date, the factory has delivered 300 locally assembled BYD electric buses.

"Since the beginning of the project, the Chinese team has provided us with great support. Our Chinese colleagues have supported us at every stage, from technical issues to quality control. They have also shared their production experience and knowledge with our local team," Gambarov said, adding that the strong collaboration between the Chinese and local teams has been one of the main reasons for the project's success.

'Fascinating field'

The factory currently has about 100 Azerbaijani employees. Among its first technical staff members was Rizvan Gulaliyev, who is now a chief foreman at the plant.

He said electric bus production was a new and fascinating field for him, and that the project had helped him acquire valuable knowledge and hands-on experience in electric vehicle manufacturing.

"Chinese specialists conducted training directly on the production line and demonstrated the correct sequence of assembly operations. They also trained us to operate the equipment, conduct diagnostics and follow quality standards. I hope to grow with the factory and become a more skilled specialist in modern automotive technologies," Gulaliyev said.

The Project Management Department under Azerbaijan's Ministry of Economy coordinates and oversees the implementation of the AEAF project. Zamir Dibirov, head of the department, said cooperation with Chinese companies helps Azerbaijan transition from being solely an importer of green technologies to becoming a producer and operator of new-energy transport solutions, with the potential to serve regional markets.

"Azerbaijan highly values its cooperation with China and would welcome greater participation by Chinese companies in the country's new-energy and advanced manufacturing sectors. We see considerable potential in battery technologies, charging infrastructure, smart mobility systems and other fields," Dibirov said.

XINHUA



Technicians conduct maintenance on an electric bus at a BYD electric bus service station in Baku, Azerbaijan, on July 23.
CHEN JUNFENG / XINHUA

Jingdezhen's porcelain heritage recognition a lesson in shared protection



Yang Han
Reporter's log

FIRST PERSON VIEW

What does it mean for a country to be among the ones with the most World Heritage sites in the world?

For China, that question carried added weight on July 25, when the Jingdezhen Handicraft Porcelain Industry Sites became the country's 61st UNESCO site.

Held from July 19 to 29, the 48th session of the UNESCO panel added 25 new sites to the World Heritage List, including the first-ever inscriptions for three African countries — Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe, and South Sudan. The committee also granted emergency protection to three newly inscribed World Heritage sites and added three previously recognized sites to the danger list.

Among them, Jingdezhen stood out not only as China's sole nomination for 2026 but also as the first site explicitly themed around porcelain, and China's first-ever "industrial heritage" nomination.

Located in East China's Jiangxi province, the Jingdezhen Handicraft Porcelain Sites comprise five component areas that trace the evolution of handicraft porcelain production from the 10th to the 19th centuries in the city now often known as the "porcelain capital" of China.

But beyond the numbers, what struck me most was the shared commitment among nations to protect heritage as a legacy for all humanity, and how China's role in that effort was perceived by those I spoke with.

"China is bringing a lot to the World Heritage List," said Alessandro Balsamo, head of the Nominations Unit at the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. "And of course, this is not just an honor to be on top of this list, but it represents also a big responsibility."

"It is very important for all the countries to share their experience on their sites," said Aseela Almoalla Alhashmi, director-general of the Fujairah Environment Authority and a member of the United Arab Emirates delegation.

During the session, the UAE successfully had Wadi Wurayah, a national park in Fujairah that hosts 1,099 species, inscribed as its first UNESCO-listed natural heritage site.

When I asked about China's growing role in international heritage cooperation, Alhashmi mentioned that she had also participated in the World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in Hangzhou in 2025 and said she believes the Global Civilization Initiative proposed by China is important for the world and future generations.

For smaller nations with limited resources, this cooperation is even more practical.

Sandra Mascarenhas, scientific coordinator of the Tarrafal Concentration Camp at the Cultural Heritage Institute of Cabo Verde, told me that her country, which has only one World Heritage Site, depends on international cooperation with partners such as China to secure financial support and capacity building.

"Last year, we were in Guangzhou, (where) there was a symposium about cooperation between Africa, China and UNESCO," said Mascarenhas. "It was very good because it helped us reformulate our nomination and helped us achieve some monetary funds."

During the latest event in Busan, South Korea, there was also a series of side events co-organized by governments, institutions and companies from China, sharing China's experience in nominations, the adoption of technology in heritage protection, and the country's call to advance international cooperation in the sector.

Every one of those events saw the rooms filled to capacity and some were so packed that latecomers had to stand along the walls. Many participants stayed on after the session to exchange ideas with Chinese organizers. It was a clear sign of the international community's interest in China's heritage experience.

As Balsamo, the UNESCO official, told me during the interview, the honor of being among the top on the World Heritage List comes with a big responsibility to show the way for other countries and to become partners in multilateral cooperation.

In Busan, I saw that responsibility being acknowledged with more than just words. At a time when heritage is facing unprecedented challenges from climate change and geopolitical conflicts, that partnership feels all the more valuable in protecting the shared legacy of all humanity.

The writer is a reporter with China Daily Asia Pacific in Hong Kong.

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WORLD

Hostilities escalate over the Black Sea

MOSCOW/KYIV — The Russia-Ukraine hostilities have escalated over the Black Sea and its coastal areas, authorities said.

Ukrainian drones have targeted multiple Russian resort cities along the Black Sea coast, while Russia has struck Ukrainian vessels transporting military supplies.

Seven people were killed and at least 40 others were injured in a Ukrainian drone attack on Arkhipo-Osipovka, a Black Sea resort village in Russia's Krasnodar Krai region on Monday, according to the regional emergency response center.

Meanwhile, the Russian Defense Ministry reported on Monday that its unmanned aerial vehicles struck four bulk carriers ferrying military cargo that supported military operations of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

The ministry said that two bulk carriers unloading military supplies were targeted at the port of Mykolaiv, a river port situated on the Southern Bug River, about 65 kilometers inland from the Black Sea. Two other cargo ships carrying military material were attacked in the Black Sea waters.

Escalating attacks by both sides on shipping in the Black Sea have reawakened fears that global food security could be put at risk.

Turkiye on Tuesday repeated its appeal for both Russia and Ukraine to ensure the safety of navigation in the Black Sea after two Turkish-owned ships were attacked by drones after leaving the Russian port of Novorossiysk.

A Turkish Foreign Ministry statement expressed concerns that the conflict is increasingly spreading across the Black Sea, threatening civilian shipping, and warned such incidents could have broader consequences, including for the global food supply, as important amounts of grain, fertilizers and other key produce move through those waters.

In other developments on the battlefield, five people were killed and six others injured in a Ukrainian drone attack on Tuesday morning in Moscow Oblast, regional governor Andrei Vorobyov said on his Max channel.

Elsewhere, a regional official in Sumy in Ukraine's northeast said Russian attacks killed one person in Sumy on Tuesday.

Oleh Hryhorov, the regional governor, said on Telegram that three locations in the Kovpakivsky District were struck, with private homes and infrastructure coming under attack.

One day earlier, Ivan Fedorov, a regional chief, said Russian planes dropped eight powerful glide bombs in a span of 90 minutes on residential districts of Zaporizhzhia, killing one person and wounding dozens of others.

In another development, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky dismissed Ukraine's ambassador to the United States, Olha Stefanishyna, according to a decree published by the presidential office on Monday.

Stefanishyna, who had served as ambassador since last year, said in a Facebook post that she had requested to be relieved of her duties for personal reasons. She described her service in Washington as "the greatest honor" of her life.

"We have increased the supply of American weapons and maintained support precisely when the political environment in Washington was not in our favor," she said.

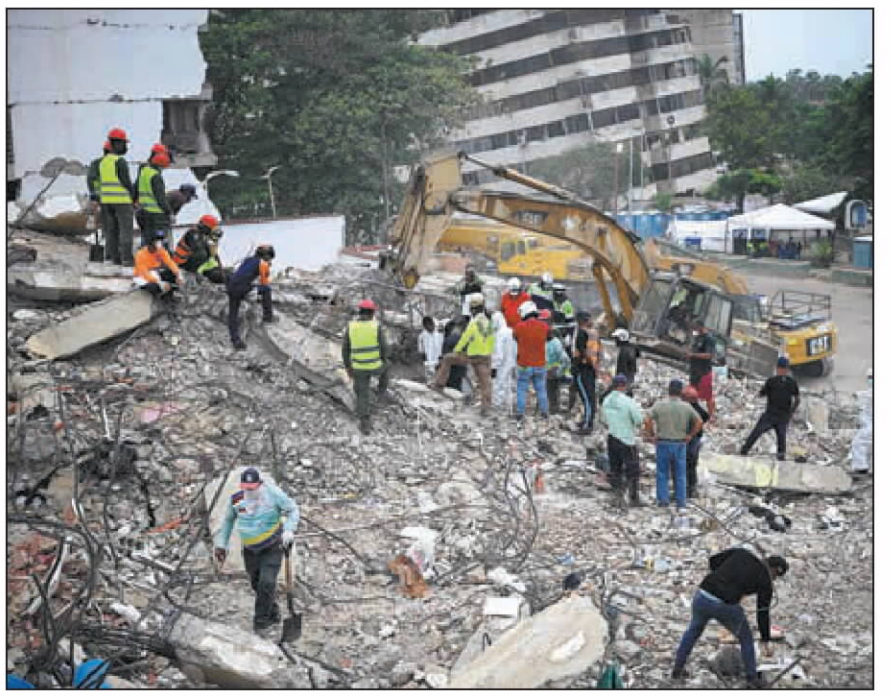
Zelensky has not announced a successor to the post.

The move comes after a government reshuffle launched by Zelensky in July and at a time when Kyiv is seeking continued US military support amid its conflict with Russia.

Zelensky had appointed new national security and foreign intelligence chiefs earlier this week.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Search for survivors



Rescue teams and volunteers search for bodies amid the rubble of a collapsed building in Caraballeda, Venezuela, on Monday. The twin quakes that shattered Venezuela in June killed 6,125 people, National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez said on Monday. FEDERICO PARRA / AFP

Report gauges AI's effect on developing nations

World Bank assessment sees less job risk, but higher barriers to accessing benefits

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
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While developing economies face lower job displacement risks from artificial intelligence compared with developed nations, gaps in infrastructure development, institutional capacity and relevant skill sets largely restrict their access to the benefits that AI has to offer, said a recent World Bank report.

According to the World Development Report 2026, which was released on Tuesday, only 4.5 percent of existing jobs in low- and middle-income countries are at risk of automation by generative AI, compared with 14.2 percent in high-income countries.

At the same time, AI could meaningfully boost productivity in 16.2 percent of jobs in developing nations, which is not far below the estimated 18.7 percent for high-income countries.

While the labor market in developing economies is less concentrated in occupations that are most exposed to generative AI, the figures suggest that workers and businesses could still use the technology to improve performance.

The World Bank described the report as "the first comprehensive assessment" of the implications of AI for developing economies, offering a perspective that has often been overlooked in academic and policy discussions focused largely on developed nations.

"AI has thrown developing economies a lifeline, and they should seize it," said Indermit Gill, senior vice-president and chief economist at the World Bank Group in a news release.

Weakest average growth

Developing economies are currently experiencing their weakest average growth performance in three decades, the World Bank said, adding that AI could be particularly valuable in cases where shortages of skilled manpower and institutional capacity have hindered development.

According to the report, AI tools can help doctors diagnose illnesses, support teachers in adapting teaching methods, guide farmers in making planting decisions, provide advice to small businesses, and enable banks to assess borrowers without conventional credit histories.

Governments could use AI to improve tax collection, social programs, healthcare services, education curriculums and disaster response, thereby extending limited public-sector capacity across larger populations, the report also said.

Gill noted that developing economies do not require large AI models or big data centers to reap the benefits of the technology. "By adapting small, low-cost AI tools to local conditions, they can bring better medical care, education, judicial services and agricultural extension within the reach of millions," he said.

The World Bank cautioned that "such optimism should not be unbridled", indicating countries that could benefit most from AI are often the least prepared to embrace the technology.

Harnessing the power of AI calls for a dependable foundation involving a stable electricity supply, affordable high-speed internet, capable institutions and skilled workers, but many developing economies have yet to achieve universal access even to electricity and the internet, it said.

The report shows that developing economies account for just 5 percent of high-performance computing capacity and 12 percent of secure internet servers. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, almost one-third of rural schools still lack a stable electricity supply, and more than two-thirds lack dependable internet connections.

While AI could significantly boost performance globally before the end of the decade, the opportunity is not guaranteed for all, the World Bank said. It added that the most advanced AI systems are being developed by a small number of countries and companies, while many developing economies still lack the basic infrastructure needed to effectively use AI.

Although adopting existing generative AI tools is less expensive, imported systems may perform poorly when applied to languages, cultures and public services inadequately represented in their training data. For example, more than 2,000 languages spoken in Africa are neglected in major language models, according to the report's concept note.

Another concern, the report said, is that governments that lack the expertise or data needed to embrace these systems could become dependent on a small number of AI solution vendors, and those dominant vendors could shape standards and regulatory frameworks in those countries.

Three-step strategy

The World Bank called on developing economies to follow a three-step strategy — adopting available AI tools, adapting them to local conditions and advancing toward frontier development over time.

This approach would allow governments to initially focus on practical, lower-cost applications, rather than making expensive attempts to reproduce the most advanced models before basic foundations are in place, it said.

Gaurav Nayyar, director of the World Development Report 2026, warned that the window to get it right is narrow. "Developing countries that build the foundations now — power, connectivity, skills and institutions — will be positioned to adopt and adapt AI for their people," he said.

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Chinese market keeps wine exports flowing

By ALEXIS HOOI in Sydney
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Australian wine exports fell to a record low in line with global consumption trends, but the Chinese mainland remained its largest export market by value in the pillar sector, according to the latest analysis.

The exports fell year-on-year by 7 percent in value to A$2.3 billion ($1.6 billion) and 6 percent in volume to 598 million liters in the year ended June 2026, statutory authority Wine Australia's export report released on July 29 showed.

It was the first time that export volume had fallen below 600 million liters since 2004, with the fall mirroring "a broader global trend of declining wine consumption over the past decade", it said.

Peter Bailey, market insights manager at Wine Australia, said the challenges facing Australian wine exporters are not unique, with other wine-producing nations facing the same conditions.

Data from multiple sources suggested that the decline in wine consumption globally reflected changing consumer behavior that is "reshaping demand around the world", he said.

'Historic downturn'

The total export figures "reflect increasingly difficult trading conditions across many of Australia's key export markets, driven by a historic downturn in global wine consumption", according to Wine Australia.

Worldwide wine consumption has fallen to its lowest level since 1961, as consumers increasingly moderate alcohol intake, face cost-of-living pressures and shift toward alternative beverages, it said.

While global trading conditions remain challenging, Australian wine continues to perform relatively well in many key markets, Bailey said.

The Chinese mainland remained Australia's largest export market by value, despite exports falling 15 percent to A$756 million, according to Wine Australia.

The Chinese market is no longer being driven by the restocking of Australian wine, Bailey said, amid "a more mature and demand-led phase" that also reflected a smaller and slower-growing sector.

Michael Harvey, senior analyst in dairy and consumer foods at global agribusiness banking cooperative Rabobank, told China Daily that the wine sector is going through a period of rebalancing and resizing.

"There are some weather conditions that played a role, but there's also been clearly a structural decline in the size of the industry. So we're actually seeing some vineyard removals, which is why we're seeing reduced production in Australia to reflect the challenging operating environment," said Harvey, who is based in Melbourne, Victoria state.

"Margins are under pressure for a lot of the wine, a lot of the vineyards and growers, which is why we're getting a supply response. So that naturally has led to less production," he said.

"There's also a structural reset in terms of the amount of alcohol we're consuming, so that's a trend you've seen in a lot of key markets and China would be part of that," Harvey said.

"At some point in time it'll find a better balance and you'll start to see some stabilization," he said, adding that there are still segments in the sector that are performing well.

"Premium wines are performing better than some of the other varieties, so it's not a linear decline everywhere."

Jack Wu, managing director Greater China for major Australian winemaker Treasury Wine Estates, noted that China has long been an important market for Penfolds, and the brand has built a strong connection with Chinese consumers over many years.

The winemaker is headquartered in Melbourne and includes the popular Penfolds label in its portfolio.

"We're focused on growing that relationship for the long term by staying close to how people are shopping and enjoying wine, supporting healthy and sustainable channels, and creating more occasions for consumers to discover and share Penfolds," he said.

Feline revival



The Amur Tiger Center releases on Monday an adult Siberian tiger named Ymit into the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve as part of a joint program with Russia to repopulate the area with tigers, a species declared extinct in these parts decades ago. AMUR TIGER CENTER / TASS

Briefly

EUROPE

Romania reroutes cooling water to reactor

Romania blew up a rock outcrop on Monday to help divert vital cooling water from the drought-hit Danube River to its sole working nuclear reactor, an unprecedented measure that underscores the scale of an energy crunch across the region. In neighboring Hungary, authorities said they might be able to eke out two more days of power from their only atomic plant, which has been hit by falling levels in the Danube that it also relies on as a coolant. Heat and drought have lowered river levels across large parts of Europe, raising concerns about water supplies, river transport and power generation. Both governments have asked people and companies to cut power use to ease demand.

AFRICA

Ebola death toll rises to 1,700 in DR Congo

Ebola has killed more than 1,700 people in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the fastest-growing outbreak of the disease, data showed. As of Tuesday, 3,802 cases had been recorded, with 1,707 deaths, according to latest update. It is not clear when the outbreak will reach its peak, Africa CDC Director-General Jean Kaseya said on Tuesday.

ETHIOPIA

Landslide kills 14 in Amhara region

Fourteen people were killed in a landslide near a monastery in Ethiopia's Amhara region, the state-run Amhara Media Corporation said late on Monday. The landslide occurred near the Tsadkane Mariam Monastery in Amhara's North Shewa zone, the broadcaster said. Search teams supported by excavation machinery were working to recover bodies, it said. The Amhara Media Corporation report did not say what caused the landslide, but independent news reports said it was triggered by heavy rains. Ethiopia is in its main rainy season, which runs from June to September.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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COMMENT

Editorials

Litigation against Section 301 tariffs clear sign of growing divide in the US

The new challenge to the United States administration's tariff policy reflects the increasing discontent that is being aggravated by the inflation caused by energy price hikes due to the Middle East crisis triggered by Washington and Tel Aviv. While the litigation initiated by a coalition of 25 states, mostly Democrat-led, against the Section 301 tariffs on Monday underscores the growing partisan divide, businesses oppose the tariffs primarily because of the rising costs imposed on the economy.

Those hoping the judges of the US Court of International Trade hearing the lawsuit brought by the states will simply strike down the tariffs should temper their expectations. Unlike the earlier International Emergency Economic Powers Act case, in which the US president was judged to have exceeded his authority, the US administration enters the dispute in a stronger position.

This time the US administration has imposed tariffs under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which expressly authorizes the president to impose tariffs in response to "unfair" foreign trade practices. The government's argument is that it has acted within the limits of the authority the US Congress delegated. The court is therefore unlikely to spend much time debating whether tariffs make sound economic policy. It will instead ask two narrower questions: Did Congress authorize tariffs of this breadth, imposed in this manner?

Historically, Section 301 investigations have focused on specific countries, specific conduct and proportionate remedies. Section 301 was never conceived as a blank check for redesigning global trade policy. Congress enacted it as a targeted enforcement mechanism against identifiable "unfair" foreign practices, not as a universal tariff authority affecting nearly all US imports.

The new tariffs, covering imports from 59 economies and the European Union on the basis of alleged "forced-labor" concerns, represent a dramatic expansion of the statute's traditional reach. The plaintiffs therefore argue that Section 301 has become a substitute vehicle for policies the US Supreme Court has already rejected. As they claimed, the US administration has merely exchanged one statutory label for another while pursuing the same sweeping tariff regime.

If the "forced-labor" investigations are found merely to provide legal cover for replacing invalidated IEEPA tariffs, the US administration's position will become more vulnerable. So whether the courts are willing to scrutinize the factual basis of those "forced-labor" findings may prove just as important as interpreting the statute itself.

Judges should exercise their own independent judgment when interpreting Section 301 rather than accepting the Office of the US Trade Representative's reading of it. And the court's increasingly influential Major Questions Doctrine requires clear congressional authorization before government agencies exercise powers of vast economic and political significance. A tariff regime affecting almost the entire US import market plainly raises questions of that magnitude.

So the administrative record assumes unusual importance. The court will examine whether the USTR followed the Congress-prescribed procedures — investigations, public hearings, factual findings and reasoned explanations — or whether tariff rates were chosen first and justified later.

Tariffs remain taxes, and taxes ultimately fall on someone. The US administration's dealmaking tool has become an instrument of economic coercion directed as much at US businesses as foreign governments. The litigation is likely to take years reaching the Federal Circuit and perhaps the US Supreme Court. In that time, the tariffs will continue to tax the US economy unless they are revoked.

While many blame US tariff policies for the rise of unilateralism and protectionism, the deeper concern lies in the political and institutional soil from which those impulses have grown. The real issue is a Congress that has increasingly tolerated the expansion of executive authority for partisan interests. Courts can police the boundaries of executive power, but only Congress can redraw them. Whether the polarized legislature can still rise above partisan divisions and vested interests to reclaim its constitutional authority over trade will ultimately determine whether the US' political system can overcome its challenges through self-correction.

Hyping 'China Shock' won't benefit Germany

The claim by Tanja Gonner, chief executive of the Federation of German Industries, or BDI, in a Monday report of Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, that a "China Shock 2.0" "threatens" the entire German industrial system is a lamentable and deeply flawed example of scaremongering.

Reportedly, Germany is mapping out vulnerabilities in China's supply chain in order to use this information as leverage in a possible trade war with China.

Some Western politicians and analysts find it far easier to make China a scapegoat than to confront the real challenges festering at home — whether soaring energy costs, suffocating bureaucratic red tape, or the painfully slow pipeline from lab to market. If their real objective were industrial renewal rather than political point-scoring, they would not have overlooked the "China Opportunity 2.0" that proponents of the "China Shock 2.0" narrative have intentionally erased from the debate.

The experience of German businesses in China tells a very different story from Gonner's alarmist warnings. China reclaimed its position as Germany's largest trading partner in 2025, with a bilateral trade of 253 billion euros ($299 billion), up 2.7 percent from 2024, underscoring the depth of their economic complementarity.

The point was reinforced this February, when German Chancellor Friedrich Merz arrived in China accompanied by senior executives from dozens of Germany's biggest companies, visiting some of the leading Chinese technology companies in search of deeper industrial partnerships.

If German boardrooms truly believe the rhetoric of "China Shock 2.0" and the Merz government believes a trade war with China is unavoidable, they have a curious way of showing it.

German enterprises have long been beneficiaries of China's market and supply chains. The BDI must understand that the competitive pressure its members feel is a normal feature of a dynamic global market. Instead of advocating an assertive posture, it should encourage German companies to explore the very market that has fueled their growth and to tap into the opportunities created by China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) with an open mind.

If some German industries are still not convinced, they need not look any further than Volkswagen, which has adjusted its research and development strategy based on the success of its R&D center in China. This has accelerated the company's transition from "hardware-defined vehicles" to "software-defined vehicles". Just as Volkswagen recognizes China's EV success as an "opportunity" to be seized, the German government should abandon its unfounded allegations of "currency manipulation" and "overcapacity" and play a constructive role in China-European Union trade consultations.

For multinational corporations, partnering with China today means embedding themselves in a vibrant ecosystem of innovation. It means gaining access not just to market share, but to a dynamic environment for self-iteration, technological upgrading and the cocreation of next-generation solutions.

The real and present concern for the German economy is its own inertia. Many Chinese travelers returning from Germany remark that a country once synonymous with punctuality and precision no longer feels quite the same. Train delays and disruptions to urban transport have become commonplace, while China's high-speed rail and metro systems — once seen as playing catch-up — now operate with a level of speed, reliability and punctuality that is taken for granted.

Anecdotes are not data, but they often capture broader truths. The contrast serves as a reminder that Germany, like some other advanced economies, faces its own structural challenges and would benefit from a more sober assessment of its domestic transition rather than attributing every competitive setback to China.

None of this is to deny Germany's unique strengths. It remains a global leader in advanced machinery, chemicals, industrial automation, environmental technology and precision manufacturing. Chinese companies have long regarded their German counterparts not as rivals to be feared but as partners from whom much could be learned. If a technological gap is grounds for fear, then should China have labeled the arrival of German companies in the 1980s and 1990s a "Germany Shock 1.0"?

What some in Germany appear to find harder to accept is that, in a growing number of industries, the flow of knowledge between China and Germany has become two-way. In fields such as electric vehicles, digital infrastructure and aspects of advanced manufacturing, the former student has, at least in some respects, become a teacher.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

FIFA boss' profiteering risks ruining the beautiful game

Under Sepp Blatter, FIFA became synonymous with patronage and scandal to many. Yet his successor Gianni Infantino, as head of the world football body, risks eclipsing even that legacy. His failed attempt to sell a stake in the World Cup to Thrive Capital, an investment company run by Josh Kushner, brother of Jared Kushner, the son-in-law of the United States president, looked uncomfortably like an offering to Washington, using football's greatest prize as political currency.

In essence, FIFA sought to sell a 20 percent stake in a new commercial subsidiary controlling World Cup revenues to a private equity firm tied to the US president's inner circle. The plan would reportedly have earned Infantino a commissioner-style role, paying around $30 million a year — five times his current salary.

The question now being asked is what else Infantino expected in return for further strengthening his standing with a US president he has repeatedly described as a close friend.

The backlash to the plan was predictable and entirely justified. The Union of European Football Associations and others were angered not only because they learned of the proposal through media reports, but because it violated a basic principle: the World Cup is not a private asset to be monetized for a handful of investors. Should commercial partners with political connections acquire a financial stake, the pressure to influence decisions will inevitably follow. At that point, FIFA would cease to be the guardian of the tournament and become its broker.

If investors closely associated with the White House stand to profit directly from football's biggest event, can FIFA credibly claim political neutrality? Countries already facing strained relations with the US, such as Iran, would have every reason to question whether commercial interests and political preferences might shape the tournament's administration. Even the perception of such influence would damage the World Cup's credibility.

With the deal abandoned and revolt spreading inside FIFA, Infantino's swagger has disappeared. Reports suggest Infantino repeatedly tried to reach the US president by phone before seeking support from US Secretary of State Marco Rubio under the banner of promoting football as the US' "soft power". Few were persuaded. As an insider bluntly put it, this was about saving his job, not promoting the sport. On Tuesday, FIFA denied the reports.

Infantino should remember that FIFA is still rebuilding its reputation after years of corruption scandals. Fresh questions have already emerged over allegations that political pressure influenced disciplinary decisions during this year's World Cup, including controversy surrounding the overturning of a red card shown to US striker Folarin Balogun. Whether those claims withstand scrutiny or not, immediately pursuing a business arrangement that appeared to favor the associates of the FIFA boss' close pal displayed astonishingly poor judgment.

Infantino insists he is expanding football's reach. He has proposed a bigger World Cup, more teams, more matches — and as hasn't escaped notice — more money-making opportunities. Expansion looks more like commercial opportunism than sporting vision. Every additional fixture creates more broadcasting slots, sponsorship inventory and advertising revenue, while concentrating influence among an ever-smaller circle of powerful hands.

The same philosophy underpins some of Infantino's so-called "innovations" such as mandatory "hydration breaks". Officially introduced for player welfare, they also create perfectly timed commercial pauses that interrupt football's natural rhythm. Infantino presents every change as progress, yet too often the beneficiaries are broadcasters, sponsors and executives rather than supporters.

Football belongs to the people. The FIFA president is supposed to protect that inheritance, not mortgage it. Infantino's failed World Cup stake sale exposed a governing philosophy in which the game's greatest treasure is no longer a public trust, but another asset to be traded among the powerful. That is precisely why the revolt against him deserves to succeed.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Revised rules will help boost innovation in IC design

Editor's note: *The China National Intellectual Property Administration has published explanations for revisions to the country's Regulations on the Protection of Layout-Designs of Integrated Circuits, publicized by the State Council on Monday. The experts include Huang Yunhua of the intellectual property institute of the China Industrial Control Systems Cyber Emergency Response Team, Li Shunde of the Institute of Law of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Cui Guobin of the School of Law at Tsinghua University. Below are excerpts of their comments. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Today, the process nodes of transistors for conventional integrated circuits are approaching their technological and physical limits. Disruptive technologies such as photonics and quantum technology have emerged, propelling the integrated circuit industry into the post-Moore's Law era, where competition revolves around new architectures, mechanisms, materials and devices.

Globally, countries are exploring ways to overcome the physical limitations of conventional integrated circuits and trying to develop new technologies for integrated circuits.

The revisions of the regulations include "the layout-designs of integrated circuits incorporating photonic, quantum and other functions" as designs eligible for protection. This reflects an accurate assessment of and proactive response to technological developments in the integrated circuit sector.

Integrated circuit design determines the performance, power consumption and competitiveness of chips. The revised regulations will enhance the protection of cutting-edge integrated circuit intellectual property and establish a system suited to the pace of technological innovation in China's integrated circuit industry.

Since 2022, there has been a rise in the number of applications filed in China for the registration of integrated circuit layout-designs incorporating photonic and quantum devices. The revised regulations are expected to further inspire innovators, boosting innovation and development in China's integrated circuit technology.

The revisions add an "originality statement" to the documents required to be submitted when registering a layout-design. This official document, submitted to the China National Intellectual Property Administration, defines the design's originality scope and demonstrates that it meets the required legal standards.

Exclusive rights to a layout-design are granted upon registration with the administration. Layout-designs which are not registered will not be protected under the regulations.

The revisions introduce a registration revocation procedure initiated by third parties. Anyone who finds that a registration fails to comply with the regulations may request the intellectual property administrative department of the State Council to revoke the registration.

To encourage the creation and utilization of layout-designs, the revised regulations say that legal persons or non-legal-person entities should grant reasonable rewards and remuneration to eligible people in accordance with the Law on Promoting the Transformation of Scientific and Technological Achievements and other relevant national rules.

The revised regulations also include a punitive damages system, saying that where an intentional and serious infringement upon the exclusive rights to a layout-design is committed, "the amount of compensation may be fixed at between one and five times the amount determined in accordance with the aforesaid methods." This provision reflects the goal of strengthening protection for layout-designs.

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VIEWS

Li Yuheng

Clustering can rewrite the story of rural China

For years, China has invested heavily in rural revitalization, yet many villages remain trapped in a cycle of scattered resources, duplicated infrastructure, and limited industrial scale.

The core reason is straightforward: local governance and funding have traditionally treated each administrative village as an independent development unit. That approach is now changing.

China's "No. 1 central document" for 2026 advocates for a "classified, orderly, zone-based promotion of rural revitalization". The policy signals a profound shift from single-village autonomy to cluster-based, cross-village cooperation.

China's rural population has declined steeply from its 1995 peak of 859 million to 451 million in 2025, a decrease of 47.5 percent. Villages have moved along vastly different trajectories: some have grown steadily amid urban-rural integration, some have merged seamlessly into nearby towns, while others have shrunk and declined due to sustained population outflow.

The previous model allocated budgets village by village, leading to fragmented investment. A single village cannot sustain a specialty industry, build a competitive tourism brand, or attract professional operators.

Neighboring villages competed instead of cooperating, resulting in redundant roads, duplicated facilities, and price undercutting. This led to a lose-lose situation where many villages struggled to achieve economies of scale and public resources were spread too thin.

The new cluster development framework is built on three principles.

First, classified positioning assigns tailored development paths to individual villages based on their growth potential, location and resources.

Second, phased progress prioritizes improvements in transportation and public infrastructure before rolling out public services and industrial projects.

Third, spatial integration groups neighboring villages with complementary resources into functional clusters. These clusters transcend rigid administrative boundaries to integrate land, capital and talent, achieving economies of scale unattainable by individual villages.

A typical cluster may combine one village's natural scenic resources, another's specialty agricultural products, and a third's surplus rural labor. Spatial restructuring reduces redundant infrastructure spending and encourages functional specialization.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Instead of competing for identical projects, villages within a cluster focus on differentiated roles in production, processing, tourism and logistics based on their strengths. The result is coordinated revitalization that transforms rural decline into collective growth.

Zhejiang province has taken the lead in piloting this approach. In 2025, the province identified 226 provincial-level core villages for driving the development of 1,447 surrounding villages. These rural clusters host 1,094 key projects, with planned investment nearing 33 billion yuan ($4.85 billion) over the next three years.

Three institutional innovations underpin the effective operation of rural clusters.

First, cross-village Party building alliances establish collaborative governance mechanisms, breaking administrative barriers between villages. Second, professional management teams serve as impartial coordinators, replacing outdated zero-sum competition with cluster-wide win-win planning that allows all villages to share the benefits of unified regional branding and industrial development.

Third, binding institutional rules firmly protect farmers' legitimate rights, ensuring that there are no changes in collective asset ownership, no damage to traditional rural landscapes and cultural features, and no forced merger of villages. These safeguards are critical to maintaining grassroots trust and long-term social stability.

It is important to clarify that cluster development does not aim for uniform prosperity for every village. Population decline and the gradual disappearance of some small villages are natural outcomes of demographic and economic changes.

The cluster model allows resources to shift away from shrinking settlements while maintaining basic public services for the remaining residents. This realistic approach avoids unnecessary fiscal expenditure and prevents the futile effort of sustaining unviable villages.

Rural depopulation, aging and fragmented public investment are universal global challenges, faced by both developed and developing economies alike.

Many countries have relied on village-centric rural development policies. Though well-intentioned, these programs often fall into the same trap of fragmentation and low efficiency.

China's cluster development formula offers valuable global insights. Reconfiguring governance from isolated villages to functional rural clusters can unlock latent resources and developmental potential that conventional village-level planning cannot achieve.

While no single model can be copied wholesale across borders, the core principle is universal: development requires scale, and administrative boundaries should not determine rural modernization.

Embracing cluster-based thinking will drive China's rural revitalization and offer practical references for global rural governance.

The author is a professor at the School of Humanities and Law in Northeastern University, and a senior associate editor of the Journal of Rural Studies.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Chris Pereira

Shenzhen's journey from exports to expertise

Over the past year Chinese companies expanding overseas have drawn global attention with everything from Labubu collectibles to electric vehicles and even coffee brands. Yet beneath these eye-catching exports lies a more profound and consequential trend: the quiet emergence of truly global businesses that integrate technology, supply chains, and industrial capabilities with local investment.

Global Lens

China's outbound direct investment reached $174.38 billion in 2025, up 7.1 percent year-on-year, according to China's Ministry of Commerce. Analysts point out that a significant share of these flows is directed toward the Asia-Pacific region, where manufacturing-heavy greenfield investment and capacity development projects are expanding rapidly, particularly across ASEAN economies.

At the heart of this outward momentum is Shenzhen, long a symbol of China's reform and opening-up era, and today the country's powerhouse of foreign trade, innovation and advanced manufacturing. As China's top-performing city for foreign trade, Shenzhen is exporting not just products, but entire industrial ecosystems. Its giant corporations such as Huawei, Tencent and BYD are building strong operations across the ASEAN region.

Take BYD for example. The global leader in EVs has established a manufacturing base in Rayong in Thailand and another EV facility in Subang in Indonesia.

BYD isn't just selling cars in these markets, it is transplanting the industrial model of Shenzhen — battery technology, supply chain coordination and local employment — in a local market while building a regional manufacturing node.

To be sure, this is not a recent development. This transfer of Shenzhen's industrial knowledge and technological innovation has been going on for a long time.

When a BYD battery pack crosses the border, it carries decades of electrochemical research, a finely tuned manufacturing ecosystem built over generations, and, increasingly, a local partnership structure that transfers real industrial knowledge to the destination economy.

DJI tells a different version of the same story. The Shenzhen-based drone maker holds an estimated 70 percent of the global market for consumer drones. Its agricultural drones are widely used across Southeast Asia to automate planting and protect crops. In markets such as Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia, the company has trained thousands of local operators and developed a dense network of dealers and service providers.

DJI did not just build a market presence, but created an embedded local ecosystem of drone pilots, distributors and service firms.

In this sense, Shenzhen's "exports" today are fundamentally different from what "Made in China" meant 20 years ago.

Today, leading Shenzhen enterprises are not just shipping products abroad; they are exporting their operational expertise and innovation frameworks to build global industrial ecosystems.

It is therefore fitting that the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in November will be hosted in Shenzhen. This marks the third time China has hosted APEC, after Shanghai in 2001 and Beijing in 2014. But while those editions signaled financial and political capital, Shenzhen has been chosen for its industrial capabilities and openness to global trade.

China's theme for the APEC meet, "Building an Asia-Pacific Community to Prosper Together", paired with its priorities of openness, innovation and cooperation, closely reflects Shenzhen's own development trajectory. This city has grown by keeping its doors open and promoting greater global engagement and trade.

The APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting is a genuine opportunity for Asia-Pacific economies to engage seriously with Chinese partners in new energy, AI infrastructure and advanced manufacturing.

They stand to gain not just products but production know-how, investment, and supply chain integration, building on a trend that is already underway: from Vietnam's electronics clusters anchored by Chinese supply chain investment to EV manufacturing hubs across the region.

Forty-five years ago, Shenzhen was mostly rural farmland. Today it is home to some of the world's most innovative technology companies and has become a powerful argument for what open, collaborative globalization can achieve. As APEC leaders gather there in November, they won't need a presentation to understand the Shenzhen model: outside the conference halls they will have living proof of what the next wave of international collaboration — Globalization 2.0 — looks like.

The author is the founder and CEO of iMpact, a communications and business consulting group.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Li Fengliang

Can artificial intelligence help prepare graduates for tomorrow's jobs?

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping the labor market, automating tasks such as routine copywriting, basic data analysis, conventional coding, repetitive administrative tasks and entry-level design work. As these jobs disappear or change, employers are increasingly demanding a different mix of skills from graduates.

This transformation comes at a difficult moment for higher education. While the number of university graduates continues to grow, structural unemployment has become more pronounced.

Under pressure to improve graduates' job prospects, universities across China are restructuring their academic programs. Many institutions are introducing AI-related majors, promoting "AI plus X" interdisciplinary education or adopting broader admissions models.

Responding to changes in the labor market is both reasonable and necessary. Universities cannot ignore technological, industrial and employment shifts. But they must also confront a harder question: Can they transform themselves quickly — and responsibly — to meet these new demands?

Building a robust academic program takes time. Universities need qualified faculty, coherent curricula, appropriate facilities and opportunities for practical training. These elements cannot be created simply by changing the name of a department or adding several technical courses.

Without sufficient preparation, professional restructuring can easily become an emergency response to employment anxiety.

Courses might focus narrowly on training students to use the latest tools, while education itself is reduced to preparing for currently available jobs. Though seemingly practical, such reforms risk creating deeper problems: an oversupply of similarly trained graduates, weak foundational knowledge, limited adaptability and a gradual erosion of the university's educational mission.

Introducing a new major does not automatically produce better talent. If universities rush into fashionable fields without understanding their intellectual foundations, required capabilities or real industrial demand, they may simply replace one mismatch with another.

The problem is compounded by the speed of technological change.

Technology often evolves faster than the university education cycle. A field that appears highly promising when students begin their degrees may have changed fundamentally by the time they graduate.

Specific tools may become outdated, and established methods may be replaced by new technological paradigms.

AI should be incorporated throughout teaching and learning. Students should learn to use intelligent tools effectively and responsibly.

Universities that merely chase each new trend could therefore produce graduates who are doubly disadvantaged: lacking the depth of traditional disciplinary education and also unprepared for the next stage of technological change.

Academic reform must therefore involve a deeper redesign of curricula, teaching methods and talent-development models.

Rather than building isolated AI schools or programs, universities should develop strong "AI plus X" platforms. Artificial intelligence should be integrated with engineering, medicine, agriculture, the natural sciences, the humanities and the social sciences. This requires deeper cooperation between departments and breaking down long-standing barriers.

The aim is not to turn every student into an AI specialist but to help students in different fields understand how intelligent technologies can reshape their disciplines, expand their analytical capabilities and solve real-world problems.

Universities also need to strengthen cooperation with businesses, government agencies and research institutions. External partners can provide practical expertise, industrial resources and an understanding of emerging workplace needs.

Such cooperation can help connect the education chain, the talent chain and the industrial chain, reducing the gap between what students learn and what society actually needs.

However, labor-market adaptation should not become the only purpose of universities. No matter how disruptive technology becomes, the fundamental responsibilities of education remain unchanged. Universities must cultivate moral character, foster independent thinking, transmit culture, encourage innovation and support the holistic development of the individual.

Real education reform is not about blindly following technological trends. It requires universities to embrace innovation while maintaining a clear sense of what education is ultimately for.

AI should be incorporated throughout teaching and learning. Students should learn to use intelligent tools effectively and responsibly. But universities must also place human development at the center of education. The more powerful technology becomes, the more important judgment, creativity, ethical responsibility and critical thinking will be.

Universities can adjust their academic structures to meet national and social needs. At the same time, they must preserve the diversity of the academic ecosystem. Not every institution should establish the same programs, pursue the same fashionable disciplines or adopt the same development model.

A wave of identical AI-related programs could lead to a new form of homogenization, in which universities lose their distinctive strengths while competing for the same students, teachers and resources. Higher education needs diversity, not a situation in which every university begins to look the same.

The rise of AI should be seen not merely as a disruption of higher education, but as an opportunity to reshape it.

The primary task for universities is not to create more AI majors, but to reconsider what universities should teach — and how they should teach — in an age when information and technical assistance are increasingly easy to obtain.

Knowledge acquisition alone can no longer define the value of university education. Students must learn how to evaluate knowledge, connect ideas across disciplines, identify meaningful problems and make responsible decisions. They must be able to work with machines without allowing machines to replace their own capacity for thought.

The graduates best prepared for the AI era will not be those who have merely mastered the latest software. They will be those with strong disciplinary foundations, broad humanistic perspectives, the ability to use intelligent tools and the independence to question their outputs.

Preparing such graduates is not only a practical response to employment pressure; it is essential to build a stronger education system and secure the country's long-term development.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

ANDREA RENDA

Symphony, not a solo

The EU can cooperate with China on open-source solutions, and treat AI as a means to achieve sustainable solutions rather than an end in itself



At the opening ceremony of the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai, President Xi Jinping said that "AI development should not be a solo performance by a single country, but a symphony of international cooperation". And the agreement on the establishment of the World AI Cooperation Organization was signed during the meeting. This will address a real challenge. The race for tech sovereignty in the AI sector is fragmenting the global AI landscape to unprecedented levels, to the detriment of innovation and access, especially for developing countries.

AI keeps moving at breathtaking speed, with ever more powerful models topping the charts every week. US labs still lead in multiple aspects, but Chinese open-weight models — DeepSeek, Qwen, GLM and Kimi — have their own edges. In the United States, top labs announce mind-blowing compute investments while companies such as OpenAI and Anthropic chase billionaire initial public offerings to monetize their lead. Four companies have now crossed a $4-trillion valuation, a figure without precedent. The US is rolling back regulation, blocking states from legislating and fast-tracking data centers that increasingly need their own power based on the conviction that it is engaged in an existential race for AI leadership with China.

Michael Kratsios, the US administration's top AI official, has spoken openly of "promoting the export of full-stack US AI technology packages to allies and partners worldwide". At the same time, it is likely that Washington tends to weaponize other countries' AI dependence — on models, the cloud and the advanced GPUs that mostly come from Nvidia. The US' measures on non-US users access to Anthropic's Mythos and Fable 5 have only pushed other countries to double down on their tech-sovereignty plans meant to reduce reliance on single foreign suppliers.

The European Union feels this acutely. Despite years of regulation to force competition and interoperability, dependence on big tech has stayed almost the same. Amazon, Microsoft and Google own almost the entire cloud market; Alibaba gets the crumbs, and European operators barely register.

The European Commission's first answer was to build its own compute — aware that at least 70 percent of global data-center capacity sits in the US and China. In recent years, the EU has announced 19 AI factories, with at least seven "gigafactories" of at least 100,000 advanced GPUs each on the way. But this simply swaps dependence on hyperscalers for dependence on Nvidia: Almost 90 percent of these factories have chosen Nvidia GPUs. This is hardly a win for the EU's tech sovereignty.

The deeper problem is that Europe is chasing the US model — data-hungry, energy-hungry, water-thirsty infrastructure built in the obsessive pursuit of artificial general intelligence, however vaguely defined. Is that what Europe needs? Probably not. European countries don't need the most power-consuming AI; they need stacks fit for real use cases in transport, health, energy, manufacturing, government and finance. For each, the optimal solution rarely looks like a one-size-fits-all gigafactory. Emulating the US model with less money is like "chasing Icarus with smaller wings".

The EU should work together with China to steer AI toward the public interest, the global good and the benefit of humankind.

China offers Europe a more attractive template. Whatever US commentators claim, Beijing is not primarily racing toward AGI. It is leaning on cheaper, more sustainable compute — less advanced GPUs, ordinary CPUs — and deepening its use of open standards to develop solutions that are fit for purpose. Often that means smaller models on smaller data, running centrally or at the edge, sparing needless costs in energy, training, inference and fine-tuning.

This is what Europe, a global industrial powerhouse, should do. The European Commission's Apply AI Strategy points toward this goal — but it comes with almost no dedicated funding. The EU's Tech Sovereignty Package, published on June 3 — comprising two legislative proposals and two strategic frameworks — promises to boost European data capacity at scale in the form of an open-source stack offering secure, high-performing solutions across sectors. If it works, Europe could emerge as a more sovereign AI power, wrapped in a regulatory framework built for fundamental rights, competition, interoperability and sustainability — now being overhauled in the name of genuine simplification.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Will the plan work? It may depend on how the EU adapts its China policy in the face of reality: Europe and China are deeply complementary. Europe depends on China for rare earths and much else; China needs the European market and technologies such as ASML's lithography for advanced chips. Duplicating such unique expertise would waste enormous resources.

No single country can set AI rules for the whole world. It is significant to promote EU-China collaboration that might be exactly the step toward a fairer, more sustainable and more sovereign AI future. The two sides are hardly "like-minded", yet they share strikingly similar perspectives: open-source solutions and the vision of AI as a means to achieve sustainable outcomes rather than an end in itself. China has initiated the establishment of WAICO, a coalition comprising 29 countries; while the EU's 27 member states enjoy privileged collaboration with several leading middle powers.

The EU and China should make deeper AI cooperation a goal — and pursue it with common agendas. Now is the moment to reckon and restart. With quantum AI and a new generation of powerful agents and robots on the horizon, the world cannot afford to wait for alignment to arrive on its own.

The author is the director of the Center for European Policy Studies in Brussels, Belgium. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

XU MINGQI

Protectionist measures could harm EU's interests

Brussels' most effective response to its trade deficit with China should be to collaborate with Beijing to boost exports of goods and services, rather than 'building walls' or 'setting limits'



The European Union recently intensified its implementation of protectionist measures targeting Chinese trade and investment. These actions, including the Foreign Subsidies Regulation, the proposed Industrial Accelerator Act, the NIS 2 Directive and amendments to the Foreign Direct Investment Screening Regulation, echo past United States' accusations that cite China's "overcapacity" and "undervalued renminbi" as grounds for imposing high tariffs and restrictions on Chinese goods. Since 2019, when the EU officially described China as "a partner for cooperation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival", China-EU relations have increasingly been influenced by geopolitical and ideological biases, undermining mutual trust. Economic and trade frictions have been politicized. The previously cooperative and mutually beneficial economic relationship has been misconstrued as a zero-sum game, leading to growing tensions despite shared goals in global governance and multilateralism.

EU policymakers and think tanks have been significantly influenced by US geopolitical and economic strategies regarding China. During his first term, US President Donald Trump adopted aggressive political posturing, imposing high tariffs against China, alongside strict export controls, while aiming for technological decoupling. This escalated China-US geopolitical and economic competition, directly impacting the EU's 2019 shift in its China policy to the "triple positioning" of a cooperation partner, an economic competitor and a systemic rival.

Although the concept of "de-risking" was proposed by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in 2023, its core ideas stem from US initiatives such as supply chain restructuring and "re-coupling", "friend-shoring" and "near-shoring", all aimed at "de-risking" from China. Consequently, "de-risking" has come to represent a coordinated US-EU policy toward China, with the EU aligning itself with the US' sanctions against Chinese tech companies.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

Despite strained US-EU relations during Trump's second term, marked by Washington's many unfriendly policies targeting the EU, political parties within the EU establishment continue to maintain their geopolitical biases. They even echo US justifications for imposing economic pressure on China in their quest for advancing unilateral trade protectionism.

There is no inherent geopolitical competition between the EU and China. Historically, both sides viewed bilateral trade and investment as mutually beneficial, forming the foundation for steadily growing trade relations. According to China's Ministry of Commerce, in 2025, bilateral trade reached $828.1 billion, and in the first half of 2026, the number was $447.88 billion, a 14.2 percent year-on-year increase. EU investments in China have exceeded $150 billion, while Chinese direct investment in the EU has reached $125 billion.

The two sides share consensus on global governance issues such as upholding a United Nations-based international order, climate action, aiding developing countries, maintaining international financial stability, supporting multilateral free trade, combating cross-border crime and tax evasion, and enhancing global health security. However, certain ideological factions within the EU seek to politicize economic differences, undermining the fundamental nature of mutual cooperation and dragging China-US competition into China-EU relations, ultimately harming the EU's interests.

In its trade disputes with the US, China has reciprocated with restrained countermeasures. This has led the US to recognize the futility of unilateral protectionism, resulting in mutual agreements to remove high tariffs and irrational export restrictions. Following Trump's visit to China in May, the two sides established trade and investment councils to discuss bilateral trade and investment issues, fostering a constructive strategic relationship.

If the EU goes ahead with its protectionist measures against China, Beijing would inevitably respond with countermeasures. Given China's effective counterstrategies against the US, the EU could face great challenges. In 2025, China-US bilateral trade saw an 18.7 percent decline, but following a compromise agreement, China's imports from the US rebounded to rapid growth, with year-on-year increases of 20.36 percent and 25.85 percent in May and June, respectively. A similar conflict between China and the EU would disrupt the 8.7 percent growth in Chinese imports from the EU in the first half of 2026.

According to General Administration of Customs, the EU's dependence on the Chinese market is greater than that of the US, with EU exports to China reaching $268.17 billion in 2025, nearly doubling the $139.7 billion of US exports to China. A trade war would inflict greater damage on the EU than it did on the US. Therefore, recognizing the underlying reasons for the declining competitiveness of industries such as automotive and machinery, reforming innovation-stifling regulations and bureaucracy, and encouraging collaboration with Chinese enterprises would be in the EU's long-term best interests.

The EU previously viewed bilateral trade imbalances as a non-issue due to its overall trade surplus. However, recent years have seen a shift in perspective. If the growing trade deficit with China is a concern, the EU can engage in technical negotiations with China to address the imbalance. Accusations of "overcapacity", "subsidies" and "undervalued renminbi", previously used by the US, overlook factors such as declining industrial competitiveness and rising energy prices due to geopolitical tensions, which have accelerated industrial relocation. Resorting to unilateral protectionism for short-term gains is counterproductive. High tariffs imposed by the Trump administration failed to revive uncompetitive US industries, and the EU cannot expect protectionism to safeguard its industries and jobs.

China's Ministry of Commerce has provided scientific explanations regarding "overcapacity", "subsidies" and "undervalued renminbi", urging the EU to understand China's position. China does not accept baseless criticisms of its economic model and industrial policies but acknowledges the EU trade concerns. The ministry reiterated China's stance of not pursuing trade surpluses, committing to increased imports, and emphasizing "constructive dialogue to dispel misunderstandings and address concerns". It is the response to the concerns of the EU that China began to increase its imports from the EU in 2026, reversing the negative growth situation. The year-on-year growth rate in the first half of the year reached 8.7 percent. The most effective policy for the EU to deal with the trade deficit with China is to increase the production and export of goods that still have a comparative advantage, and to cooperate with the Chinese government and enterprises to increase the export of goods and services to China, rather than setting restrictions.

The essence of international trade and investment is to enhance corporate profits and national welfare, while unilateral protectionism is a proved policy mistake.

The author is a researcher of international economics at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and the former president of the Shanghai Institute for European Studies. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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BUSINESS

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Factories set to maintain healthy pace

Boosting consumption will be a leading policy priority in second half

By **ZHANG CHENXU**
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China's manufacturing sector is expected to remain resilient and sustain its expansion in the second half despite a slight moderation in momentum in July, as policymakers step up efforts to bolster domestic demand while ensuring a smooth transition from old growth drivers to new ones, experts said.

Their comments came as the RatingDog China General Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index — which gauges operating conditions in the sector — edged down to 50.9 in July from 51.7 in June, marking a four-month low but remaining above the 50-point mark, that separates expansion from contraction, for an eighth consecutive month, a private survey showed on Monday.

Highlighting the necessity of consolidating the manufacturing sector's expansion momentum, experts said boosting domestic demand will be a key policy priority in the second half, with policy support expected to place greater emphasis on coordinating demand expansion with supply optimization.

Despite the moderation, the survey showed that export activity returned to expansionary territory in July after two consecutive months of contraction, while overall new orders grew for a 14th consecutive month — the longest stretch of gains since 2018 — though the pace of growth slowed from June.

Meanwhile, cost pressures eased further, with input price inflation slowing to a six-month low — signaling that elevated inflationary pressure was being effectively contained — while output prices remained broadly unchanged, the survey said.

"China's manufacturing sector continued to expand in July, though at a slower pace, underpinned by sustained growth in new orders and a further easing of cost pressures," said Yao Yu, founder of RatingDog, adding that renewed growth in new export orders was an encouraging sign.

Looking ahead, manufacturers remain upbeat about output over the next 12 months, with optimism picking up slightly from June on expectations of stronger market demand, new product development and capacity expansion, Yao added.

That optimism, however, came amid lingering pressure on market demand. The official manufacturing PMI fell to 49.2 in July from 50.3 in June, slipping into contraction territory for the first time in five months, while the new orders subindex dropped to 48.5, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Friday.

"The decline mainly reflects still-soft domestic demand, compounded by disruptions from extreme weather," said Xiong Yuan, chief economist at Guosheng Securities, adding that the official reading pointed to continued pressure on the broader economy amid the ongoing transition from old growth drivers to new ones.

At a tone-setting meeting in late July, the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee made arrangements for economic work in the second half, calling for efforts to accelerate the transition from old growth drivers to new ones, step up countercyclical adjustments, expand domestic demand and optimize supply.

"This signals a stronger policy push and a growing sense of urgency to expand domestic demand," said Luo Zhiheng, chief economist and head of the research institute at Yuekai Securities.

Luo expects faster fiscal spending and more efficient use of bond funds — alongside progress on the six major infrastructure networks — to provide a stronger boost to investment and consumption.

Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Orient Golden Credit Rating International, also saw room for additional fiscal and monetary support, and expects a package of pragmatic and effective incremental policies to be introduced around the end of the third quarter.

"By our estimates, there is room to issue an additional 700 billion yuan ($103.7 billion) in local government bonds by year-end, while the central government has greater room for additional borrowing," Wang said.

On the monetary front, Wang projects that the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, could cut policy rates by 10 basis points and lower the reserve requirement ratio by 0.5 percentage point.



Employees work at an auto component company in Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. HE HUAWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Rising demand for RMB trade settlement

By **JIANG XUEQING** in Shanghai
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Singapore's DBS Bank is seeing steadily rising demand for renminbi-denominated trade settlement and financing, as Chinese companies deepen commercial ties with the rest of Asia and the international use of the Chinese currency expands.

China's cross-border interbank payment system, known as CIPS, reflects this trend, with its average daily transaction value rising from about 680 billion yuan ($100.7 billion) in 2025 to roughly 830 billion yuan in June. "This clearly shows that there is greater adoption of RMB for payments to counterparties in China," said Han Kwee Juan, group executive and group head of institutional banking at DBS Bank.



Han Kwee Juan

Demand for offshore renminbi has also surged in the dim sum bond market. As of June 22, issuances of dim sum bonds had reached nearly 820 billion yuan this year, up 47 percent from a year earlier, according to market tracker Wind Info. The growing appetite for offshore RMB financing underscores rising demand for cross-border payments into China, Han said.

DBS has seen more corporate clients choosing to settle trade transactions in RMB, particularly through CIPS. Increasingly, overseas companies are asking the bank to facilitate RMB payments to their Chinese counterparties, reflecting broader acceptance of the currency in regional trade.

The bank has also expanded its RMB financing business. DBS China recently joined three other banks in providing an 8-billion-yuan leveraged buyout facility to support the privatization of ANE Group from the Hong Kong stock exchange, using a strategic seven-year term loan structured under the free trade non-resident account framework.

Han attributed the growing international use of the RMB to expanding trade between China and the rest of Asia. As trade volumes rise, more Chinese exporters are requesting overseas customers to settle transactions in RMB where possible, a trend he expects to continue.

With operations spanning the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Singapore, DBS is positioning itself to facilitate cross-border capital and trade flows across the region. The bank is seeing particularly strong demand to connect financial flows between China and Singapore, as well as between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations economies.

Trade and investment between China and ASEAN continue to strengthen. "We do see the strength of the Chinese economy and manufacturing in data centers and AI infrastructure, together with EVs, and all these will contribute to create a flow of trade and investments between China and ASEAN. And we think that trend will continue for the next few years," Han said.

Greater offshore RMB liquidity — supported by record dim sum bond issuance and the availability of the Chinese currency through free trade non-resident accounts — is also making it easier for companies to finance trade and investment with China, he added.

Han said Chinese companies are increasingly well positioned to export technology and expertise to ASEAN markets, particularly in electric vehicles and large-scale battery storage. Regional demand for these technologies is expected to support deeper economic integration.

He also said China's economic transition is progressing as policymakers intended.

"We're seeing great growth in the area of high-tech manufacturing, EVs and renewables, as well as in the area of AI infrastructure. All these are contributing to the growth that we're seeing," he said.

Taipingling plant boosts power output

By **ZHENG XIN**
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Unit 2 of the Taipingling Nuclear Power Plant in South China's Guangdong province officially began generating electricity on Monday, marking the full completion and operation of Phase I of the first "Hualong One" third-generation nuclear power project in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Operated by China General Nuclear Power Group, the milestone signals a major step forward for the region's green energy transition, delivering stable, low-carbon baseload power to the country's southern economic powerhouse.

Based on the average utilization hours of domestic nuclear power plants in 2025, the two units of Phase I are projected to generate more than 18 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, said CGN.

This massive output is sufficient to meet the annual production and living electricity demands of nearly 2 million people, while reducing carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 16.63 million metric tons each year, delivering substantial environmental benefits, it said.

The announcement came after China greenlit 8 new nuclear reactors last week, accelerating its atomic energy expansion and cementing its dominance in the global push for next-generation clean energy.



View of the Taipingling Nuclear Power Plant in South China's Guangdong province. XINHUA

Six of the new reactors will employ the domestically designed Hualong One, China's third-generation nuclear power technology with full intellectual property rights. It is also one of the most widely accepted series of third-generation nuclear power reactors in the world.

As the inaugural batch of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, these projects set a definitive tone for China's energy blueprint during the most critical window for its climate commitments, said Li Jinkai, a distinguished professor at the School of Economics at the Beijing Institute of Technology.

China's nuclear power construction has entered a stage of large-scale, batched and normalized development, he said.

Located in Huizhou, the Taipingling project received official national approval in April 2019, with construction of Unit 2 breaking ground in October 2020.

A single Hualong One unit generates nearly 10 billion kWh of electricity annually, saving over 3 million tons of standard coal. Furthermore, its research and construction have integrated a complete supply chain of nearly 6,000 upstream and downstream enterprises, effectively steering the upgrading of China's manufacturing industry, according to CGN.

According to the National Energy Administration, the country's nuclear power generation reached approximately 467 billion kWh in 2025, while completed investment in nuclear power engineering hit a record 161 billion yuan ($23.84 billion) last year, with five approved projects featuring private capital participation.

Private companies are also becoming a vital force in energy technology innovation. In 2025, all 10 approved nuclear power units introduced private capital, with private shareholding reaching up to 20 percent.

According to the 15th five-year plan for new power system construction, jointly released by the National Development and Reform Commission and the NEA, China will vastly expand its clean energy capacity across a diverse portfolio by 2030, including nuclear power.

Landmark green energy shipment by Chinese firm

By **ZHENG XIN**

China's green fuel sector achieved a historic milestone last week as a vessel carrying 3,750 metric tons of green ammonia set sail from Lianyungang Port in East China's Jiangsu province bound for South Korea, marking the nation's largest single-batch export of the zero-carbon energy to date.

Produced by State Power Investment Corp, the shipment represents the first time Chinese green fuel has gained international market recognition based on its full lifecycle carbon reduction contributions.

The delivery signifies that China's entire wind-solar-hydrogen-ammonia industrial chain has officially upgraded from technical demonstration to large-scale international commercial delivery, the company said.

Completed and commissioned in July 2025, the green energy-producing facility is supported by 800,000 kilowatts of installed renewable energy capacity. It stands as the world's largest single-unit green ammonia plant with an annual output capacity of 32,000 tons of green hydrogen and 180,000 tons of green ammonia, it said.

Long utilized as a vital component in fertilizers, ammonia is now gaining traction as a viable low-carbon fuel for the shipping industry. However, conventional ammonia is largely produced using coal and natural gas, which fails to take advantage of its green-energy potential.

Meanwhile, green ammonia — made using renewable power — offers a zero-carbon alternative, but its growth has been hampered by high technology costs and a spatial gap between where renewable energy is generated and where fuel demand is located.

Industry experts believe that through proprietary core technologies and authoritative international certifications, Chinese-made green ammonia products are now officially becoming deeply embedded in the global green fuel supply chain.

"The expansion from technical demonstration to commercial export, and from product supply to standard-setting, demonstrates that this 3,750-ton export shipment does not merely represent a cross-border delivery of green fuel," said Lin Boqiang, director of the China Center for Energy Economics Research at Xiamen University.

"The international market's endorsement of Chinese products based on their lifecycle carbon reduction fully demonstrates the core global competitiveness of China's clean energy capabilities, industrial standards and development paradigms."

Lin said the country's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality before 2060 is driving growing momentum around low-carbon ammonia, particularly through pilot projects targeted at supplying green fuel to the shipping sector.

Producing and consuming roughly one-third of the world's ammonia supply — and home to some of the globe's busiest ports and shipping corridors — China is uniquely positioned to lead the deployment of clean marine fuels, he added.

Its independently developed "green power-hydrogen-ammonia" flexible coordinated control system has successfully tackled a major global technical challenge — namely, reconciling the intermittent and fluctuating nature of wind and solar power with the continuous stability required for the production of green chemicals.

State Power Investment Corp said that compared with traditional coal-based synthetic ammonia produced in China, the 3,750 tons of green ammonia bound for South Korea will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 10,000 tons across its entire lifecycle — an environmental benefit equivalent to the annual carbon absorption of approximately 1 million trees.

The shipment comes as global demand for traceable and verifiable green fuels continues to climb.

Possessing a dual identity as both a clean fuel and a green industrial feedstock, green ammonia is rapidly becoming a vital commodity in the global low-carbon transition, the company added.

Briefly

Marine economy posts steady growth in H1

China's gross ocean product reached 5.5 trillion yuan ($810.09 billion) in the first half of 2026, up 5.1 percent year-on-year, according to data released by the Ministry of Natural Resources. The amount accounted for 7.9 percent of the country's gross domestic product, the ministry said, noting that the marine economy is experiencing steady growth with a positive development momentum.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the yuan weakened 19 pips to 6.7917 against the US dollar on Tuesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

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BUSINESS

Marine tourism boom fires up summer travel

Integrated fishery resorts, coastal leisure consumption spur marine economy



Top: An aerial image shows Genghai No 1, the country's first integrated intelligent large-scale ecological marine ranch complex, in Yantai, Shandong province. Genghai No 1 was built with a total investment of about $62.2 million.
TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY



Left: A tourist (center), guided by professional instructors, enjoys scuba diving in Sanya, Hainan province, on July 30.
WANG CHENGLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

JINAN — At 9 am, a passenger ferry departs on schedule from a wharf in East China and arrives minutes later at a giant flower-shaped offshore structure over the sea.

The complex combines marine ranching with tourism under an innovative "blue granary" model, offering visitors an immersive experience including fish viewing, ecology sessions and virtual-reality movies.

Named Genghai No 1, the integrated facility beyond the Fisherman's Wharf in the city of Yantai, East China's Shandong province, was built with a total investment of 420 million yuan ($62.2 million).

Wang, a visitor from Jinan, capital of Shandong, joined the "Little Ocean Steward" program with her daughter. She fed fish in offshore cages, observed the harvesting process and learned about marine ecology through guided demonstrations.

"Taking my daughter to the seaside used to mean playing on the beach," Wang said. "Now she can learn about the ocean while seeing firsthand how technology is transforming modern aquaculture."

China boasts abundant marine resources with 18,000 kilometers of mainland coastline and another 14,000 km of island coastline, according to official data.

During the peak summer travel season, coastal destinations across the country are rolling out diverse marine tourism experiences, underscoring the growing vitality of China's marine economy.

According to the operator of Genghai No 1, the complex has grown into an offshore resort integrating modern aquaculture, marine tourism, scientific research, public education, dining and accommodation.

Equipped with a "5G+ marine ranch" smart management system, it produces 150,000 kilograms of premium seawater fish annually and welcomes more than 150,000 visitor trips each year.

Similar tourism-driven growth is surging in many places along China's coastline.

In Zhelin Bay of Raoping county, South China's Guangdong province, the Xi'ao fishery-tourism platform, covering more than 3,000 square meters, features specialty restaurants, a seaside cafe, starry-sky cabins and boutique seaview guestrooms.

At the ocean pastoral fishery tourism park on Nanji Island in East China's Zhejiang province, visitors stroll along suspended floating walkways above the sea and enjoy recreational fishing.

In Haitang Bay of Sanya, South China's Hainan province, night fishing has emerged as a new coastal scenario combining sightseeing, cuisine and social interaction. The local "night fishing plus dining" projects have lifted the nighttime departure rate of recreational fishing yachts from less than 30 percent to more than 95 percent.

> "The ocean is a foundational resource and an emerging market for the modern tourism industry, as well as a new strategic space for China's efforts to build itself into a world-leading tourism destination."
>
> **Dai Bin,** president of the China Tourism Academy

The diversification of marine tourism has extended leisure activities well into the evening, and driven a rise in demand for related industries, including water sports equipment.

At Hetong (Weihai) Sporting Goods Co Ltd in the city of Weihai in Shandong, production lines are operating at full capacity as workers rush to complete a batch of inflatable paddleboards destined for overseas markets.

"The popularity of water sports tourism has fueled strong order growth," said Wang Yongfeng, the company's general manager. "Our shipments exceeded 90,000 paddleboard sets in the first half of the year, up 150 percent year-on-year."

Liu Zhiqing, deputy general manager of Weihai Heliyuan Carbon Fiber Technology Co Ltd, said the company's production capacity in 2026 has expanded three to four times compared with previous years, with water sports equipment now accounting for 55 to 60 percent of its total carbon fiber sales.

According to the Ministry of Natural Resources, China's gross ocean product exceeded 11 trillion yuan in 2025, up 5.5 percent year-on-year and accounting for 7.9 percent of the country's GDP.

Against this backdrop, China is cultivating the marine economy, including marine tourism, as a new growth engine.

Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy, said, "The ocean is a foundational resource and an emerging market for the modern tourism industry, as well as a new strategic space for China's efforts to build itself into a world-leading tourism destination."

He called for stronger market connectivity, industrial cooperation and policy coordination to build a coordinated marine tourism landscape featuring closer land-sea integration and differentiated regional development.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

Themed tourist trains on faster growth track, driven by demand surge

BEIJING — Passengers boarding a themed sightseeing train in the eastern Chinese city of Fuzhou, Fujian province, last week stepped into a carriage that felt more like a classical Chinese garden.

Decorated with local bamboo and tea elements and Song Dynasty (960-1279)-inspired interiors, the train running through Wuyishan National Park turns the journey itself into a unique cultural experience.

This train is part of a broader boom in an emerging train-plus tourism model, in which railway operators combine transportation with sightseeing, cultural experiences and entertainment to meet a growing appetite for immersive, hassle-free vacations.

In Shangrao, East China's Jiangxi province, a tourist train brings local culture onboard through live performances and interactive theatrical experiences. "Since entering service in late April, the train has maintained an occupancy rate of more than 90 percent," said Qin Zhonghao, head of the operator's sightseeing train business.

Official data support this trend. China operated 1,797 tourist trains in the first half of the year, nearly doubling the 972 trains during the same period of 2025, according to the national railway operator China State Railway Group. Railway operators also launched 445 themed trains tailored for concerts, sporting events, exhibitions and other activities.

The rising buzz around tourist trains highlights just how quickly new ways to experience travel are taking off in China's service sector.

The country's recently released five-year plan for expanding consumption calls for fostering new business models and consumption scenarios centered on improving consumer experiences. In the first half of the year, service retail sales rose 5.3 percent year-on-year, far outpacing the 1.1 percent growth in goods retail sales.

Against this backdrop, industry experts believe a train ticket is no longer merely a means of transportation. Instead, it is now a gateway to a wider tourism ecosystem, linking travelers to fresh experiences and opening up new opportunities for spending on travel-related services.

When the Northeast China Football League tournament kicked off in May, the local railway operator introduced dedicated fan trains offering one-stop travel packages that combined match tickets with sightseeing opportunities.

"To watch the opening ceremony, three friends and I traveled from Tongliao in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region on a fan train," said Wang Lei, a football fan. "Besides the matches, we also had time to visit Shenyang Imperial Palace, Xingshun night market and Beishichang cultural district, all places I had wanted to explore. The trip was definitely worthwhile."

In Northwest China's Shaanxi province, the local railway operator has launched more than 70 themed tourist trains this year featuring study tours, wellness trips and flower-viewing excursions. Developed jointly with tourism authorities, the travel packages integrate round-trip rail tickets with admission to scenic spots, hotel stays, cruises, cultural performances, shuttle transportation and onboard cultural activities.



Passengers pose for photos inside a steampunk garden-themed carriage of the Tianjin Fantasy Express on July 29. SUN FANYUE / XINHUA

"In the past, passengers bought a point-to-point train ticket. Today, they're buying a complete travel experience," said Hui Lixia, deputy director of the passenger transport department at China Railway Xi'an Group Co Ltd.

By giving transportation an even bigger role in tourism, this trend encourages the development of local tourism resources and helps convert passenger flows into broader consumer spending, said Zhang Linshan, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research under the National Development and Reform Commission.

Looking ahead, policymakers see further room for growth. In June, multiple authorities, including the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and China State Railway Group, jointly issued a guideline to promote the integration of railways and tourism, with the goal of developing more than 160 dedicated tourist trains nationwide by 2030.

Experts said they believe the next stage of development will require a wider range of products at different prices to meet increasingly diverse consumer needs.

Wang Jia, an associate professor at the School of Tourism, Nanchang University, called for closer collaboration among rail operators, travel agencies, hotels, scenic attractions and cultural businesses.

With improved themed services and deepened cooperation with the tourism sector, the train-plus tourism model will inject fresh momentum into China's summer economy and its rapidly expanding services consumption, analysts said.

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CHINA

Intl tai chi contest



Polina Sapunkova, 19, from Russia, competes in a tai chi single fan competition during the 8th Chenjiagou International Chen-Style Tai Chi Championship in Chenjiagou village, Jiaozuo, Henan province, on Monday. The championship, held from Saturday to Wednesday in the birthplace of Chen-style tai chi, brought together nearly 1,000 participants from home and abroad. The event aimed to promote the legacy of Chinese traditional culture through martial arts. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Disaster prevention stepped up

New plan highlights entire risk zones in addressing increasing geological threats

By LI MENGHAN
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Facing increasingly severe geological disaster threats, China will accelerate a shift in risk management from individual hazard points to entire risk zones while advancing precise and intelligent prevention to minimize casualties and property losses, according to a new five-year plan released by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The implementation plan for national geological disaster prevention and control during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30) comes as extreme rainfall increasingly triggers sudden, clustered and cascading disasters in areas outside traditional high-risk zones, exposing the limitations of point-based prevention.

Despite significant progress in recent years, China's geological disaster prevention and control situation remains severe. By the end of 2025, nearly 280,000 geological disaster hazard points had been registered nationwide, threatening 11.48 million people and property worth more than 760 billion yuan ($112.54 billion), according to the ministry.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), deaths from geological disasters fell by 52 percent and direct economic losses dropped by 38 percent compared with the previous five-year period. The country also made significant advances in disaster prevention technology by deploying more than 75,000 automated monitoring and early warning devices and piloting comprehensive remote-sensing identification of geological disasters.

However, China's diverse terrain, complex geological conditions and active tectonic and seismic activity, combined with varied climate types, frequent extreme weather and intensive engineering activities, make geological disasters frequent and recurrent, said Yang Xudong, a senior engineer at the ministry's geological disaster technical guidance center.

Geological disasters are also difficult to predict because of their concealed nature, tendency to recur and sudden onset, Yang said, adding that prevention remains the key to reducing disaster risks.

Yang said China's geological disaster prevention has entered a third stage.

"The previous two stages — whether relying on traditional community-based monitoring and professional surveys or on large-scale, high-precision remote sensing and widespread monitoring instruments — focused on hazard points with visible deformation signs," Yang said.

"The new stage directly addresses mass shallow landslides and debris flows triggered by extreme rainfall, which often show no warning signs and typically occur during the heaviest rainfall. Traditional methods have difficulty identifying and predicting such disasters," he said.

To address the new challenges, the plan outlines seven major tasks for the next five years, including dynamic surveys, monitoring upgrades and comprehensive governance. It calls for more than 4,200 engineering treatment projects, over 6,100 hazard elimination projects and the relocation of 50,000 households.

Dual management of both hazard points and risk zones will be implemented in 1,206 key counties, cities and districts across 17 priority provinces, with management lists and accountability systems established for each area.

The plan also designates 21 key prevention zones, up from 16 during the 14th Five-Year Plan period. The zones cover about 2.97 million square kilometers for landslides, rockfalls, debris flows and ground subsidence, as well as 280,000 sq km for ground settlement and earth fissures.

Newly designated prevention zones include the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo River hydropower project area, high-altitude long-distance disaster chain regions and the Yanshan-Taihang Mountain region. The plan also further refines traditional high-susceptibility areas, including the southeastern hilly regions and the southwestern mountainous regions.

The plan emphasizes improving the precision and intelligence of geological disaster prevention. It calls for detailed surveys at a 1:10,000 scale in key towns located in extremely high- and high-risk areas and promotes the application of technologies such as artificial intelligence and digital twins to improve hazard identification and early warning.

"These changes represent a major upgrade in prevention thinking," Yang said. "The shift reflects the scientific recognition that under extreme conditions, some disasters remain beyond prevention with existing technology."

He said future disaster prevention will rely more on scientific risk assessment, precise early warning and broad public participation to enhance disaster prevention awareness across society.

Seminar stresses intl cooperation to fight terrorism

By FANG AIQING in Yining, Xinjiang and **MAO WEIHUA** in Urumqi

The International Seminar on Counter-Terrorism 2026 opened on Tuesday in Yining, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, drawing about 100 officials and scholars from 24 countries and regional organizations, including the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Russia and the African Union.

Under the theme "Addressing New Challenges of Terrorism: Strengthening State Responsibilities and Fostering International Synergy", the event highlighted the need for shared commitment, state responsibility and international cooperation.

Supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Xinjiang regional government, the seminar was organized by the region's foreign affairs office, the Institute of Chinese Borderland Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the World Muslim Communities Council.

Zhai Jun, the special envoy of the Chinese government on the Middle East issue, said global terrorist activities have resurged, with attacks becoming more complex, diverse, technology-driven and organized. The Middle East, Africa and South Asia have been among the regions most severely affected, while countries in the Global South are facing mounting pressure, he said.

Zhai said counterterrorism efforts should be integrated with conflict reduction, poverty alleviation, bridging civilizational divides and promoting political dialogue, with the United Nations playing a central coordinating role. He added that China has provided — and will continue to provide — public goods to strengthen international counterterrorism capacity-building. He also called for stronger governance of emerging technologies to prevent their misuse by terrorist groups.

Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi, chairman of the Defense Affairs, Interior and Foreign Affairs Committee of the UAE Federal National Council and chairman of the World Muslim Communities Council, described terrorism as a common enemy of humanity and said no country can confront the challenge alone. Defeating terrorism requires unity and a comprehensive approach that combines financial, political, military, educational and ideological measures.

Al Nuaimi said both China and the UAE have made significant progress in addressing the root causes of terrorism, offering a prevention-oriented and holistic approach that respects international law. He emphasized the importance of education in promoting coexistence, peace and national identity.

Drawing on his visits to Xinjiang, he said all levels of government and local communities have actively participated in countering extremism, safeguarding security and promoting prosperity.

Xu Guixiang, secretary of the leading Communist Party of China members group of Xinjiang's foreign affairs office, said the region once experienced multiple terrorist attacks and violent incidents but has not seen such cases for nearly a decade after years of sustained efforts.

He said that terrorist forces abroad continue to infiltrate through online and cross-border activities, and that social stability remains a top priority. Xu reiterated Xinjiang's resolve to crush any terrorist plots in accordance with the law, while adjusting tactics as appropriate to balance public convenience with stability.

Xu added that Xinjiang will deepen cooperation under the frameworks of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS and the China-Central Asia mechanism in areas including risk assessment, cyberspace governance, joint exercises and coordinated operations.

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Chinese silk went westward 4,000 years ago: Study

By LI MENGHAN
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An international research team has discovered that China's domesticated silkworms reached Central Asia nearly 4,000 years ago — almost two millennia before the Silk Road — challenging the conventional narrative of how silk spread across the ancient world and reshaping our understanding of early globalization across Eurasia.

The findings are based on three dried silkworm cocoons and mulberry wood remains excavated at Sapalli Tepe, a Bronze Age site in southern Uzbekistan, by Chinese and Uzbek researchers during fieldwork between 2017 and 2019. The study, conducted by scientists from six institutions in China, Uzbekistan, Germany and the United States, was published in the journal Science Advances on July 23.

Silkworm domestication and silk production technologies originated in ancient China, with genomic and archaeological evidence tracing their origins to between 8,500 and 5,000 years ago. However, when and how Chinese silk first spread beyond the country's borders has long been debated. Many scholars have assumed that its westward transmission could not have begun before the Han Dynasty, the era during which the Silk Road was established.

The new study challenges that long-held view.

"Through protein analysis, we identified the three cocoons as belonging to the domesticated silkworm species Bombyx mori, which cannot survive without human care and mulberry leaves, and dated them to roughly 4,000 years ago," said Xia Qingyou, the study's corresponding author and a professor at Southwest University in Chongqing.

Zhou Xinying, a researcher at the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences who led the study, said the team discovered not only silkworm cocoons but also evidence of mulberry cultivation.

"This means that communities in Central Asia had begun producing silk long before the opening of the Silk Road, demonstrating that this uniquely Chinese invention spread far beyond its homeland," Zhou said.

Soil samples from Sapalli Tepe yielded the three cocoons alongside thousands of plant remains. Scanning electron microscopy revealed fiber structures consistent with Bombyx mori cocoons. The ancient fibers were notably finer than those of modern domesticated or wild silkworms, suggesting they represented an earlier stage of domestication.

Shen Hui, an associate researcher at the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, said mulberry charcoal was found at all three sites the researchers excavated — Sapalli Tepe, Djarkutan and Molleli in Uzbekistan.

"The proportion of mulberry charcoal increased from 10 percent at Sapalli Tepe to 60 percent at Molleli, indicating that mulberry cultivation expanded over time," Shen said.

The team also identified citrus wood, a plant native to the southeastern Himalayas, further supporting links between Central Asia and South Asia, Shen added.

By compiling archaeological records of mulberry across Asia, the researchers proposed that China's sericulture tradition spread along the southern slopes of the Himalayas before reaching Central Asia, rather than through the better-known northern Silk Road corridors.

"This discovery places sericulture within a broader wave of early globalization alongside the spread of millet, wheat, livestock and metallurgy between China, Central Asia and South Asia during the third and second millennia BC," Zhou said.

"It shows that nearly 4,000 years ago, communities across Eurasia were already connected through networks of shared knowledge and technologies — far earlier than previously believed," he added.

The researchers said the findings also raise new questions about whether diverse forms of sericulture existed across Bronze Age Asia.

Hainan hosts workshop on Global South farming

By CHEN BOWEN in Haikou
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An Egyptian participant presents date palm products to attendees during the FAO workshop in Haikou, Hainan province, on Monday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

More than 40 government officials, agricultural experts and development partners gathered in Hainan province on Monday for a United Nations-backed workshop on tropical agriculture, highlighting China's growing role in sharing agricultural technologies and expertise to support sustainable farming across the Global South.

The six-day workshop, organized under the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization's One Country One Priority Product initiative and co-hosted by the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences, focuses on sustainable production, post-harvest management, value addition and market access for tropical specialty crops. Participants are also visiting research facilities in Hainan to explore practical applications of agricultural technologies.

Launched by the FAO in 2021, the OCOP initiative encourages countries to develop one priority agricultural product with comparative advantages while strengthening sustainable value chains through technology sharing and international cooperation. The initiative now includes 94 participating countries, 60 of them tropical nations.

"OCOP is not simply about promoting a product," said Yurdi Yasmi, director of FAO's Plant Production and Protection Division. "It is about helping countries transform local potential into sustainable development outcomes. It connects innovation with farmers, knowledge with action, and partnerships with impact."

For many delegates, the discussions centered on practical technologies that could help address production bottlenecks back home.

Egypt, which produces more than 2 million metric tons of dates annually across 60 varieties, is looking to adopt AI-powered optical sorting equipment and advanced packaging technologies to improve quality and competitiveness, said Amgad Ahmed Mohamed Elkady, executive general manager of the Food and Agro Industries Technology Center under Egypt's Technology and Industrial Innovation Centers.

Cambodia, meanwhile, hopes to strengthen cooperation on pest management and production standards to expand overseas markets for its mango industry.

"We have to boost smallholder development and explore new overseas markets — that's a major challenge," said Hun Darin, fruit crop expert officer, general directorate of Agronomy, Cambodia. "We are seeking collaboration via OCOP and China's South-South programs to carry out joint pest prevention and train local farmers."

The workshop also showcases China's broader approach to agricultural cooperation, which increasingly emphasizes technology transfer and long-term capacity building.

Through the FAO-China South-South Cooperation Programme, China has shared expertise drawn from its own agricultural transformation — from subsistence farming to technology-driven, market-oriented production — to help partner countries strengthen their agricultural systems.

The approach has already delivered tangible results.

Under previous FAO South-South projects, Chinese mango, banana and pineapple technologies boosted fruit yields by 50 to 300 percent in Sri Lanka, while training over 2,200 farmers. In the Republic of the Congo, high-yield cassava varieties and processing lines tripled output. In the Maldives, green biocontrol techniques helped save coconut forests from devastating pests, according to You Wen, deputy director of CATAS' international cooperation division.

"Hainan is ready to share its tropical agricultural practices as a model case for South-South cooperation," said Lu Sheng, deputy director-general of the province's agriculture department. "We are working with global partners to explore new pathways for green development of specialty products."

Alue Dohong, FAO assistant director-general and regional representative for Asia and the Pacific, praised the collaboration with leading regional science partners as instrumental to OCOP's success.

The workshop, which runs through Saturday, is expected to identify new areas for technical cooperation and future partnerships among participating countries, further expanding collaboration on sustainable tropical agriculture across the Global South.

Perfect launch



A Long March 8A carrier rocket blasts off from the Hainan commercial spacecraft launch site in Wenchang, Hainan province, on Tuesday, successfully placing a batch of satellites into their preset orbits. ZHANG MAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

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POLICY REVIEW

Dedicated plan aims to up consumption

Targets include growing middle income, services, tech-driven retail

By WANG KEJU
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SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

China has unveiled its first-ever national-level five-year plan specifically dedicated to expanding consumption, setting a target of 60 trillion yuan ($8.3 trillion) in total retail sales of consumer goods by 2030 as a major part of the push to rebalance the economy toward domestic demand-driven growth.

On July 13, the State Council, China's Cabinet, approved the plan for expanding consumption during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, placing greater emphasis on boosting services consumption and enhancing household income and social security.

China's retail sales surpassed 50.1 trillion yuan in 2025, authorities from the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Commerce said when elaborating on the plan.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, consumption expenditure contributed an average of 58.8 percent to economic growth, 10 percentage points higher than the previous five-year period, they added.

However, authorities acknowledged that the consumption sector still faces challenges, which objectively constrain the further unleashing of consumption potential.

The latest plan marks a major shift in how policymakers approach consumption. Rather than treating it as a short-term tool, the plan positions consumption as a core pillar of China's medium- to long-term development strategy, according to Teng Tai, director of the WANB New Economy Institute, a Beijing-based think tank.

"Expanding consumption is not simply about stimulating terminal demand — it is a systemic transformation covering income and structure, demand and supply," Teng said, adding that the 60-trillion-yuan target is "pragmatic and prudent", leaving room for potential economic fluctuations.

The plan implies an average annual real growth rate of about 4 percent in retail sales over the next five years, a figure economists say reflects realistic expectations given the current economic environment.

The plan's 28 measures are organized around six strategic pillars: upgrading service consumption, expanding goods consumption, creating new consumption scenarios and business models, enhancing household spending capacity, optimizing the consumption environment, and strengthening institutional mechanisms.

At the top of the list is service consumption, a category that, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, accounted for 46.1 percent of household spending last year and is seen as the next frontier for consumption growth.

The plan calls for expanded access to elderly care, childcare, cultural tourism and health services, reflecting the government's recognition that China's aging population and changing consumer preferences demand a reorientation of supply.

New consumption hot spots are rapidly emerging across China, and service retail sales growth has consistently outpaced goods retail, making service consumption the main driver of consumption growth, said Dong Yu, executive vice-president of Tsinghua University's China Institute for Development Planning.

"This deployment will strongly propel China's service consumption into a more diversified, integrated and quality-oriented development stage," Dong said. "It will better meet the demand for high-quality living while promoting high-quality and efficient development of the service sector, injecting new momentum and vitality into economic growth."

The plan also specifically addresses new business formats and models, including digital consumption, green consumption, the debut economy, experiential consumption and inbound consumption. The plan includes the further expansion of visa-free entry, increased direct international flights, specifically to Europe, the United States and countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, and an overhaul of payment and tax-refund systems to remove friction for foreign tourists.

Chen Lifen, a researcher at the Development Research Center of the State Council, said that with a population of over 1.4 billion and a middle-income group exceeding 400 million, China's consumption upgrading space remains immense.

Against a backdrop of rising external uncertainties and slowing growth in traditional goods consumption, cultivating new business formats, models and scenarios as consumption growth points is essential to converting potential market space into actual market scale, Chen said.

"This can continuously expand consumption growth and help the economy navigate challenges with steady progress," Chen added.

The plan devotes significant attention to household income and social security — the foundational drivers of consumption. It calls for raising minimum wages, expanding individual income tax deductions, and increasing pension and healthcare protection to put more money in people's pockets.

Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank, said the key is the "substantive implementation" of the urban and rural resident income growth plan, which was outlined in this year's Government Work Report as a priority.

"People need to have money in their hands and confidence in their future," Wen said, adding that improving the social safety net will help reduce precautionary saving and encourage households to spend.

The plan also embraces the role of technology in reshaping consumption. It explicitly calls for deepening "AI plus consumption" integration, supporting the development of debut economy events, and cultivating immersive, experience-driven consumption scenarios.

"Digital technologies such as AI, the Internet of Things and virtual reality are not only generating new products and services like smart wearables and instant retail, but are fundamentally reshaping consumption scenes and interaction patterns," said Fu Yifu, a researcher at Jiangsu Su Merchants Bank.

According to a report on changing consumer behavior released last October by US media services company Omnicom Media Group, 65 percent of consumers now expect to find the answers they are looking for in artificial intelligence overviews.

"We clearly observe this trend through monitoring click streams, sessions and conversations on our platform," said Diarmuid Gill, chief technology officer of global commerce media company Criteo, noting that the application of AI is currently focused on the product discovery and price comparison stages, with the final consumer decision-making phase remaining underdeveloped.

As AI has become an important part of the consumer shopping journey, businesses need to deploy AI agent-driven marketing strategies promptly to capitalize on this critical growth opportunity, Gill added.

'Six networks' infrastructure strategy angles for investment

By WANG KEJU

China is accelerating a sweeping infrastructure plan centered on six interconnected networks — water, power, computing, telecommunications, urban pipelines and logistics, in a bid to stabilize investment, create jobs and lay the groundwork for the next phase of the country's technological and industrial transformation.

Premier Li Qiang chaired a State Council executive meeting on July 20 to review progress on the "six networks" plan, which was first unveiled in March and has since become a key part of Beijing's strategy to counter economic headwinds.

Prior to the meeting, China released its first-half economic data showing that fixed-asset investment contracted 5.7 percent year-on-year in the first six months of 2026 to 22.64 trillion yuan ($3.1 trillion), as a deepening property sector downturn continues to weigh on broader investment activities.

China vowed late last year to halt the investment downturn, following a 3.8 percent contraction in fixed-asset investment in 2025.

The meeting called for "systematic advancement" of the networks, faster implementation tailored to local conditions, and stronger funding support.

The plan is backed by massive financial firepower. The National Development and Reform Commission estimates that investment in the six networks and related key areas will exceed 7 trillion yuan this year alone.

Over the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030), cumulative investment is projected at 20 trillion to 25 trillion yuan, the commission said. "Just three of the networks — water, power and urban pipelines — will see combined investment exceeding 16 trillion yuan during the 15th Five-Year Plan period," it added.

"This is not just about expanding effective investment," said Luo Zhiheng, chief economist and head of the research institute at Yuekai Securities. "It is a strategic move to cultivate new quality productive forces and shape future competitive advantages."

Luo said that the networks of water, pipelines and logistics provide "foundational support" for the physical economy, while networks of computing power, communications and the smart grid serve as "innovation engines" that will enable artificial intelligence, green energy and digital transformation.

To back the plan, the government has already allocated 755 billion yuan in central budget investment and 1 trillion yuan in ultra-long special treasury bonds for this year, with disbursement largely completed by the end of June. An additional 800 billion yuan in new policy-based financial instruments is being deployed.

Zheng Shanjie, head of the National Development and Reform Commission, hosted a private sector symposium on June 16 to solicit input on the six-networks plan, emphasizing that the initiative offers "major opportunities" for businesses to expand markets, increase investment and drive innovation.

"We will open competitive infrastructure sectors fairly to all market players and improve mechanisms for private companies to participate in major projects," Zheng said.

Policy Digest

Data privacy rules to be eased for small entities

China is simplifying data privacy requirements for small entities, with new provisions released by the Cyberspace Administration of China and the Ministry of Public Security. Taking effect on Sept 1, the provisions aim to lower compliance costs for startups and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

An official with the CAC said the move represents an important step in implementing the country's Personal Information Protection Law. The provisions apply to any entity or individual that processes the personal information of fewer than 100,000 people.

The document sets out simplified measures concerning personal information processing rules and the fulfillment of protection obligations, while also specifying requirements for supervision and administration.

It supports enterprises, social organizations and professional institutions by strengthening their protection capabilities through training, lectures, legal awareness activities and consultation.

Government departments responsible for personal information protection are also encouraged to provide small entities with infrastructure, technological tools and consultation services for secure and convenient information processing, helping further reduce compliance costs.

Eldercare professional qualification system set up

China has established its first official professional qualification system for eldercare service professionals, marking a major step forward in the nation's strategy of addressing its rapidly aging population.

Approved by the State Council, the provisional regulations were jointly issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security. The framework sets standardized guidelines for professional examinations, core competencies, and official registration across home, community and institutional care settings.

It has junior, intermediate and senior qualifications. Junior and intermediate candidates will take nationally unified examinations, while rules for senior professionals will be formulated separately. The passing score for each subject is generally 60 percent, and successful candidates will receive paper and electronic certificates.

Junior professionals should possess basic knowledge and skills, help assess older people's conditions, and provide care and rehabilitation services. Intermediate professionals should be able to devise care plans, train eldercare workers, offer consultation, connect resources and make referrals.

Blueprint lays out goals for green energy development

China's National Development and Reform Commission and the National Energy Administration released the country's renewable energy development plan for the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026–30) on July 23.

The policy framework signals a strategic transition for China's clean energy sector, shifting focus from rapid capacity expansion to quality improvement, system integration and reliable substitution of fossil fuels.

According to the document, by 2030, the total consumption of renewable energy is expected to reach approximately 1.8 billion metric tons of standard coal equivalent.

By 2030, the total installed capacity of renewable energy power generation is projected to reach about 3.5 billion kilowatts, with an annual power generation of approximately 6 trillion kilowatt-hours. The combined installed capacity of wind and solar power is expected to exceed 2.8 billion kW, with annual power generation surpassing 4 trillion kWh.

Renewable energy refers to energy that can be continuously replenished and regenerated through natural processes within a relatively short period. It includes hydropower, wind, solar, biomass, geothermal and marine energy. New energy refers to all renewable energy sources excluding hydropower, according to the document.

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Z WEEKLY



Students from schools in China and overseas raise country placards during the 2026 China Daily Model United Nations in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, held from July 31 to Aug 3, 2026. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Learning the art of diplomacy

Students at the 2026 China Daily Model United Nations navigate competing interests and seek common ground on global challenges.

By GUO JIATONG
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Visiting Suzhou for the first time, 13-year-old Luo Shiqi was impressed by the city's hospitality and quickly made friends with young delegates from different schools and countries.

The Italian-Chinese student from Varese Chinese Language School in Italy was in the city to take part in a four-day Model United Nations conference, where students assumed the roles of national representatives and debated global challenges.

Held from July 31 to Aug 3 in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, the 2026 China Daily Model United Nations (CDMUN) brought together teachers and student representatives from nearly 100 schools in China and overseas.

The agenda covered four broad areas: global governance, governance of emerging issues, regional affairs and international communication. Through simulations of international organizations, participants examined global challenges from the perspectives of the countries they represented.

Inside the meeting rooms, country placards rose above tables as delegates leaned toward microphones to debate regional conflicts, the global energy transition and humanitarian crises.

Representing Canada on a simulated United Nations Development Programme committee, Luo said the discussions changed how she viewed the challenges countries face when pursuing shared goals.

"Listening to different voices helped me become more open-minded," she said. "Sometimes a country cannot achieve a goal not because it lacks the will, but because it lacks the resources, technology or financial capacity."

Liu Biwei, former vice-president of the China Public Diplomacy Association, said Model UN gives young people a valuable opportunity to gain firsthand insight into international organizations and global affairs.

"The simulations also helped young people develop communication skills, deepen mutual understanding and learn to cooperate," Liu said.

For some participants, the conference offered a deeper look at the competing interests that shape international negotiations.

Lu Dikai, a 21-year-old international relations major at Dalian University of Foreign Languages in Liaoning province, served as a journalist with the CDMUN media center. He reported on discussions about the Cyprus crisis of 1974 and the conflict in Sudan.

Through those discussions, he observed that humanitarian concerns in contemporary regional conflicts are often politicized, while multilateral processes are sidelined.

"Major powers tend to prioritize their own geopolitical interests," Lu said. "Humanitarian operations that should focus solely on protecting civilians can easily become instruments of geopolitical competition."

In his view, addressing such challenges requires an approach grounded in multilateralism, fairness and justice.

"Transnational issues cannot be solved by one or a few nations alone," he said. "Only through equal consultation and listening to diverse voices can we build a sustainable global governance framework."

The simulations also gave Lu a more practical understanding of diplomacy, which he described as a continual process of adjustment and compromise. "Unexpected developments can arise at any point in a meeting," he said.

"Rather than simply confronting one another, delegates must quickly reassess their national interests and adjust their negotiating positions. The challenge is to find the broadest possible common ground without compromising their core interests."

The question of balancing national priorities and the common good also emerged in discussions on environmental cooperation.

Zhou Tuoyi, a 20-year-old international relations student at the London School of Economics and Political Science, served on the academic team for the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

During the conference, Zhou helped guide discussions on the sustainable management of transboundary water resources in the Aral Sea Basin, where decades of environmental degradation have exposed the limits of existing international mechanisms.

"When countries compete over natural resources, pursuing individual national interests can produce collectively irrational outcomes," he said. "That's a dilemma worth debating."

He believes effective international cooperation requires countries to consider the human consequences of their decisions.

"Empathy is what drives us to address problems that affect millions of lives," Zhou said. "If countries focus only on their own interests, social and humanitarian needs can easily be overlooked."

Attending the conference for the third time, Zhou said he had watched young delegates grow throughout the event.

"Many delegates arrive as hesitant participants but leave as confident speakers," Zhou said. "More importantly, they begin to understand that addressing long-standing global crises requires not only negotiation, but also genuine empathy."

For Luo, that learning process meant recognizing why a country might struggle to meet an international goal. For Lu, it meant understanding how geopolitical interests and unequal national capacities can complicate international cooperation.

The experience also reinforced Lu's belief that understanding international affairs requires a strong grounding in history.

He advised young people interested in diplomacy to build that foundation before delving into international relations theory.

"History is the bedrock of international politics," he said. "Young people must think independently, build their knowledge over time and avoid being influenced by one-sided opinions."

Wang Benchuang contributed to this story.

Shining Wisdom

Building a green legacy for generations to come

"A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit" is a quote I was reminded of while reading *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*. It reflects the book's long-term perspective and its presentation of leadership as stewardship: development should be managed not for personal profit, but for future generations.

Xi's emphasis on sustainable growth and ecological civilization suggests that good government is like planting trees: it requires patience, selflessness and a commitment to benefits that may not become visible for years.

Environmental concerns have been incorporated into China's constitution and national development goals. Local governments are increasingly judged not only by their economic performance, but also by how well they protect the environment.

This shift has contributed to major changes in industry, with China emerging as a global leader in green technology. At the same time, it has made it more difficult for heavily polluting industries to operate without restriction.

This is consistent with one of Xi's best-known statements: "Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets." China's pledge to peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060 reflects this environmental ambition.

In the United States, material wealth has increasingly become a measure of national success. Gross national product (GNP) was often treated as a comprehensive indicator of progress, even though it records economic activity regardless of whether that activity improves people's lives.

As Robert F. Kennedy observed in a 1968 speech, it can count pollution, crime, destruction and military expenditure while excluding children's health, educational quality, compassion, wisdom and the integrity of public life. In his words, it measures many things "except that which makes life worthwhile".

Such a system captures economic activity without distinguishing between productive growth and social or environmental costs. Efforts such as environmental accounting and China's emphasis on ecological progress seek to address this limitation by incorporating environmental costs into assessments of national development. This approach moves beyond purely quantitative measures of output by recognizing that not all growth contributes equally to long-term well-being.

If you live in or visit China, you will see firsthand evidence of ecological civilization in practice. From bus stops to apartment complexes, there are reminders to keep China green.

One of the most widely recognized examples of ecological progress in China is the "Great Green Wall", which aims to slow and reverse desert expansion across northern China. Through decades of large-scale tree planting and land management, the project has become a symbol of Chinese environmental governance. Like any project of this size, it has faced challenges, including concerns about water use and the suitability of certain tree species. Still, it demonstrates the importance of long-term environmental planning.


Conor Weeks

As a member of Gen Z, I have a personal interest in global ecology because today's environmental decisions will shape the conditions in which my generation must live.

Every generation inherits a world it did not create and becomes responsible for what it passes on. Environmental stewardship is therefore not only a political or economic concern, but also a moral obligation between generations.

Growing up in the US, ecological sustainability was part of my elementary school education. Reminders to recycle, turn off the lights when leaving home, or donate a dollar to charity while buying coffee were common. It would be logical to conclude that, given this education, the country's natural beauty and strong rural culture, the US would be a global leader in ecological sustainability.

However, as painful as it is to admit, this is not entirely the case. The US is responsible for more cumulative carbon dioxide emissions than any other country, and its emissions per person remain among the highest in the world. Although efforts have been made to develop sustainable energy, recent federal policies have also sought to reverse or weaken some environmental protections.

I hope that in the future, Americans can better understand that prosperity is not isolated, but shared among individuals, communities and people across the world.

I also hope that American leadership can learn from the farsighted, long-term approach emphasized in Chinese governance, while recognizing that every country, including China, still faces serious environmental challenges of its own.

That vision returns us to the image of planting trees today so that others may one day sit in their shade. A society becomes great not only through what it builds for the present, but through what it preserves for the future.

Written by Conor Weeks, a 24-year-old American currently living in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. He holds a master's degree in Chinese politics from Renmin University of China and now works in marketing for a Chinese technology company.

Online
Watch the video by scanning the code.

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Find purpose in rural fieldwork

Young researchers leave campus to listen to villagers, document rural change and seek practical solutions for education and community development.



Students from the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics participate in the "Thousand-Village Survey" program, conducting fieldwork in villages across the country this summer. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY





By **WANG XIN** in Shanghai
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Wang Ruiqing knows firsthand how access to better education can change a rural child's life.

The 19-year-old grew up in a village in Poyang county, East China's Jiangxi province. She attended primary school in her village, middle school in a nearby town and high school in the county before earning a place at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (SUFE).

This summer, she returned to the Jiangxi countryside — not as a pupil, but as a university student researching rural education.

Wang, now a second-year law student, joined her university's "Thousand-Village Survey" program for the second consecutive year in July. She was among about 420 participants conducting fieldwork across the country.

As one of the program's 41 team leaders this year, Wang led 13 fellow students on visits to villages, schools and rural households in Jingdezhen.

Using a carefully designed questionnaire, the team spoke with farmers and collected information on their family circumstances, educational experiences, difficulties, needs and expectations.

For Wang, the subject is deeply personal.

Growing up, she saw many of her childhood classmates struggle. Some were left-behind children whose parents had moved away for work, while others came from families facing financial hardship.

She recalls the challenges faced by left-behind children, including loneliness and a lack of emotional support from parents working far from home.

> "We may not yet be able to accomplish anything truly grand, but together we are building the program's database like a Great Wall, with each of us adding one brick at a time."
>
> **Wang Ruiqing,** 19, a student at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics

"Through in-depth surveys and conversations, we can better understand their needs and explore possible solutions," Wang said. "I believe this is the very purpose of our research, and I sincerely hope rural education will continue to develop."

The fieldwork also showed Wang and her teammates how rural communities were changing.

China's sustained efforts to promote rural development have significantly improved farmers' livelihoods. In Hanxi village in Jingdezhen's Fuliang county, the team was impressed by summer crowds enjoying the local tea culture and countryside scenery. They also saw notable progress in villagers' living conditions and access to education.

Launched in 2008, the "Thousand-Village Survey" program brings together more than 1,700 students and teachers each summer. After completing their fieldwork, each team submits four research reports and one article. The materials are then reviewed and analyzed by professors and used in broader, more in-depth studies.

To date, the program has sent more than 30,000 students to visit tens of thousands of rural households. Participants have conducted research in more than 16,000 villages across 34 provincial-level administrative regions and produced over 13,000 reports, according to the university.

For nearly two decades, the program has focused on the "Three Rural Issues" — agriculture, rural areas and farmers. Moving beyond the university campus and into grassroots communities, participants have explored subjects ranging from farmers' livelihoods, rural healthcare and the rural workforce to food security, elderly care, access to basic financial services, entrepreneurship, industrial revitalization and rural governance.

The program's findings on food security, rural financial services and the effectiveness of grassroots governance have attracted the attention of national policymakers and provided valuable references for government decision-making.

In May, 42 additional universities joined the program to establish an alliance that draws on their respective academic strengths and supports the country's rural revitalization efforts.

"The program aims to encourage students to step outside the classroom and see the most authentic side of China with their own eyes," said Ding Jing, director of the Student Affairs Office at SUFE.

"We hope they will put their academic knowledge into practice through field research, develop a deeper concern for rural development and, ultimately, discover their own aspirations."

The program also welcomed younger participants.

Wang Sixia, an art teacher at SUFE's affiliated high school, joined the fieldwork with four 16-year-old students.

"These trips have given them deeper insight into the experiences of people from different walks of life and greater empathy for them," she said. "What they learned will help them understand the complexity and diversity of society. It is a form of growth that no school course can offer."

For Wang Ruiqing, the experience has become part of an ongoing journey.

She first took part in the survey last year, when she traveled to Wuyuan county in Jiangxi. She said the field trips have not only inspired her and strengthened her academic skills but also allowed her to make new friends and discover a much wider world.

"I see my Gen Z teammates as a passionate, sincere and determined group," she said. "We may not yet be able to accomplish anything truly grand, but together we are building the program's database like a Great Wall, with each of us adding one brick at a time."

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Z WEEKLY



Xu Yuehan (first from right) finishes fourth in the Open Women division at the 2026 Legian Boardriders-LSI Club Series at Legian Beach, Bali, Indonesia, on July 18, 2026.

Mountains behind, waves ahead

Born far from the sea, a young surfer is making waves through determination, sacrifice and fearless ambition.



Xu (right) poses with an Indonesian national team surfer after the heats at the 2026 Legian Boardriders–LSI Club Series at Legian Beach, Bali, Indonesia, on July 18, 2026.

By GUI QIAN and LI YINGQING

At 5 am, the first orange-red glow spread across the sea off Bali, Indonesia, as 12-year-old Xu Yuehan walked toward the waves with a surfboard under her arm.

Xu comes from Anning, Yunnan province, an inland city surrounded by mountains and nearly 1,000 kilometers from the sea. In Bali, however, where she was attending a surfing training camp, her days revolved around the water.

She got up before dawn to catch the early waves and surfed until about 9 am. After breakfast, she returned to the water for another session. She spent the afternoon on physical conditioning and ended the day with stretching, massage and recovery.

The schedule kept her in the water or the gym for most of the day, but she did not find it exhausting.

"Standing on a wave makes me feel free," she said. "I can try whatever moves I want."

Her grueling training regimen is already paying off.

Xu recently finished fourth in the Open Women division at the Legian Boardriders-LSI Club Series 2026 in Bali. The division had no age limit, and some of her competitors were adults more than a decade older than her. Many had also grown up in coastal areas with easy access to the sea.

Still, Xu said she felt neither nervous nor intimidated.

She has been surfing for just over a year but has already won several trophies. In August 2025, she claimed her first national title, winning the girls' under-12 shortboard event at the Guangdong stop of the National Surfing U Series.

Her rapid progress began with a chance encounter during a family holiday in Wanning, Hainan province, over Spring Festival in 2024.

Xu, then 9, noticed a leaflet in the hotel lobby advertising a surfing lesson and persuaded her father to sign her up. She managed to stand up on the board on her third wave.

The sensation of being lifted and carried forward by the water captivated her immediately.

After the family returned to Anning, surfing might easily have remained a holiday memory. But Xu could not let it go.

That summer, she told her family she wanted to return to Hainan and earn a surfing certificate. Her parents suggested other vacation plans, but she turned them down.

"When I see big waves, I don't feel afraid," Xu said. "I feel incredibly excited. I want to learn to surf properly and go further in the sport."

Her mother later recalled seeing the light in her daughter's eyes and realizing that surfing was not a passing interest.

To continue training from her home in Anning, Xu had to fly repeatedly to the coast while keeping up with school. At the end of 2024, she decided to transfer to a school in Lingshui Li autonomous county, Hainan.

Her goal was simple: to be closer to the sea. "After transferring, I could study and train at the same time," she said.

Family follows waves

Xu's journey from the mountains to the sea would not have been possible without her family, who reorganized their lives around her dream.

Her parents run a beverage business in Anning and had no previous connection to surfing or other water sports. Once Xu decided to pursue surfing seriously, her mother stepped away from work to travel with her, first to Hainan and later to Bali.

Both parents began learning more about surfing. Her mother also started teaching herself English so she could accompany Xu to surf spots farther from home.

"They've both become amateur surfing enthusiasts," Xu said with a laugh. "Now we always have something to talk about when it comes to surfing."

Xu said she understood how much her parents had sacrificed for her.

"I know that some of my peers' parents worry that surfing is too dangerous and want them to quit," she said. "That's why I'm especially grateful that my mother has placed so much trust in me."

While her family's support allowed her to stay close to the sea, entering competitive surfing required professional training.

In September 2024, Xu began training independently and competing as an amateur. At a competition in Hainan in April 2025, a coach from a provincial surfing team noticed her performance and selected her for the province's reserve team, where she began training and competing with the squad.

Xu's journey also reflects the gradual growth of surfing in China. As competitive programs have expanded, children from inland provinces have gained more opportunities to take part in a sport once largely confined to coastal communities.

Professional training not only helped Xu progress more quickly but also gave her a better understanding of how judges evaluate a ride and which techniques earn higher scores. She is now focusing on the "snap", a sharp turn performed near the top of a wave and an important scoring maneuver.

She eventually aims to master aerial moves and barrel riding, in which a surfer rides inside the hollow section of a breaking wave.

Xu also wants to compete at higher levels, both at home and internationally, and hopes her experience will encourage other children growing up far inland.

"Distance may keep you from the sea," she said. "But it cannot keep you from your dream."

Contact the writers at guiqian@i21st.cn



Xu competes in the U12 women's shortboard division at the Wanning, Hainan, stop of the 2026 National Surfing U Series on March 10, 2026, finishing runner-up. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Global Insights

Shared fields connect rural China and Bangladesh

I did not expect a small county in the hills of Fujian province to make me homesick for Bangladesh. But that is what happened when I visited Jianning county in Sanming city and found myself ankle-deep in mud, planting rice seedlings beside a farmer I had met only minutes earlier.

I had gone looking for scenery and Jianning has plenty of it: green mountains, clear streams and a stillness that feels increasingly rare in a rapidly urbanizing world. What stayed with me, however, was something harder to photograph — a spirit of community that reminded me of the village where I grew up.

One morning, I noticed a farmer working alone in a rice field. His movements were precise and unhurried. My Mandarin was limited, so I pointed at the seedlings and then at myself, gesturing to ask if I could join him.

He smiled and handed me a bundle.

As I stepped into the muddy paddy, memories of rural Bangladesh came rushing back. Like many children raised in rural areas, I had once helped my family with farm work. The mud beneath my feet, the flooded field and the rhythm of planting felt immediately familiar.

The farmer and I worked side by side, communicating through smiles and gestures. Before long, other villagers began to arrive. One after another, they entered the field and joined the planting. What had begun as one man working alone soon became a group moving steadily across the paddy.

Curious, I asked the farmer whether he was going to pay them.

He looked almost puzzled by the question.

"No," he said. "They come to help. When the work in my field is done, I will go to their fields to help. This is how we do things."

His answer described a system based not on charity but on reciprocity. Farmers help one another without contracts or negotiations, knowing that they, too, can count on their fellow neighbors when the time comes. The arrangement reduces labor costs, strengthens relationships and gives people confidence that they will not face difficult times alone.

That spirit felt familiar, too. Similar forms of mutual assistance have long existed in rural Bangladesh. Yet in many places, migration, commercialization and changing lifestyles have weakened traditional community ties.

Jianning reminded me that rural development is not only about infrastructure, incomes or technology. It is also about preserving the relationships that allow communities to work together.

What makes Jianning particularly interesting is that this culture of cooperation exists alongside the modernization of agriculture.

The county is one of China's largest hybrid rice seed-production bases, accounting for more than one-tenth of the country's hybrid rice seed-production area and output. It has also been introducing digital tools into farming.

Through *Liangshengbao*, a digital farming-services platform, farmers can manage orders, reserve agricultural machinery and access production-related information. The platform covers 161,000 *mu* (10,733 hectares) of hybrid rice seed-production fields and serves more than 24,000 farmers.

These tools are intended to improve coordination and reduce the administrative burden on farmers.

Jianning's experience suggests that digital technology can improve agricultural efficiency without displacing the traditional values of trust and mutual assistance. For developing countries such as Bangladesh, Jianning offers useful lessons, although its model cannot simply be copied.



Mohammad Saiyedul Islam (center) plants rice seedlings alongside two farmers in Jianning county, Sanming, Fujian province, on May 31, 2026. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Bangladesh has fertile land, hardworking farmers and a strong agricultural tradition, but many rural communities still struggle with poor market access, limited digital services, small and fragmented farms, and few opportunities to add value to their produce.

Cooperative farming models and digital agricultural platforms could give farmers better access to machinery, information and markets while creating new opportunities for younger people to remain involved in agriculture.

But technology alone would not be enough. Rural revitalization succeeds only when it improves people's quality of life, protects the environment and strengthens relationships within the community.

My clearest memory of Jianning is not technology or a production statistic. It is the sight of villagers entering a muddy field and beginning to plant alongside a fellow farmer.

I arrived in Jianning looking for scenery. I left thinking about Bangladesh — and about how rural communities can embrace change without losing the trust and cooperation that have sustained them for generations.

Written by Mohammad Saiyedul Islam, PhD, a senior lecturer and researcher at the School of Overseas Education (School of Foreign Languages), Sanming University, in Fujian province. He is also a senior research fellow at the Daffodil International University Belt and Road Research Center in Bangladesh.

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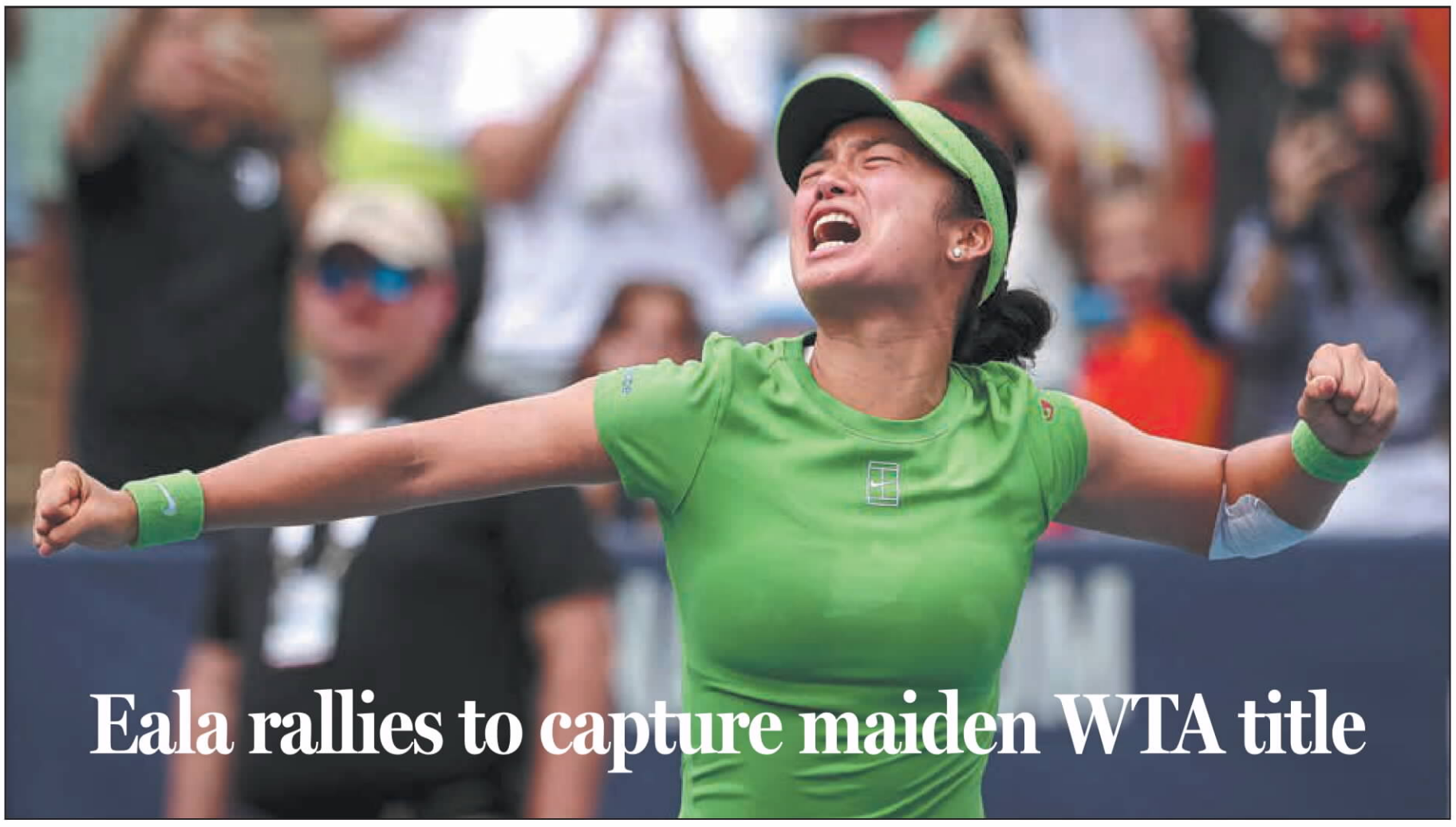
SPORTS

TENNIS

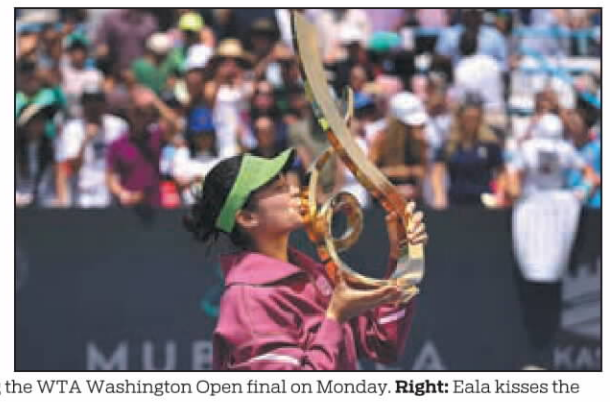


Eala rallies to capture maiden WTA title

Alexandra Eala of the Philippines lets out a victorious roar after winning her maiden WTA title at the Washington Open, beating Jessica Pegula of the United States in the women's singles championship match on Monday in Washington, DC. GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

Filipino star hits ground running after overnight rain delay to deny Pegula





Left: Alexandra Eala gets ready to hit a return to Jessica Pegula during the WTA Washington Open final on Monday. **Right:** Eala kisses the WTA500 Washington Open trophy on Monday. GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

WASHINGTON — Alexandra Eala's breakthrough week at the DC Open lasted one day longer than expected. By the time it ended, the Filipino expression written across the Nike T-shirt she had worn earlier that week had become a reality.

"Once it grows, it cannot be stopped."

After the women's final stretched across two days because of heavy rain, Eala rallied past Jessica Pegula 4-6, 6-4, 6-0 Monday to capture her first career WTA Tour title.

The victory made the 21-year-old Eala the first Filipina to win a singles title on the tour, completing the same career-defining breakthrough that the Washington tournament once gave Pegula when she claimed her first WTA title in 2019.

"At the beginning of the week, there's no way I would have thought that I would be holding this trophy," Eala said. "Winning a 500 (level tournament) is insane. It's an incredible milestone for me. These things kind of creep up on you and I hold these moments really close to me."

Eala arrived at Stadium Court as the story of the tournament, carrying the hopes of her nation.

Philippine flags decorated the stands throughout Sunday's rain-interrupted session and remained visible Monday, with the lower bowl filled for the resumption. Chants for Eala routinely outweighed those for the top-ranked American playing on home soil.

"It's not fun to play against, but I do appreciate the really fun atmosphere," Pegula said of the crowd. "I think it's amazing."

It capped a week in which the rising star transformed the atmosphere around the tournament, while reaching her first WTA final in her debut at the hard-court tune-up for the US Open.

The two traded breaks midway through the opening set, with Pegula breaking again at 4-4 and serving out the set at love.

The players held through the opening three games of the second set before heavy rain suspended play on Sunday afternoon.

When they returned on Monday, the momentum belonged to Eala.

She stormed back to claim the second set, then swept through the third. Eala ultimately won the final eight games of the match to secure the championship, beating all three of the tournament's top seeds along the way.

Eala dropped to the court with her head in her hands, overcome with emotion. Tears filled her eyes before she rose, embraced Pegula at the net and let out a triumphant scream.

"I was so nervous, and I kind of just blacked out," Eala said. "Everything just came rushing to me."

She won the last eight games of the contest, surrendering just eight points in the third set.

"Just pure happiness," Eala said of her first title, which comes after she agonizingly failed to convert four championship points in her only prior final at Eastbourne, England, last year.

'Very steep hill'

Eala is projected to rise to a career-high 20th in the world after a storming run that included victories over Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen, second-seeded Elina Svitolina, third-seeded former world No 1 Naomi Osaka and defending champion Leylah Fernandez.

"It was a very steep hill," she said. "I knew that the competition was super tough. So I'm really, really proud. I think I encountered my fair share of obstacles this week."

The scoreboard showed a match time of one hour and 45 minutes, but it took nearly 24 hours to complete.

Pegula had won the first set 6-4 and Eala was up 2-1 in the second on Sunday when officials postponed the finish until Monday after lengthy rain delays.

The pair had waited through a three-hour delay before starting, and once the match was halted it was another five hours before officials called a halt for the day.

"Definitely felt like two different matches," said Pegula, who opened Monday's action with a nervy service hold for 2-2.

"I just felt like I couldn't find my rhythm. I think I was playing much better yesterday, for whatever reason, than I was today, and I think she was playing better today than she was yesterday."

Pegula could make no inroads on Eala's serve, and Eala broke Pegula in the 10th game to take the second set and force a third.

The final set was all Eala, to the delight of a vocal contingent of supporters, who turned out in force despite the postponement.

Pegula welcomed the energy of the crowd even in support of her opponent, who has proved a massive draw around the world.

"I just think it's so refreshing and nice to see how well she's handled all of the kind of fandom and stardom that's come with her being from the Philippines, and how they've really embraced her," Pegula said.

"It's crazy how she deals with it every single week, which just shows her maturity as both a player and as a person."

Both players will now head to Toronto, where two-time champion Pegula is the third seed and Eala is seeded 25th in the WTA1000 hard-court event.

Eala also received congratulations from former eight-division boxing champion Manny Pacquiao, who wrote on social media that her comeback showed the "heart of a Filipino" before calling her "our new champion".

In the men's final later on Monday, third-seeded Taylor Fritz defeated Rafael Jodar 7-6 (2), 6-4.

Fritz broke the Spaniard twice early in the second set, and eventually converted his fifth championship point after letting four earlier opportunities slip away.

Fritz lay on the court for several moments after winning the 11th title of his career, then got to his feet with a roll of his eyes as the tension of finally closing out the match gave way.

"It was just relief, like, thank God I got it done; thank God the match is over," Fritz said of the moment. "It wasn't so much as, like, a celebration ... I can just lay down for a second."

AGENCIES

Venus-Bublik, newlyweds among new US Open doubles teams

An additional 13 teams, one featuring Venus Williams and some comprised of married couples, have entered the US Open mixed doubles championship.

The new duos, announced Monday by the US Tennis Association, raised the total to 29 teams for the 16 spots in the main draw, which will be held on Aug 25 and Aug 26.

Williams is partnering with Alexander Bublik for the tournament that was overhauled last year in an effort to get top singles players to compete, with a $1 million top prize on offer. Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka and 24-time Grand Slam singles champion Novak Djokovic headlined the initial list of 16 teams.

Elina Svitolina and her husband Gael Monfils, who is expected to play his final Grand Slam event at the US Open, and newlyweds Katie Boulter and Alex de Minaur also were among the new entries.

The other new teams: Karolina Muchova and Jakub Mensik, Anna Kalinskaya and Lorenzo Musetti, Emma Navarro and Tommy Paul, Maria Sakkari and Karen Khachanov, Tatjana Maria and Valentin Vacherot, Reese Brantmeier and Michael Zheng, Jelena Ostapenko and Marcelo Arevalo, Gabriela Dabrowski and Harri Heliovaara, Demi Schuurs and Julian Cash, and Caty McNally and Robert Cash.

Teams can enter until Aug 17, when the six duos with the best combined singles rankings at the time will be automatically entered into the main draw. That means Sabalenka, the two-time defending US Open women's champion, and Djokovic, still ranked No 5 on the men's tour at age 39, will be safely into the field.

Eight teams will be given wild cards by the USTA, and two other teams will play their way into the field through a new qualifying tournament to be held Aug 24.

Besides Sabalenka and Djokovic, teams previously announced were: Iga Swiatek and Casper Ruud, the runners-up in 2025; Elena Rybakina and Taylor Fritz, the Japanese duo of Naomi Osaka and Kei Nishikori, Jessica Pegula and Jack Draper, Mirra Andreeva and Andrey Rublev, Belinda Bencic and Flavio Cobolli, Diana Shnaider and Daniil Medvedev, Amanda Anisimova and Learner Tien, Alexandra Eala and Felix Auger-Aliassime, Leylah Fernandez and Frances Tiafoe, Taylor Townsend and Alexander Zverev, Elena-Gabriela Ruse and Nuno Borges, Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori, Katerina Siniakova and Henry Patten, and siblings Peyton Stearns and Preston Stearns.

Errani and Vavassori are the two-time defending US Open champions. The Italians needed a wild card to get into last year's event because their singles rankings were too low, and that will be the case again this year.

AP

Shelton finds sweet spot in Montreal

MONTREAL, Canada — Ben Shelton doesn't want to miss a match, as he begins the defense of his ATP Montreal Masters title with the goal of arriving at the US Open in full flow.

With the last major of the season starting on Aug 31 in New York, the American has programmed a full run-up schedule: Washington last week, Montreal and Cincinnati still to come.

"Three tournaments is the perfect amount. I'd like to get as many matches as possible," the fifth seed said on Monday.

"I'm the type of player, the more matches I play, the better I play, as long as my body can hold up," Shelton added. "It's a great three-tournament run before having a week off leading up to the US Open. I'm just kind of going for it."

Shelton, the men's No 10 who reached last week's Washington quarters, is not bothered by the bloated length of the Montreal tournament, which has attracted criticism and could be ripe for future change.

Shelton said he cannot fault his all-star peers for choosing to skip it.

The weather is playing a major role in the controversial 12-day extended Masters, a tournament where world No 1 Jannik Sinner and 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic are high-profile absentees.

"I think there's a lack of sustainability (in the two-week format), for sure, but I don't know if there's a different way to go about it," he said. "Jannik knows himself. Novak knows himself. Maybe I would do the same thing if I had won Wimbledon — I didn't.

"It's tough to criticize those guys for the decisions that they make throughout the season when they're trying to sustain a level and maintain their health.

"At the same time, for me, this is one of my favorite parts of the year, one of my best swings, and I don't want to miss out on playing any of these tournaments."

Shelton said that he does not dwell on the 1,000 ranking points from his 2025 victory that he needs to defend in Canada.

"I've never been somebody who worries too much about defending. It's just not as much in my nature," he said. "If you're always thinking about defending, or what week that you made points or didn't make points, it's easy to kind of get lost in your mind.

"That's why I like to just think about my body of work for 2026, what I'm doing, and what I want to accomplish by the end of the year.

"To get another opportunity to be playing really good tennis leading into the US Open is kind of my main goal here. I'm looking forward to getting out there again."

AFP

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Quake costs
Rebuilding bill could reach $50 billion in Venezuela
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Protection of Huangyan stepped up
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Heritage renewed
Exhibition showcases miniature replicas of ancient structures
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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 2026

Border control



Military personnel escort migrants in Ceuta, Spain, on Saturday, following recent mass crossings by migrants on foot and by sea from Morocco into Spanish territory. VIOLETA SANTOS MOURA / REUTERS **See story, page 5**

Blacklisting by Washington called destructive bullying

By ZHANG CHENXU and **ZHONG NAN**

The United States' latest addition of more than 40 Chinese entities to a so-called "forced-labor" blacklist amounts to economic coercion dressed up as law enforcement, officials and experts said, warning that such unilateral sanctions risk destabilizing global industrial and supply chains.

Coming just one day after lead economic and trade officials from both sides held talks on stabilizing bilateral ties, the move — the largest single expansion of the list — can only heighten tensions between the world's two largest economies and further erode mutual trust, they added.

"The US action is groundless, as Washington has continued to use so-called 'human rights' and 'forced labor' as pretexts for arbitrarily imposing unilateral sanctions on Chinese companies under its domestic laws," a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Commerce said on Saturday, voicing "strong condemnation" and "firm opposition" to the move.

The US Department of Homeland Security announced on Friday the addition of 43 Chinese companies to the entity list under the so-called Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act. The law, which took effect in June 2022, effectively bars goods linked to the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region from entering the US market, in the name of combating so-called "forced labor".

Spanning industries from metals and electronics to apparel, cotton and food processing, the newly listed companies include capacitor manufacturer Hunan Aihua Group, snack food producer ChaCha Food and cotton supplier and processor Henan Tongzhou Cotton Industry Co, according to a US government notice.

The additions will take effect on Monday, raising the total number of listed entities from 144 to 187, a 30 percent increase, the US department said.

"The move is a typical act of economic coercion and seriously infringes upon the legitimate rights and interests of the companies concerned," the Chinese Commerce Ministry spokesperson added.

Notably, the latest restrictions were announced just a day after Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng held a video call on Thursday evening with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, during which the two sides had what were described as "candid, in-depth and constructive" discussions on maintaining stable bilateral economic and trade relations.

"Just one day later, the US introduced such egregious measures that harm China's interests, seriously deviating from the consensus reached by the two heads of state," the spokesperson said.

Wu Xinbo, dean and professor of Fudan University's Institute of International Studies, said China and the US need sustained negotiations to manage differences and address outstanding issues amid an increasingly complex global environment.

Ongoing economic and trade dialogue is helping Washington gain a clearer understanding of Beijing's positions, he said, adding that China's policy responses have also, to some extent, reshaped Washington's approach toward Beijing.

"Such sustained engagement is more consistent with what is needed to build a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability," Wu added.

The spokesperson reiterated that China has consistently opposed forced labor and said there is no such thing as so-called "forced labor" in Xinjiang, adding that the region enjoys social harmony and stability, sustained economic development and rising living standards.

The China Cotton Association said in a statement on Sunday that machine-picked cotton now accounts for more than 90 percent of Xinjiang's output, and that the entire chain, from planting to textile production, is highly automated. Cotton farmers and industry workers are protected by Chinese law and are free to choose their jobs, it said.

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Bans and blame serve no real purpose

WORLD WATCH
By Anthony Moretti

Again. And again. And again. Seemingly once a week, the United States announces a new set of bans against Chinese organizations and technologies. And each time a new obstacle is put in place, the reality becomes clearer: Washington is scared. US officials know it. So, too, do international audiences.

Consider what has transpired in the US in the past couple of weeks.

On July 23, the Department of Defense updated its "List of Foreign Research Institutions Conducting Problematic Activities", imposing sanctions on more than 80 Chinese institutions. Universities and military organizations dominate the list, and the ban includes a "funding prohibition [that] extends to all employees of such institutions". In other words, every person is judged guilty no matter what he or she does.

Guilty of what exactly? Good luck getting a substantive answer to that. One US official said the moves were needed in order to preserve "the integrity of the American scientific enterprise".

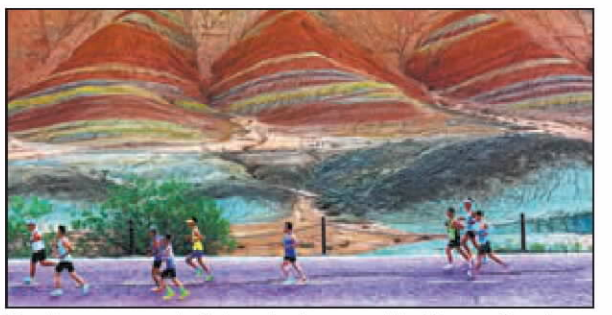
Then on July 28, the US government announced a ban on imports of new Chinese humanoid robots, quadruped robots and grid-connected power inverters, citing national security risks.

Without offering any evidence, the head of the Federal Communications Commission claimed the move was wise because it would "secure America's critical supply chains". The FCC further justified the action by suggesting the devices could pose cybersecurity threats to critical infrastructure.

Note the inclusion of the word "could"; its use provides the rationale for the severe action undertaken. Just do not tell anyone in Washington that the flip side of the word "could" is the phrase "might very well not". That does not fit the tidy little narrative Washington constantly trots out about China being an unfair global partner.

The drumbeat continued on July 31.

*See **Bans,** page 3*



Marathon runners set off at sunrise for a race at the Zhangye Danxia Geological Park in Gansu province on June 28. WANG JIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

RAINBOW MOUNTAINS UNVEIL EARTH'S DIARY IN STONE

In Gansu's Zhangye Danxia park, nature's palette defies belief and attracts global pilgrims

By HU YUMENG and **MA JINGNA** in Lanzhou

As dawn breaks over the Zhangye Danxia Geological Park in Gansu province, the first light reveals rolling mountains bathed in myriad hues. As the ribbons of crimson, ocher, sage green and pearl gray grow brighter in the morning sun, it becomes obvious why these are known as the Rainbow Mountains of China.

China Vibes

The stunning natural palette looks almost unreal — so much so that on the lifestyle platform Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, the viral refrain is: "Were these painted?"

Photos of the hills taken after summer rains, when the colors deepen dramatically, have drawn millions of views, waves of disbelief and quiet pilgrimages from travelers determined to see the wonder for themselves.

*See **Park,** page 3*

XI'S VISION | HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

Stability seen amid shift in growth drivers

Stepped-up policy efforts, stronger support for domestic demand likely, observers say

By ZHOU LANXU and **ZHANG CHENXU**

China's economic growth is expected to further stabilize in the second half of the year, as policymakers step up efforts to address structural challenges arising from the transition in growth drivers while strengthening support for domestic demand, experts and executives said.

The comments came after a meeting on Thursday of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, presided over by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee. The meeting called for efforts to accelerate the transition from old growth drivers to new ones and effectively implement a more proactive fiscal policy and an appropriately accommodative monetary policy.

Economists said the meeting addressed a major challenge facing China's economy, as rapidly expanding new industries have yet to fully offset the slowdown in traditional sectors, insufficient domestic demand and growing structural divergence.

Policy focus should not only be on stepping up macro policy stimulus and accelerating investment in emerging industries and industrial upgrading, but also on bolstering employment and income to foster broader growth, they added.

Zhu Feng, China chief economist at JPMorgan, said that growth momentum in the third and fourth quarters will likely improve from the second one, but divergence could persist amid the transition from old to new growth drivers.

New growth engines, led by artificial intelligence and the smart economy, are likely to continue buoying related investment, high-tech manufacturing and some export sectors, while domestic demand, real estate, private investment and durable goods consumption still need time to recover, Zhu said.

China's economy expanded 4.7 percent year-on-year in the first half, driven by resilient exports and industrial output as high-tech manufacturing sectors benefited from a global wave of AI-related capital expenditure. By comparison, retail sales remained subdued, while fixed-asset investment contracted.

GDP growth weakened to 4.3 percent in the April-June period. In July, the official manufacturing purchasing managers index fell to 49.2, the National Bureau of Statistics said, indicating that falling market demand has caused factory activity to contract for the first time in five months.

To cope with economic divergence, Zhu stressed the need to boost services consumption to absorb jobs released from traditional industries, given the labor-intensive nature of the services sector, while beefing up targeted support for smaller and private businesses to bolster their confidence.

"The key to meeting the annual growth target lies in accelerating fiscal policy implementation and, if necessary, introducing incremental fiscal measures, while better translating policy resources into growth in household employment and income, thereby boosting consumption and private investment," he added.

The meeting on Thursday said that pragmatic and effective incremental policies will be introduced in a timely manner, and it called for intensified efforts to effectively safeguard and improve people's well-being.

The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, pledged at a meeting on Saturday to comprehensively utilize monetary policy tools and make timely adjustments to keep ample liquidity.

Yin Yanlin, deputy director of the Committee on Economic Affairs of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said additional treasury bond issuance should be considered when necessary, and monetary policy should cut the reserve requirement ratio and interest rates at a proper time as imported inflation pressure eases.

Ming Ming, chief economist at CITIC Securities, said an 800 billion yuan ($118.5 billion) policy-based financial tool is likely to ramp up support for new types of infrastructure, including synergy between computing and electricity networks, helping drive a recovery in investment.

According to the National Development and Reform Commission, investment in computing network infrastructure in China could reach 4 trillion yuan during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period. It also said that new growth drivers, including high-end manufacturing, the digital economy and modern services, had contributed more than 40 percent of economic growth in the first half of this year.

Such momentum is underpinning international institutions' confidence in China's economic transition. Moody's Ratings said in a commentary that credit conditions in China are expected to remain stable in the second half as fiscal and monetary support, strong exports and technological advances offset weak domestic demand.

Goldman Sachs has forecast that China's economy will grow 4.6 percent this year, within the annual target range of 4.5 to 5 percent, with exports a key source of resilience, thanks to China's manufacturing competitiveness.

For multinational companies, China's shift in growth drivers is creating fresh opportunities. "To gauge China's economic resilience, one must look beyond headline GDP figures and identify where growth originates," said Rogier Janssens, president of Merck China.

"Merck operates across healthcare, life sciences and electronics; in each domain, the picture is clear: China's market not only absorbs innovation but accelerates it," Janssens said.

Wang Keju contributed to this story.

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From 'building villages' to 'developing villagers'
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INDEPTH



Incense sticks made of agarwood.



Children show keen interest in agarwood craftsmanship during the 4th China International Consumer Products Expo in Haikou, Hainan province, in April 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Raw agarwood pieces.



Agarwood bead bracelets.



Spiral incense made of agarwood resin.

Agarwood's sweet smell of success

Once associated with privilege, the high-value agricultural product is spreading its reach

By YANG FEIYUE
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For generations, fragrant agarwood has been associated with collectors, temples and scholars — and while ordinary consumers know its name, they seldom get to experience it.

Today, advances in cultivation, scientific research and product development are transforming the resin-rich wood into the foundation of a growing industry.

Across Hainan province, researchers, growers and entrepreneurs are betting that its fragrance, once associated with privilege, and its other products, can find a place in ordinary homes.

The Nada Agarwood Research Institute based in Hainan is taking a novel approach to marketing an agarwood resin they developed. The company has drawn inspiration from the empress's residence in Weiyang Palace in Chang'an (present-day Xi'an, Shaanxi province) during the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24).

Known as Jiaofang Hall, or Pepper Hall, the palace's walls were covered in a plaster mixture of pepper and clay that filled the residence with a warm, pungent aroma — a symbol of refinement, status and fortune in that era.

At an agarwood exhibition in Beijing's Gongmei Building from March to May, the research institute featured a burning coil of incense that releases agarwood fragrance.

"The inspiration came from the Jiaofang Hall. But we replaced pepper with agarwood," said Yan Bin, founder and chairman of the company, which has spent two decades focusing on agarwood cultivation, research and product development.

"What we want to carry forward is the old Chinese idea of bringing fragrance into living spaces," Yan said.

Behind such ambition is a rapidly expanding market.

According to a 2024 report by Zhiyan Consulting, China's agarwood market size had grown to about 55 billion yuan ($7.6 billion) by 2023. Under an agarwood whole industry chain development plan (2023–30) by the Hainan government, the province aims to reach an annual output value of over 5 billion yuan by 2030.





Visitors learn about agarwood at a trade fair in Haikou in December. GUO CHENG / XINHUA



Left: A farmer showcases necklaces made of agarwood in Qionghai, Hainan province, on June 14. MENG ZHONGDE / FOR CHINA DAILY
Right: Workers process agarwood at an agri-products processing park in Wanling town, Hainan, on July 17. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Research efforts

Known in Chinese as *chenxiang*, or "sinking fragrance" — a name that refers to its high density, which makes the best pieces sink in water — agarwood is one of China's most prized aromatic woods.

Unlike ordinary timber, agarwood forms only when *Aquilaria* trees are damaged by nature, or it is deliberately induced through cultivation. In response to injury, the trees produce a dark, aromatic resin that gradually permeates the wood, creating the distinctive fragrance prized in incense, perfumes and traditional medicine.

Because the process is slow and unpredictable in the wild, high-quality agarwood has long been exceptionally rare.

When Dai Haofu began studying agarwood after returning from Germany in 2004, he quickly encountered an industry built more on reputation than science. The market was chaotic, and authentic research samples were difficult to obtain, he said.

Dai had originally come to Hainan to study marine resources, but switched his research to agarwood due to limited funds.

"At that time, agarwood was very rare and expensive," said Dai, head of the Haikou Comprehensive Experimental Station of China Agriculture Research System for Chinese Materia Medica. "Finding enough material for research was a major problem."

Unlike marine research, which required expensive boats and equipment, agarwood research could be done in a lab with small samples, which he managed to obtain from collectors, traditional pharmacies, and by visiting growing areas.

But he soon discovered that a large proportion of agarwood products sold by pharmacies were either fake or of very poor quality. Consumers had no way to tell the difference, as there were no scientific standards or reliable methods to verify authenticity.

Wild agarwood resources were limited, and cultivation was slow. Dai believed that better varieties, technology and standards could be achieved through the use of science.

In the beginning, gaining support for the project was difficult, Dai said. A turning point came in 2007, when Hainan's science and technology authorities began supporting major research projects on agarwood.

Working with growers in Guangdong province and other regions, Dai's team began selecting superior trees from natural populations, leading to a series of improved agarwood varieties. High-yielding and of superior quality, the new varieties were easier to induce resin production. Five of them were certified and approved by the Forestry Department of Hainan.

Traditional agarwood trees can require decades to produce valuable resin. New cultivation methods shortened that process significantly, from decades to about six years for some varieties.

"In nature, some trees grow stronger than others. We identify those advantages and reproduce them," Dai said.

Meanwhile, his team collected agarwood samples from 15 countries and regions, conducted systematic research on a chemical basis, and built a database of agarwood compounds. They also developed a rapid analytical method based on these compounds, helping to solve long-standing challenges in verifying authenticity and providing a scientific basis for quality evaluation.

Long prized for the quality of its wild agarwood, Hainan now hopes cultivated trees can restore that reputation on a much larger scale. Cultivation has expanded across Hainan and several southern provinces.

Most Hainan producers still sell raw material rather than higher-value finished products — something Dai believes must change. "Hainan still does too little processing. I'm encouraging relevant parties to do more."

From rags to riches

In Xiaogu village, Chengmai county, on the northern side of Hainan Island, every household now grows agarwood in their front and backyards. The trees have replaced the rubber plantations that once dominated the landscape.

It was not always this way.

The man who changed that is Cai Qinxin. The villagers once called him "Dog Smell". As the youngest of five children in a poor rural family, he often wore torn and dirty clothes.

At age 12, Cai followed his parents to fish the Nandu River that flows through both his home county and the agarwood-growing regions of Danzhou. A day's income was usually less than 50 yuan.

In 1993, while selling fish, Cai met a businessman from Shantou, Guangdong, who operated an agarwood processing factory. The monthly salary was 600 yuan, and Cai took a job immediately.

At the factory, he learned how agarwood was processed, from cutting raw wood to extracting oil. The work was physically demanding. Other workers processed five or six bags of wood a day. Cai processed more than 10. Each bag weighed around 40 kilograms. "I worked harder because I knew this was an opportunity," he said.

After one year, his salary was increased to 1,200 yuan. Three years later, the factory owner told Cai he had learned everything about agarwood processing and should go back home and start his own business. The owner gave him 50,000 yuan as a reward and start-up money.

In 1996, Cai returned to Xiaogu village and began processing agarwood in a small tiled house, but he struggled to find outlets to sell his products. He found a partner from the local agarwood association, who handled sales while Cai focused on processing. Their products eventually reached overseas markets, including the Middle East.

Despite the market potential, Cai saw that many villagers did not understand the value of agarwood. Many trees were cut down because farmers wanted to plant rubber — a supported crop that provided a steady income. Discarded agarwood was often treated as firewood. "I bought some of it for only a few cents per kilogram," Cai said.

His fortunes changed in 2006, when he visited an elderly villager who had found an old tree stump in a rubber plantation. The stump had been placed inside a house.

"The fragrance filled the room the moment I walked in," Cai recalled.

He recognized its value and bought it for 3,000 yuan. After processing, he sold it for 600,000 yuan. The piece later appeared at an auction in Hong Kong and was sold for 2.8 million yuan. The buyer gave him an extra 100,000 yuan.

"My whole family was extremely happy. We never expected this much money," Cai said.

In 2013, Hainan asked Cai to represent the agarwood industry at an international exhibition in Beijing, where he demonstrated traditional processing techniques. "The things I brought were sold out in half a day," he said. On the first day of the exhibition, his handmade agarwood bracelets sold for 460,000 yuan.

Returning from Beijing, Cai decided his village should plant agarwood. The following year, he helped establish an agarwood planting cooperative. Villagers provided land, and the cooperative provided investment, technology and sales channels. Profits were shared. Dozens of households now participate in agarwood cultivation and processing. The cooperative produces incense, bracelets, essential oils, tea and other related products.

Despite the industry's rapid growth, Cai has stuck with the traditional method of creating the resin.

"It takes hard manual work — using saws, electric drills and controlled burning — to imitate the natural forces that wound the trees so they can produce the fragrant resin," he said.

He is skeptical of attempts to accelerate production through chemicals. "Those methods may be faster, but they compromise the quality. Good agarwood needs time."

Betting on a slower tree

In 2020, Hang Yong cut down 23,000 profitable areca palms. At the time, areca prices were at an all-time high, and the trees could generate nearly 10 million yuan annually.

"Nobody understood," Hang said. "Even today, many people still don't understand."

Hang had no background in agarwood. Originally from the northern Inner Mongolia autonomous region, he worked in telecommunications before starting his own company.

In 2016, he arrived in Hainan seeking warmer winters. Like many, he imagined retirement. But instead of buying property, he wanted to build something of his own.

In 2017, when the Hainan government encouraged the building of shared farms with policy support, he established his own farm in Qiongzhong Li and Miao autonomous county, in central Hainan. At first, the farm focused on other crops, including areca palm. Then, in 2019, he met local agricultural experts who showed him the potential of agarwood.

Hang traveled to Maoming in Guangdong, a major agarwood distribution center, to visit planting bases, processing companies and markets. He saw how the industry worked and met the people who later became his partners.

"I visited the plantations, the processors and the traders," Hang said. "Only then did I decide this was an industry worth waiting for."

His decision to clear the areca, he explained, was based on the belief agarwood could provide income plus an industry — with processing, tourism, and a long-term value that a single crop could never match.

His friends thought he had lost his mind.

Since then, Hang has planted 400,000 agarwood trees. His farm, which spans 187 hectares, is now a major agarwood plantation in Hainan.

Hang also wants visitors to understand what agarwood actually is, so his farm combines agarwood forests with tourism experiences, providing camping areas, outdoor activities and ecological projects.

"Many people have heard of agarwood, but they don't know it comes from a tree. There has to be an experience," he said.

He believes filling that gap in knowledge represents the future market. "Agarwood has only just begun," he said.

Hang has signed strategic cooperation agreements with other major agarwood companies in Hainan.

"Ten years ago, all agarwood products could fit in a 10-square-meter room. Today, you couldn't fit them in a large exhibition hall. The market is still in its infancy. It's big enough for everyone," he said.

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TOP NEWS



China Coast Guard personnel conduct drills on Saturday in the waters near Huangyan Island. According to the China Coast Guard spokesperson, the drills focused on operations such as visit, board, search and seizure, interdiction of forced entry and forced towing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

China carries out extensive drills off Huangyan

By **LUO WANGSHU**
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China's latest diplomatic, military and law enforcement actions with regard to Huangyan Island reflect a more targeted and coordinated response to the Philippines' increasingly aggressive maritime, legal and diplomatic moves, experts said.

On Saturday, the People's Liberation Army Southern Theater Command conducted joint naval and air exercises in the territorial waters and airspace off Huangyan Island and its surrounding areas, while the China Coast Guard carried out rights-protection law enforcement and control drills in nearby waters.

According to separate statements issued by the command and the coast guard, the exercises covered reconnaissance and early warning, deterrence patrols, sea and air control, boarding inspections, interception and compulsory towing.

Ren Yuanzhe, a professor of diplomacy and foreign affairs management at China Foreign Affairs University, said China's response has become more targeted and coordinated, with maritime law enforcement being used alongside diplomatic and public communication efforts.

"The response demonstrates China's resolve to safeguard its sovereignty and maritime rights, while maintaining restraint and leaving room for practical cooperation, including maritime search and rescue," Ren said.

The actions followed a series of Philippine activities near Huangyan Island in late July.

Over two consecutive days, Philippine government and coast guard vessels entered Chinese waters, the China Coast Guard said.

During the larger operation, the Philippines assembled seven government vessels, three coast guard ships, one fishing vessel and a large number of fishing boats near the island. Three Philippine government vessels ignored repeated warnings and deliberately entered Huangyan Island's territorial waters, prompting the coast guard to take measures including verbal warnings, interception and control, and the use of water cannons, it said.

Zhang Qiyue, assistant director of the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies' Institute for Global Governance Studies, said the latest Philippine actions were larger, more organized and more multidimensional than previous sporadic incidents.

"They combined large-scale operations at sea with legal and diplomatic moves, showing that Manila is seeking to advance its claims through several channels at the same time," Zhang said.

The Philippines also deposited with the United Nations Secretariat a nautical chart setting out its claimed baselines, territorial sea and contiguous zone around Huangyan Island.

China firmly rejected the Philippines' delimitation of the so-called "baselines of the territorial sea" in a Foreign Ministry statement on Friday, calling the move illegal, null and void.

The ministry stressed that Huangyan Island has never been part of Philippine territory, which has been defined by a series of international treaties, and that Manila's territorial claim is completely baseless under international law.

It also reiterated that the so-called "award" of the unilaterally initiated "South China Sea arbitration" is illegal, null and void and has no binding force.

The developments came as 2026 marks the 10th anniversary of the announcement of the so-called arbitration award.

Zhang said the Foreign Ministry statement represented a continuation and further clarification of China's long-standing position on Huangyan Island.

It also helped the international community better understand the historical background of the issue, the legal basis of China's position and the nature of the Philippines' actions, she said.

New measures tighten island's conservation

Mechanism improves ecological governance, curbs activities harmful to marine habitats

By **LI MENGHAN**
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China's newly released management measures for the Huangyan Island National Nature Reserve are a significant step aimed at protecting the island's rich biodiversity, officials and experts said.

The 16-article management measures for the reserve, which is a newly established protected area in the South China Sea covering 3,523.67 hectares of coral reef ecosystems and rare marine habitats, were jointly issued on Saturday by the Ministry of Natural Resources, the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, the China Coast Guard and the People's Government of Hainan Province.

According to the measures, a coordination mechanism has been established to address major issues, strengthen collaboration and share information.

Huangyan Island, which is part of the Zhongsha Islands, features unique coral reef ecosystems and distinctive geological formations. It is home to numerous rare and endangered species, including hawksbill turtles, green sea turtles, giant clams, triton shells and tiger cowries, making it a marine biodiversity hot spot of significant ecological value.

Chen Danhong, director-general of the department of international cooperation at the Ministry of Natural Resources, noted that the measures were issued in response to urgent demands to protect the ecosystem as it faces heightened risks, including an abnormal rise in sea temperatures caused by climate change and extreme weather, human activities and potential outbreaks of harmful organisms.

"The measures provide an institutional basis for protection management and law enforcement. Their implementation will significantly improve the construction and management of the reserve, and they are of great significance for maintaining the health and stability of the South China Sea marine ecosystem," Chen said.

Under the measures, the Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for boundary surveys, planning review, resource protection and utilization management, asset accounting and registration, as well as the protection of territorial sea baseline points. The National Forestry and Grassland Administration supervises the reserve and reviews adjustments, planning and construction. The South China Sea bureau of the Ministry of Natural Resources, the designated management institution, handles daily protection, resource monitoring and ecological restoration.

The Hainan provincial government cooperates with the China Coast Guard on administrative law enforcement, while the local government assists the management institution with disaster prevention, safety management and emergency response measures.

The reserve is divided into a core protection zone of 1,242.55 hectares and a general control zone of 2,281.12 hectares. The measures prohibit entry except for activities authorized by laws and regulations or organized by the management institution for protection and management purposes. Fishing, mining, excavating corals, coral reefs and giant clams, and other activities that damage rare marine species and natural ecosystems are prohibited without approval.

The coast guard will establish a routine patrol system in collaboration with the management institution, deploying patrol personnel and equipment to deter and report violations. Violations will be prosecuted under applicable laws including the Ecological and Environmental Code, the Sea Areas Administration Law, the Island Protection Law, the Wildlife Protection Law, the Coast Guard Law and the regulations on nature reserves.

Jin Yongming, a distinguished professor at Ocean University of China's School of International Affairs and Public Administration in Shandong province, said the multiagency management model of the Huangyan Island reserve is shaped by its marine environment and geopolitical sensitivity, noting that it involves foreign affairs, politics and security — issues no single department can handle alone.

"The release of these management rules represents a significant step forward in safeguarding China's lawful maritime rights and interests at Huangyan Island," Jin said.

Bans: US refuses to accept a multipolar world order

From page 1

On that day, the Department of Homeland Security added 43 more Chinese companies to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Entity List in its largest-ever single expansion. Justifying the sweeping import bans under a "rebuttable presumption" of guilt, officials once again leaned heavily on broad rhetoric of national security and economic protectionism.

Two themes connect the bans announced in July.

First, there is a flawed belief inside the White House and among many who make up the political elite in Washington that the US is capable of going it alone in creating and sustaining the most sophisticated technologies. During both of his terms, the US president has spoken of a rebirth of US manufacturing; he has talked in tones of returning the US to those days long gone in which the country was the envy of the world because of what it produced and then sold domestically and internationally. There therefore needs to be a rationale as to why manufacturing is not returning and why the technological resurgence Washington has promised has not materialized, and it can't be because of decisions made in Washington.

Enter China. Claiming that China does not play by "the rules" allows for finger-pointing at a bogeyman. The sanctions offer fuel to the suggestion the US is responding forcefully and ethically.

More fundamentally, Washington increasingly appears to be redefining competition itself. Traditionally, economic leadership rested on producing better technologies, attracting more talent and creating more competitive industries. Increasingly, however, leadership is being pursued by restricting competitors' access to markets, capital, research partnerships and advanced technologies. Competition is no longer confined to outperforming rivals; it extends to shaping the conditions under which rivals are allowed to compete. That marks a significant shift in how economic power is exercised.

Second, the activities deliver a violent slap in the face to the US' long-standing professed belief in free trade.

In order to protect select domestic industries, Washington has repeatedly kicked to the curb one of its fundamental tenets: free trade is the best trade. Here again, one Washington insider after another will say that if only China played by "the rules" — yes, there is that phrase again — then these pesky bans might just go away.

Of course, those rules were written by the US. They are supported by other Western democracies. They are endorsed by the World Bank and other international agencies that are absolutely beholden to Washington. With all of that as the backdrop, maybe "rules" is not the correct word. Perhaps diktats is.

No, the US is not coming right out and saying it is running scared, but only the most naive of people cannot see the truth.

The US no longer holds sway on the international stage as it once did. It lacks the moral authority to lead by example. It alone does not produce the most cutting-edge items. It refuses to accept that a multipolar world defines the 21st century. Solid leadership would acknowledge those facts and adjust accordingly. But that is not Washington's way.

The world does not like that. Just a few days ago, a new poll released by the Pew Research Center found that people in 25 of the 36 surveyed countries held a more favorable view of China than of the US.

A nation confident in its people and in its ability to compete on the intricately connected world stage would roll up its sleeves and find real solutions. A scared nation blames and blames and blames.

The author is an associate professor at the Communication and Organizational Leadership Department, Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania. The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Robert Morris University. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Deadly attack



A law enforcement officer stands guard at the site of an explosion in Moscow on Saturday. Three people were killed and 21 others injured after an improvised explosive device detonated at a restaurant in central Moscow. Russia's National Anti-Terrorism Committee said a woman carrying the explosive device into the restaurant was killed when it detonated. ALEXANDER ZEMLIANICHENKO JR / XINHUA

Park: Views shift continuously depending on the weather and season

From page 1

The landscape was recognized as a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2020. Voted one of CNN's "24 Most Unusual Landscapes in the World" in 2025, the park is renowned for its otherworldly display of colors.

The Chinese name for the landscape, *danxia*, literally means "rosy clouds". It evokes the colors of the sky at dusk. First appearing in an ancient verse, the term was borrowed by Chinese geologists to describe these colorful landforms, conjuring up an image of the heavens spilling onto the earth.

A hashtag roughly translated as "Nature's Canvas" on social media has seen visitors from across China and beyond posting their own unedited proof of what they saw.

"The landscape is entirely natural," said Li Junling, deputy director of the scenic area's comprehensive management department.

Beneath the multicolored surface lies a geological epic: The thick layers of sandstone and mineral deposits from the time when dinosaurs still roamed the Earth were thrust upward by tectonic forces over millions of years and were then sculpted by wind and rain.

Some 35 distinct colors can be found in the park, each a page from the Earth's own diary — telling the story of a dry season, a flood, a shallow sea — a record of an ancient climate system.

The park, covering around 1,290 square kilometers, also straddles ancient Silk Road routes. Zhangye, known in ancient times as Ganzhou, was a crucial oasis in the Hexi Corridor, where merchants from Persia, Sogdiana and the Mediterranean once rested their camels and traded silk for spices. Centuries later, the Venetian merchant Marco Polo lingered here, describing a city adorned with temples and monasteries.

Today, travelers retrace his route on tour buses, yet the sense of wonder remains unchanged.

Mao Guodong, a Mexico-based traveler who returned to China for a two-month journey to explore its natural wonders, was awestruck.

"The landscape is breathtaking. It's truly one of nature's masterpieces," he said. Understanding how geological forces shaped the terrain turned a sightseeing stop into the highlight of his entire journey.

Chloe Choo, a visitor from Singapore, described the landscape as "absolutely breathtaking".

"I could hardly believe these colorful rocks were formed entirely by nature," she said. "The vibrant colors and straight layers look like the Earth painted itself."

Depending on the weather, season and angle of the sun, the views shift continuously, making the park a paradise for photographers. After rains, the colors deepen into jeweled tones; at sunrise and sunset, the hills blush as if lit from within.

For some families, the park serves as an outdoor classroom. At the No 4 viewing platform, Yang Ziwei from the Ningxia Hui autonomous region watched her daughter hold up a textbook — the cover image an exact match for the view before them. "Travel brings knowledge that can't be found in the classroom alone," Yang said.

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WORLD IN FOCUS



Crumbling edifice

Cost of rebuilding more than damage for quake-hit Venezuela, experts say

Two people stand beside the rubble of a collapsed building in Caraballeda, Venezuela, on July 27, one month after an earthquake struck the area. FEDERICO PARRA / AFP

Two earthquakes that rocked Venezuela on June 24 caused $19.6 billion in direct physical damage, but the cost of rebuilding could be twice that much or more, the World Bank said in an early assessment released on July 23.

The 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude quakes killed about 5,000 people, according to the government, destroying residential buildings, infrastructure and nonresidential buildings in the northern areas of the country, including the capital Caracas.

The government estimates that nearly 17,000 people were injured and nearly 18,000 remain homeless. The disaster, the country's deadliest earthquake since 1812, came at a time when socioeconomic conditions were already precarious, with a poverty rate of over 76 percent.

"The earthquake caused an estimated $19.6 billion in direct physical damage, a staggering figure for any economy and one that demands a coordinated response," said Susana Cordeiro Guerra, the World Bank vice president who oversees Latin America and the Caribbean.

"Without timely additional investment, the negative impact on productive capacity and living standards will slow the path to recovery," she said.

The bank completed its global rapid damage estimation using remote-based earthquake modeling, local seismic data, satellite imagery and damage reports from government, humanitarian agencies and others on the ground. The estimate does not include the cost of "building back better" through structural improvements or upgrading the construction type. Those costs, including debris clearance, could be two to two-and-a-half times the replacement costs, which could drive the total bill to close to $50 billion.





Left: People attend a vigil in Caracas, Venezuela, on July 24, in honor of the victims killed in twin earthquakes.
Right: A woman provides a haircut to a girl in a temporary shelter in Catia La Mar, La Guaira, Venezuela, on July 26.
PHOTOS BY LEONARDO FERNANDEZ VILORIA / REUTERS

'Far from over'

A month on, search efforts continue for bodies buried underneath rubble, but operations have evolved to focus on post-earthquake humanitarian aid and rebuilding. Recovering from the earthquakes in Venezuela will take years, according to the Red Cross.

"This disaster is far from over," said Scott Craig, spokesman for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Craig said that while in the immediate aftermath the focus had been on saving lives, now it was on caring for survivors.

"Survivors are living with anxiety, fear, sadness and sleeplessness as they grieve relatives, homes, jobs and livelihoods lost," he told reporters in Geneva.

Healthcare, mental health support and access to safe drinking water were the immediate priorities, he added, as many families were still relying on bottled water for drinking, cooking and washing.

"Recovery here will be measured in years, not weeks," said Craig. "Health centers, schools, water systems, power and sewerage were destroyed or badly damaged."

The pace of reconstruction would be a decisive factor in shaping the country's economic recovery and social outcomes. Without higher public and private investment, productive capacity and GDP would likely remain below pre-quake levels until at least 2036, the World Bank said.

Additional borrowing would add to Venezuela's already large debt stock, but could stoke stronger growth, which would gradually strengthen the country's fiscal position, it said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



A child rides a bicycle and performs tricks beside a temporary shelter with Chinese characters "disaster relief" on it, in Catia La Mar, La Guaira, Venezuela, on July 26. LEONARDO FERNANDEZ VILORIA / REUTERS







From left: Men work at the Simon Bolivar international airport, which was damaged by the twin earthquakes, in Maiquetia, Venezuela, on July 23. AFP
A woman shows a sign in Spanish that reads "They're our heroes; they deserve a hug" near the rubble of a collapsed building in Tanaguarena, Venezuela, on July 23.
A man sprays pesticides near the rubble of a building in Caraballeda, Venezuela, on July 22. PHOTOS BY JUAN BARRETO / AFP

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WORLD

China backs UN on AI governance

New agency seeks wider tech access, shared development for Global South

By **ZHAO HUANXIN**
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China will consult and cooperate with other countries through the broad platform of the United Nations on major issues concerning the future of global AI governance, guided by principles of openness, open-source cooperation, mutual benefit, joint contribution and shared benefits, China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Fu Cong said on Friday.

Fu made the remarks during a briefing at the UN headquarters, organized by China's UN mission. The briefing took place two weeks after the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance was held in Shanghai.

Fu said the conference was more than a platform for dialogue, exchange, and cooperation; it brought stakeholders together to facilitate the global flow of innovation resources for AI development and inject fresh momentum into international cooperation.

"More importantly, it focused on the defining issue of our times: how to ensure that artificial intelligence develops in ways that benefit all humanity," he told representatives from more than 70 countries and international organizations at the briefing.

Fu noted that Chinese President Xi Jinping outlined China's vision for building a just and equitable global AI governance system, presenting four observations: boosting innovation-driven development, ensuring AI remains secure and under human control, promoting mutual learning between civilizations, and improving global governance.

One of the conference's major outcomes was the launch of the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization, or WAICO, the world's first intergovernmental international organization dedicated to AI. Representatives of 29 countries signed the founding convention.

"It represents China's concrete response to the aspirations of the Global South and an important step toward bringing countries together for AI development and global governance," Fu said, adding that the organization welcomes the participation of all countries.

The ambassador said WAICO is designed to complement and reinforce the UN's work on AI governance by focusing on capacity building, policy dialogue, technical cooperation, and AI applications.

"China stands ready to strengthen policy coordination, institutional cooperation, and practical collaboration with the United Nations, and to support the UN in playing an even greater role in global AI governance," he said.

"We see the UN as the main channel and the main platform for global governance on AI," he said during a question-and-answer session.

Asked about regulation, Fu said governments must balance innovation against risk. "If you have too much regulation, then you stifle innovation," he said, while warning that giving companies free rein could expose societies to AI's inherent dangers.

Speaking at the briefing, Amandeep Gill, the UN secretary-general's envoy on technology, described this year's World AI Conference as "qualitatively different".

'Step forward'

He also said the Shanghai gathering marked "a significant step forward" in making AI capacity-building an international priority.

Gill said the UN secretary-general focused on capacity, safety and sustainability, and stressed that different initiatives should complement one another, with the United Nations retaining a central role.

"I think the UN should remain the inclusive home for AI governance," Gill said at the Q&A session of the briefing.

The briefing also heard talks by other representatives from countries across Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Moses Jere, a counselor and cyber/digital expert of Zambia's UN mission, said that computing remains the binding constraint for most African countries. The obstacle is neither ambition nor talent, but access to computing infrastructure, quality data, and comparable standards.

"The undertakings given in Shanghai on access to computing infrastructure and AI standards frameworks are therefore of real consequence," he said.

Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Pakistan's permanent representative to the United Nations, said the establishment of WAICO is timely and significant, as it provides a platform for countries, particularly those of the Global South, to strengthen national capacities and promote shared development.

The ambassador said that developing countries need more than access to finished AI products. They also need the data, computing capacity, models, tools, and the technical support to develop and adapt AI themselves.

"In this regard, the outcomes of the conference and the high-level meeting provide a clear and action-oriented framework for future international progress," he said.

Other speakers welcomed the establishment of WAICO and called for the conference's initiatives to be translated into practical capacity-building support for developing countries, with the broader goal of making AI more inclusive, widely accessible and mutually beneficial.

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Migrants pass through a broken fence as they leave Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta toward the Moroccan town of Fnideq following an attempted crossing at the Bab Sebta border, on Saturday. ABDEL MAJID BZIOUAT / AFP

Migrant influx adds to Europe's woes

By **EARLE GALE** in London
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Several European nations will push for a stronger border between the European Union and the world at a special meeting on Tuesday.

The talks were hastily arranged after more than 50,000 migrants swept over and around the border separating the North African Spanish enclave of Ceuta from Morocco on Thursday.

At least 72 people died during the mass influx, local officials said on Sunday. Most of the people who rushed into Spain's North African territory have returned to Morocco since the territory's largest mass migrant crossing.

"The latest figure that we have is 72," the government's delegate to Ceuta, Miguel Angel Perez Triano, told reporters, when asked about the number of fatalities.

Spain said on Friday it had escorted almost all of the migrants who entered Ceuta back over the border, but the sudden arrival of so many people demanding asylum and entry into the bloc led Italy to immediately suspend its participation in the EU's border-free travel area, known as the Schengen zone, a move Denmark and Finland supported.

The influx triggered a joint statement from 22 of the EU's 27 member states, calling on the bloc to strengthen its external borders and not allow weaknesses to "create the perception that illegal entry into the European Union is possible" because it would "encourage further attempts, undermine confidence in our common migration policy and have repercussions for all member states".

Spain responded to the criticism from fellow EU countries by saying most of the migrants who illegally entered Ceuta had headed back, and that nations that criticized its border enforcement in Ceuta had been "selfish, polarizing, and unlawful".

Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez wrote to President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen saying his country had quickly secured its border and prevented any "unauthorized onward movement toward continental Europe".

Fernando Grande-Marlaska, Spain's interior minister, said on Saturday the situation in Ceuta was almost back to normal.

"Almost all of (the migrants) have already left Ceuta," he said.

Tuesday's emergency talks are likely to be both a debriefing about what happened and a look at how to stop it happening again. And they will also likely include debate about the EU's Schengen Area.

The border-free travel zone that encompasses more than 450 million people and 29 countries in Europe means there is no need for checks at the borders between nations for people who are already within its external border.

Critics say it acts as a magnet for people who know they only need to crack one external border at its weakest point to have full access to the European continent.

Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said she wants the EU to look at all options, "including a suspension of Schengen cooperation".

Migrants who returned to Morocco on the weekend said hunger, exhaustion, and the lack of a warm welcome were their reasons for giving up on the idea of relocating to mainland Europe.

A waiter from Morocco told Reuters local people in the enclave had closed all the stores and made it clear they were not welcome: "They imposed a siege to force us to leave Ceuta by ourselves … They succeeded in their plan."

China, US business leaders seek deeper ties

By **MINLU ZHANG** in Washington
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Chinese and US business leaders hold a meeting in Washington DC on Friday. SHA HANTING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Chinese and US business leaders met in Washington DC to explore opportunities for deeper cooperation as the two countries continued high-level engagement and economic and trade exchanges while managing differences.

The meeting, held on Friday, came a day after Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng, who is also China's lead person for China-US economic and trade affairs, held a video call with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. The two sides had "candid, in-depth and constructive exchanges", while China expressed serious concerns over recent US trade and economic restrictions, according to Xinhua.

"There's this myth out there that American companies don't want to do business with China, that American companies are leaving China, or that they aren't investing in China or welcoming Chinese companies in the United States," Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, or USCBC, said.

"All of those are myths. All of those are false," he said. "American companies are committed to being in China. They're committed to partnering with Chinese companies."

Stein made the remarks on the sidelines of a meeting between a Chinese business delegation and representatives of USCBC member companies. The event was organized by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, or CCPIT, and the USCBC.

The USCBC is a nonprofit association representing around 270 US companies doing business in China, with members including major US companies such as Apple, Nvidia, Boeing, Ford, Amazon, Coca-Cola, JPMorganChase and ExxonMobil. The CCPIT is the largest trade and investment promotion agency in China, representing China's business community.

Ren Hongbin, chairman of the CCPIT, said the Chinese delegation's visit was aimed at implementing the consensus reached by the two countries' leaders and creating more room for cooperation between the Chinese and US business communities.

'Improvement in relations'

"We have seen improvement in bilateral relations, especially after the meeting between the two heads of state," Ren said.

According to the USCBC member survey released in June, 92 percent of surveyed US companies in China were profitable last year and 95 percent said the Chinese market helps them "stay globally competitive".

"Those are huge numbers," Ren said, adding the survey results reflected "the commitment and strong interest of US companies in China".

Ren also said US companies are expected to make up the largest national group of business participants at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation CEO Summit when China hosts the 2026 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting later this year.

"APEC is an incredible magnet. It brings together some of the world's most advanced and dynamic economies," Stein told China Daily.

"It's an unparalleled opportunity not just to talk with one company or one country, but to engage with officials and businesses from across the region and build consensus on issues that matter to companies and economies alike," he said.

"This is really about plurilateral and multilateral diplomacy and creating an environment across multiple economies where companies can thrive and economies can grow."

The Washington DC meeting followed stops by the CCPIT-led Chinese business delegation in Utah and Illinois, where Ren said the group sought to strengthen ties and create more opportunities for cooperation between Chinese and US businesses.

Africa takes lead in BRI investment, report says

By **EDITH MUTETHYA** in Nairobi
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Africa retained its position as the leading destination for the Belt and Road Initiative investment in the first half of this year, attracting $33.5 billion in Chinese investment, up 254 percent from the same period last year, as manufacturing and energy projects gathered pace amid shifting global trade dynamics.

A report, jointly published by the Green Finance & Development Center at Fudan University in Shanghai and the University of Queensland Business School in Australia, said Africa's strong performance was driven by increased investment in manufacturing, energy and infrastructure.

Ethiopia recorded the largest growth in BRI engagement globally, attracting more than $18.9 billion.

The East African country has secured the world's largest Chinese energy investment through green energy development agreements worth more than $14 billion between the Ethiopian Investment Commission and China's Ming Yang Smart Energy Group.

The project is expected to greatly facilitate Ethiopia's green transformation. In the first phase, the project will include a $7.5 billion 8.4-gigawatt renewable energy project comprising both wind power and solar energy.

In the second phase, the Chinese company will invest an additional $7.3 billion in green ammonia production, as well as the manufacturing of electric transmission and wind turbine equipment.

The investment is expected to accelerate industrial development, create jobs, facilitate technology transfer and boost foreign exchange earnings.

Egypt also recorded a sharp rise in Chinese investment announcements in the first half of the year, reaching $12.2 billion during the period, according to the report.

China's Xinfeng Steel is investing $10 billion in Egypt to develop an industrial and steel manufacturing complex in the Ain Sokhna industrial zone. The facility will focus on producing automotive steel and other large-scale industrial steel products.

Since its launch in 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative has significantly boosted infrastructure development, trade, and investment across Africa. Flagship projects continue to expand their positive impact on local development.

Highest level

Globally, BRI engagement reached its highest level for any first half since the initiative was launched, totaling $49.8 billion in investments and $76.5 billion in construction contracts.

Energy remained a major driver of Chinese overseas engagement. Total energy-related BRI investment reached $36.3 billion in the first half of this year, nearly double the level recorded during most first-half periods since 2013, surpassed only by 2025.

Investment in green energy reached a record high, with $14.3 billion committed to wind, solar and waste-to-energy projects, alongside $5.3 billion in hydropower. Overall, China's investment in green energy and hydropower more than doubled in the first half of the year, compared with the same period last year.

Since the launch of the BRI, cumulative Chinese engagement has exceeded $1.5 trillion, comprising $926 billion in construction contracts and $614 billion in investments.

Christoph Nedopil Wang, founding director of the Green Finance & Development Center, said he expects BRI engagement to remain strong through the rest of the year despite global economic uncertainty driven by US trade measures and volatility in fossil fuel markets linked to tensions around the Strait of Hormuz.

"With strong engagement in sectors requiring significant investment such as mining, manufacturing, and increasing ability to scale energy investment as well as data centers, I expect deal size to also remain large (in the future)," he said.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Bessent's 'underwater kicking' allegation perfect metaphor for US' 'water polo' play

While it is a memorable metaphor, it is also an almost perfect inversion of reality. Speaking to Fox Business, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent compared Sino-US economic relations to a water polo match, claiming that "Under the water, the Chinese seem to have done a lot of kicking lately", and that "If we have to, we'll kick back".

But Washington has not ceased expanding restrictions on Chinese technology and industry. In May, it tightened artificial intelligence chip export controls by closing so-called "loopholes" for Chinese-headquartered companies operating overseas, extending US jurisdiction far beyond its borders.

In June, the Pentagon baselessly added 65 Chinese entities to its Section 1260H List of alleged "Chinese military companies". Then, in late July, the US Federal Communications Commission moved to block imports of Chinese-made advanced robotics and power inverters, despite acknowledging the restrictions would raise costs and slow aspects of the US' own AI development.

The pattern continued on Friday, when Washington placed over 40 Chinese entities on its so-called "Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Entity List" — just one day after Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng held what both sides described as a candid and constructive video call with Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.

This is not evidence of Chinese "kicking", but a US campaign of "underwater kicking" that has become broader, more systematic and increasingly disconnected from its stated goal of stabilizing relations.

Bessent's metaphor therefore reveals more than what he perhaps intended. The US administration casts itself as the reluctant "rules-abiding" player, forced into a defensive posture by what it projects as Chinese "dirty tricks". Yet it is Washington that is resorting to such unsporting behavior, erecting new barriers across semiconductors, artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing and trade.

The US has stretched "national security" to cover virtually all major sectors, disregarding the strong appeals of the US business community. By using administrative powers to disrupt commercial exchanges, Washington continues to push its de facto "decoupling" and "supply chain fragmentation" strategy. These coercive actions benefit no one — they are classic cases of market distortion and unilateral coercion.

Reuters recently photographed Bessent's own handwritten notes during a Cabinet meeting, revealing plans to purchase billions of dollars' worth of Japanese yen. The carefully visible notebook might be an exercise in signaling financial markets without making an official announcement — the very sort of below-the-surface maneuvering that Bessent hypocritically accused China of.

The US seeks to contain China's development while preserving stable ties. In practice, however, Washington treats periods of stability as tactical pauses — opportunities to secure what it still needs from China, notably rare earths, before pressing ahead with its broader strategy of constraining China's rise. That explains why before and after almost every dialogue between the two sides the US introduces another round of restrictions.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio acknowledged this week that any economic or military conflict between the US and China would be catastrophic for both countries and the wider world. On that point, at least, there should be little disagreement.

Despite this, the US administration remains hellbent on pressing ahead with its ill-advised China policy — a strategy that has increasingly come to weigh on the US economy itself. It is no coincidence that Bessent's remarks coincided with second-quarter US GDP figures showing annualized growth slowing to 1.5 percent, down from 2.1 percent in the first quarter. Washington has long had a familiar instinct when domestic headwinds gather: redirect attention outward.

Bessent tried to dismiss the figures as "very noisy", blaming "technical factors". But a neutral observer might reach a rather different conclusion.

Bearing the bigger picture of Sino-US relations in mind, Beijing, for its part, has responded rationally to the US moves to protect China's legitimate rights and interests.

The US Treasury chief should remember one lesson from the sport he invokes. In water polo, the player kicking beneath the surface often does so because he is struggling to stay afloat. The US' technological lead remains in some sectors. But preserving that advantage requires confidence, not perpetual escalation. If Washington continues mistaking competition for a zero-sum game, it may find that the turbulence it complains about is largely of its own making.

Tokyo further dismantles postwar order

Japan's National Intelligence Bureau — the country's first centralized foreign intelligence body since the end of World War II — held its inaugural meeting on Friday, chaired by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi.

This represents another troubling shift in Tokyo's security policies, as it is a significant step in Japan's systematic push toward remilitarization and a challenge to the postwar international order.

The 730-person bureau, set up under the National Intelligence Council Establishment Act that passed Japan's upper house in May, ends a postwar arrangement that left the country's intelligence divided across the Cabinet Office, the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Defense, the National Police Agency and the Ministry of Justice.

This design breaks with the long-standing tradition of decentralized intelligence checks and balances in postwar Japan. Even more concerning are the bureau's vague functional boundaries and the near absence of oversight. The concentration of power and the lack of supervision make it easy for the intelligence system to become a tool for right-wing politicians to manipulate politics and suppress dissent, rendering the checks and balances of the Diet and public opinion ineffective.

Viewed from a historical perspective, this system bears dangerously similar genetic traits to the espionage governance of Japanese militarism before and during World War II. The so-called "Special Higher Police", known as *Tokko* and established in 1911, once suppressed progressive forces domestically and acted as a vanguard of aggression abroad. The so-called "Cabinet Intelligence Bureau", established in 1940, provided an integrated intelligence hub for the invasion of China and the waging of the Pacific War.

Japan's wartime intelligence agencies were compulsorily dissolved following its defeat. However, the postwar settlement left the deeper structures of militaristic thinking largely intact. With Tokyo now establishing a modern intelligence framework under revised security legislation, the prospect of a militaristic intelligence ethos being revived — albeit in contemporary guise — is a risk that warrants serious attention.

Tokyo's deeper intention is to pave the way for military expansion. Since the Takaichi government took office, it has accelerated the push to lift the ban on "collective self-defense" and amend Article 9 of the pacifist Constitution.

Japan's military budget for the fiscal year 2026 exceeded 9.04 trillion yen ($57.36 billion) for the first time, a record high. The Japanese government has abandoned the principle of "exclusive defense", accelerated the development of long-range offensive weapons, relaxed arms exports and participated in joint military exercises with many other countries. Against this backdrop, the core task of the National Intelligence Bureau is precisely to build an all-encompassing intelligence hub for military expansion, forming a complete chain of "intelligence coordination — high-level decision making — military implementation".

Article 9 of Japan's Constitution renounces the country's right to remilitarization. But the Takaichi government is systematically abandoning its postwar commitments. From the "Special Higher Police" to the new intelligence system, the right-wing forces of Japan are revisiting the path of intelligence centralization.

For nations that suffered from Japanese aggression in WWII, the number "731", the code name of the Imperial Japanese Army's germ warfare unit, carries painful memories. For Japan to choose July 31 as the date to launch the new intelligence agency is nothing but an open insult and provocation.

Japan's push for intelligence system reform poses a serious threat to regional peace and stability. The international community must be highly vigilant against the moves being taken by Tokyo. In the face of the rise of neo-militarism in Japan, China should take targeted countermeasures with a firm commitment to safeguarding its national security. It is necessary for China to continuously enhance all-weather, multi-domain counterintelligence reconnaissance and deterrence capabilities.

Japan's intelligence-gathering and military activities should be closely monitored to ensure that China's core interests are not violated. A robust security firewall for technology, the economy and digital supply chains must also be established to tightly guard against Japanese intelligence infiltration and cognitive warfare threats.

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Song Chen



Opinion Line

Proposed law part of efforts needed to curb cyberbullying

At the end of July, China solicited public feedback on the draft of long-awaited legislation targeting online bullying. This legal framework is both necessary and timely, yet it represents just one step in a broader effort to combat the pervasive issue of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying has become cross-platform and organized, impacting real-world lives. It disrupts online order, inflicts lasting psychological harm on victims and damages the online business environment. The harm caused by cyberbullying is as real and damaging as physical violence.

In recent years, incidents of online abuse have become alarmingly common, ranging from doxing — publicly revealing private information about someone with the intention of harassing or seeking revenge — to coordinated smear campaigns. Liu Xuezhou, a young man looking for his biological parents, took his own life after enduring relentless online speculation and harassment. Similarly, Zheng Linghua, a young woman known for her distinctive pink hair, ended her life following vicious attacks on her appearance. These heartbreaking tragedies are not isolated cases but rather indicative of a widespread social problem.

Dismissing online abuse as mere "internet quarrels" is a grave injustice to those who are the victims of it. Words can hurt deeply, and the anonymity and viral nature of social networking sites make it difficult to delete and escape torrents of abuse. Most victims feel powerless to fight back, often choosing silence and retreating into a shell in search of peace and safety.

The proposed legislation is a direct response to the pernicious nature of such deeds. If enacted, it would provide victims with the legal recourse they need to defend themselves, clearly define the responsibilities of governments, platforms, institutions and users, and ensure that offenders face real consequences for their actions.

This coordination across various fronts in the draft law is crucial because online bullying requires collective efforts. Platforms, in particular, must not prioritize engagement and online views over responsibility and user safety. They should take proactive measures to prevent and address abuse — through early warning systems, content moderation and accessible reporting channels — while cooperating with law enforcement agencies to identify and penalize offenders. Early intervention is essential to prevent harmful comments from spiraling out of control.

No victim should feel isolated or helpless in the face of online abuse. The cyberspace regulators need to conduct routine oversight, and the public security authorities must act swiftly on complaints — investigating, gathering evidence and providing timely support to victims. The rule of law must underpin online safety, ensuring a secure digital environment for all users.

It's encouraging to see the draft legislation requires educational authorities and schools to include anti-bullying content in their curricula, as individual internet users also have a crucial role to play in enhancing their legal awareness and digital literacy. Under the draft, if students are involved in online abuse, schools must intervene promptly and take preventive action to address the issue and support affected individuals. True progress will occur when every individual and institution embraces the values of respect for others, reverence for the law and accountability for their words and actions.

Ultimately, only by fostering a culture of respect and responsibility can we build a digital environment that protects everyone from harm and prevents us from harming others. This collective effort will help create a cleaner, more orderly cyberspace for all, where individuals can engage freely and safely without fear of abuse or harassment. The proposed law is part of that effort.

— CAO YIN, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Plan aimed at developing more high-value patents

Editor's note: *The State Council, China's Cabinet, recently issued a plan to protect and utilize intellectual property. Officials of the China National Intellectual Property Administration attended a news conference at the State Council Information Office late last month to outline what China will do to improve IP production in the coming years. Below are excerpts of the remarks made by one of the officials, Liang Xinxin, who is director general of the administration's Strategic Planning Department.*

High-value invention patents cover four categories. The first are those in emerging industries of strategic importance, such as next-generation information technology and new energy sectors. The second are invention patents with an overseas patent family. The third are patents that have been maintained for more than 10 years. The fourth are invention patents that have won the National Science and Technology Awards or the China Patent Awards.

At present, patents in emerging industries of strategic importance account for over 70 percent of China's high-value invention patents. This share is expected to rise further during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period.

A target was set to increase the number of high-value invention patents per 10,000 people to more than 22 during the 15th Five-Year Plan period, an increase of more than six compared with the end of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period. This reflects the country's confidence in improving its innovation capacity.

The country has set out five priorities for protecting and utilizing intellectual property during the 15th Five-Year Plan period.

First, to further bolster the development of an innovation-driven economy, the country will continue refining patent laws, regulations and policies and ensure timely and effective protection for major scientific and technological innovations. It will also promote the commercialization of patents on a regular basis.

Second, the country will strengthen policy guidance to foster more renowned trademark brands with global influence and boost the development of the "brand economy".

In recent years, China has vigorously advanced the building of brands, cultivating a growing number of domestic brands that enjoy popularity both at home and abroad.

Third, China will continue to boost growth of different regions by promoting local special products. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, the country's geographical indication products played an active role in creating jobs in rural areas and raising farmers' incomes. The country will further strengthen the protection of GIs to provide stronger support for comprehensive rural vitalization.

Fourth, China will work to better support the development of the digital economy. It will keep enhancing the protection of intellectual property in the integrated circuit sector by effectively implementing the newly revised Regulations on the Protection of Layout-Designs of Integrated Circuits. Meanwhile, it will advance efforts to formulate rules governing the protection of data-related intellectual property.

Fifth, the country will continue to uphold an open economy. It will strengthen the research on foreign intellectual property laws and policies, and improve its guidance for Chinese companies to handle overseas intellectual property disputes.

It will also align closely with high-standard international economic and trade rules, continue to provide equal protection for the intellectual property of both domestic and foreign-invested enterprises, deepen intellectual property cooperation with major trading partners, and strive to build a market-oriented, law-based and world-class business environment.

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VIEWS

Pu Yixing

Spark curiosity to build the bridge

Every generation worries that the next is drifting away from classical culture.

The proposed remedies are consistently the same: teach more history, assign more classics, build more museums and preserve more heritage.

Yet, the anxiety never disappears.

Perhaps that is because we keep mistaking preservation for transmission. Culture survives not because it is protected, but because it is rediscovered. And for each generation, rediscovery begins not with obligation but with curiosity.

I learned this lesson in an unlikely place: a video game. As a child, I struggled through *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the Chinese historical epic that shaped generations of East Asian imagination. The novel is one of China's greatest literary achievements, but to a young reader it can feel forbidding.

Its language belongs to another era, the cast of characters is immense and the political intrigues demand patience that many children simply do not yet possess. I finished it because I thought I was supposed to.

Years later, I found myself playing a strategy game set in the Three Kingdoms period. For the first time, history became immersive rather than instructional. Instead of trying to remember alliances and famous battles, I was making decisions and fighting battles myself.

When the game ended, I did something no teacher had ever persuaded me to do: I began reading history voluntarily.

Soon I was searching historical records, comparing fact with fiction, reading *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, and eventually writing a song about Sun Shangxiang, a legendary figure of the era — sister of Sun Quan and wife of Liu Bei.

Only later did I discover that my story was not unique. Across Chinese social media, countless young people trace their fascination with the Three Kingdoms not to a classroom but to a game.

That should tell us something. For decades, educators have debated how to convince young people that classical culture matters. Many creators have quietly found an answer: they stopped trying to persuade and started making culture irresistible.

The medium is not the point. Curiosity is. This realization shaped my work when I began writing my first solo album, drawing inspiration from figures including Pu Songling, a Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) writer, the fourth-century calligrapher Wang Xizhi and the Venetian traveler Marco Polo.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Marco Polo fascinated me for a particular reason.

In China today, many children recognize his name before they know anything about the man who crossed Eurasia in the 13th century. They know him instead as a hero in a mobile game.

A fictional character can be the door to a real historical figure.

When I decided to write a song about Marco Polo, I did not want to summarize his travels.

History textbooks already do that well enough. Instead, I immersed myself in the details of his journey — his years in what is now Beijing, his visits to Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Sichuan provinces in China, the vast distances he crossed, and the civilizations he encountered along the Silk Road.

Those discoveries reshaped my understanding of him.

So rather than retelling history, I embedded it inside a metaphor.

A worn pair of sheepskin boots carries the dust of Persian deserts. Silver coins bloom into lotus flowers. A scimitar leaves its trace on bamboo slips. These images do not explain history outright. Instead, they invite listeners to wonder about their origins.

Curiosity is more powerful than explanation because it nudges people to explore.

The lyric I value most says, "The greatest adventure is admitting you have never truly discovered."

It sounds paradoxical. Explorers are remembered for making discoveries.

But genuine discovery begins with abandoning certainty.

Marco Polo did not come to China merely to confirm what he already believed. He encountered a civilization larger, more sophisticated and more surprising than anything he had imagined. The real breakthrough was not geographical but intellectual. He recognized that his previous understanding had been incomplete.

That may be the most valuable lesson his journey offers.

Every society is vulnerable to inherited assumptions about places it has never seen. Every culture can get trapped in stories told by someone else. The only lasting antidote is curiosity — the willingness to look again, and to discover that reality is richer than imagination.

This is also why I hope more young people around the world will experience China for themselves. Not because they should travel out of obligation, and certainly not because a song tells them to.

The purpose of art is to inspire questions, not give instructions.

If a listener finishes my song about Marco Polo and decides to explore the Silk Road, to learn why a Venetian merchant traveled so far east, or simply to wonder what he actually found here seven centuries ago, then the song has already succeeded.

That is how classical culture survives. Not by demanding reverence, but by rewarding curiosity.

Creators often speak about preserving tradition, but preservation is only the beginning. Our responsibility is not to enshrine the past behind glass cases, but to make it resonate in the present — through film, games, music, animation, short videos or whatever form allows a new generation to encounter it as something living rather than distant.

The bridge matters more than the monument.

When I was a child, no bridge connected me to *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. A game built one. Music allowed me to build another.

If my work inspires someone else to cross that bridge — to Pu Songling's strange spirits, to Wang Xizhi's calligraphy, to Marco Polo's long journey across Eurasia — then I have fulfilled what I believe every creator should aspire to.

Not simply preserve the past. But make someone eager to discover it.

The author is a Chinese singer, writer and actor.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Huang Ronghuai and Xu Lin

Reimagining education in the era of AI

The intelligent society is a new stage of social development in which artificial intelligence is deeply embedded in daily life. From production lines to classrooms, AI reshapes how we learn, work and govern. This era is characterized by human-machine collaboration, cross-sector integration and co-creation.

In education, this transformation is bringing about systemic changes, reshaping knowledge generation, educational institutions and talent cultivation. The 2026 Stanford AI Index Report indicates that AI's influence on society has never been more pronounced. But while AI capabilities and adoption accelerate rapidly, education systems are still struggling to adapt.

The fundamental purpose of education is still human development. Education should enable learners to develop judgment, responsibility, creativity, cooperation and moral agency. AI undoubtedly creates significant opportunities for education.

It can support personalized learning, adaptive feedback, language access, remote tutoring and more responsive learner support.

However, these opportunities are accompanied by substantial risks. Without clear educational goals, ethical safeguards and institutional guidance, AI may intensify inequalities, encourage superficial learning and weaken learner agency.

Therefore, the key issue is not whether AI should be used in education, but under what educational principles, institutional arrangements and social responsibilities it should be used.

This concern resonates with UNESCO's call for a new social contract for education, which emphasizes education as a public endeavor and a common good grounded in human dignity, social justice, cultural diversity, care, reciprocity and solidarity, all geared toward sustainable development. AI isn't just another educational tool; it is reshaping the educational contract and the relationship among stakeholders in education. Education systems must therefore renew the foundational pact of learning and education to support human development, social responsibility and sustainable futures.

Three long-term tensions are particularly important in this process. First, the conflict between immediate gains and long-term human development. AI can improve efficiency, convenience and performance.

It can generate answers, summarize texts and produce polished outputs rapidly. But education cannot be evaluated only by short-term productivity or visible outcomes. It must also cultivate long-term capacities such as attention, judgment, character, resilience and responsibility. If education is organized primarily around efficiency, its formative function will be weakened.

Second, the tension between individual awareness and collective consciousness. In AI-rich environments, information, opinions and emotions are increasingly mediated and amplified by platforms and algorithms.

Learners may be exposed to collective judgments before they have developed the capacity for independent reflection. Education must therefore strengthen learners' ability to ask questions, evaluate evidence, resist conformity and form reasoned judgments.

Last, the tussle between instrumental rationality and habitual dependence. While AI tools can assist learners in solving problems more efficiently, excessive reliance on them may result in cognitive outsourcing, whereby learners mistake the acquisition of answers for the development of understanding. The educational challenge is not to keep learners away from AI, but to ensure that AI complements but doesn't substitute cognitive engagement, inquiry and reflection.

To address these tensions, education must cultivate Intrinsic, Authentic, Agentic and Active learners. IAAA learners are intrinsically motivated by curiosity, meaning and autonomy; authentically connected to real-world problems, personal identities and meaningful social contexts; agentic in exercising voice, choice, goal-setting and responsibility; and active in constructing knowledge through inquiry, experimentation, creation and reflection.

Such learners are not passive recipients of information or algorithmic recommendations. They are self-directed, using AI responsibly without becoming dependent on it, maintaining human judgment, and linking personal growth with public responsibility.

However, learner self-commitment requires more than individual will. It depends on the coordinated efforts of multiple stakeholders. The renewed education pact should be a multilayered agreement connecting society, government, schools, families, teachers and learners.

Society and culture provide the value foundation of the common good, equity, inclusion and shared responsibility. Government and policy provide institutional guarantees through public resources, regulation, accountability and governance.

Schools and families translate social expectations into learning environments, curriculum, pedagogy and developmental support. Teachers and students sustain the core human relationship of education through care, engagement, feedback and adaptation. At the center are IAAA learners, whose self-commitment and development give the entire pact its educational meaning.

China's recent strides in becoming a leader in education, advancing a learning society and promoting AI-enabled educational transformation provide a meaningful reference for this renewal. The Smart Education of China platform reflects the idea of digital education as public infrastructure, expanding access to quality learning resources and supporting lifelong learning.

The AI Plus Education Action Plan integrates AI with curriculum reform, teacher development, rural education support, talent cultivation and education governance. Its significance lies not just in AI application, but in building a coordinated educational ecosystem that supports high-quality education, lifelong learning and modernization.

The future of education in the intelligent society will not be determined solely by technological innovation.

It will depend on whether societies can embed AI within a broader educational pact that protects human dignity, strengthens learner agency, supports the development of IAAA learners, and advances inclusive, equitable and lifelong learning. Only when AI serves human development and sustainable futures can it truly serve education.

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

Rubhesh Jha and Victoria Strelets

Sustainable procurement driving green growth and decarbonization

China's 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30) places new emphasis on green manufacturing and low-carbon industrial upgrading. This supports the national goal of peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and realizing carbon neutrality by 2060.

However, much of the debate around this transition focuses on factories, technology and finance. Less attention goes to procurement — the daily decisions buyers make about which suppliers to select and which contracts to sign.

Sustainable procurement means building environmental criteria into sourcing decisions from the start, not after price and quality are settled. This idea is moving from principle into practice worldwide.

Procurement carries more weight than its quiet reputation suggests. In many manufacturing sectors, the majority of a product's total carbon footprint sits upstream, in the materials and components a company buys rather than in what it makes. This means a buyer's sourcing decisions often shape a company's climate performance more than what its factory floor does.

Consider a common scenario. A senior buyer compares two suppliers of the same component. One offers a lower price. The other charges more but can document its energy use, water use and recycling.

When sustainability criteria exist from the beginning, buyers can make this choice with confidence. When those criteria are added later, they tend to disappear once cost pressure rises.

The calculation also looks different over time. A supplier with cleaner processes may cost more today but often proves more stable tomorrow, since it faces fewer regulatory penalties, less exposure to carbon pricing and steadier access to export markets with strict environmental rules. Buyers who weigh total cost over several years, rather than the price on a single invoice, tend to reach a different conclusion than those who do not.

This is where much of the real work of decarbonization happens. A buyer managing sourcing across China and wider Asian supply networks increasingly negotiates supplier commitments on emissions reporting as a routine part of contracting, alongside price and delivery timelines.

Global Lens

Training and shared investment in cleaner equipment matter more than strict rules on their own.

Phased supplier development programs help smaller manufacturers meet basic environmental benchmarks step by step. Training and shared investment in cleaner equipment matter more than strict rules on their own. Some call this buyer-led greening.

This kind of collaboration is expanding beyond manufacturing processes into product design itself. European buyers increasingly work with suppliers on packaging, durability and repairability, not simply requiring compliance but helping suppliers get there. As companies prepare for the EU's Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation, this has become a routine part of supplier development rather than a one-time audit.

One of us witnessed this directly in a recent sourcing decision. Two suppliers offered similar products. The lower-cost one used conventional plastic packaging and could provide only limited documentation on material compliance. The other was willing to redesign its packaging with recycled materials, cut unnecessary plastic and provide full documentation, including PFAS-free and RoHS declarations. The second supplier was chosen. It reduced compliance risk, aligned with upcoming EU packaging rules and met customers' sustainability expectations.

A related factor is whether a supplier can provide replacement parts across a product's life cycle. Suppliers that support repair over full replacement help extend product life and reduce waste, a core principle of the circular economy the EU is promoting. This is also an opening for Chinese suppliers to strengthen their competitiveness by supporting longer product life cycles.

Digital tools are making this easier. Supplier traceability platforms and simple emissions-tracking software now let even mid-sized buyers verify claims that once required lengthy audits. As these tools become cheaper and more common, verifying a supplier's environmental performance is turning from a specialist task into a standard part of sourcing work.

International practice offers useful reference points. In the European Union, large retailers require tiered supplier disclosure, starting with basic energy reporting and expanding to full carbon accounting over several years. In Germany, automakers pair procurement standards with joint supplier training, so upstream vendors do not bear the full cost alone.

These examples show that the pace of change depends less on the strictness of a rule and more on the support that comes with it.

China's State-owned enterprises have already moved in this direction. A growing number of centrally administered firms build green criteria into procurement design, from supplier scoring systems to long-term sourcing contracts.

Extending this approach into private manufacturing supply chains, especially among small and medium-sized exporters, could speed progress further.

Smaller exporters often want to meet these standards but lack the resources. A shared, cross-provincial registry of green suppliers would build on the momentum already underway. It would allow a supplier that has been verified once to serve as a trusted partner for many buyers, rather than repeating the same disclosure work for each new customer.

This would also make China's own progress easier to see and measure. Consistent supplier data, gathered through routine procurement rather than special reporting exercises, gives policymakers a clearer picture of how the low-carbon transition is unfolding on the ground.

Supply chains do not decarbonize on their own. They decarbonize one sourcing decision at a time, repeated across thousands of buyers and suppliers every day.

As China advances its low-carbon transition, procurement deserves a bigger place in that story. It is not a technical afterthought.

It is the mechanism through which national targets turn into results on the ground, one contract at a time.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

LI YANQIN

When village paths meet the world

China's booming rural inbound tourism builds new cross-border cultural connections



The "China Travel" map is experiencing a quiet shift. Overseas visitors who once contented themselves with city walks in Beijing and Shanghai are now boarding early-morning buses bound for rural areas, walking into tea terraces, ancient pear orchards and Miao embroidery workshops in Yunnan and Guizhou provinces, and other parts of China.

The rural turn in China's inbound tourism is not a fad. Behind it are practical enablers: relaxed visa waivers, smoother payment and language services, and a rural transport grid that now reaches once-isolated valleys. But the deeper pull is cultural. Foreign travelers are tired of algorithm-fed sameness; they want variety, warmth and the texture of other people's ordinary lives. Chinese villages — with their 100-year trees, harvest rituals and courtyard hospitality — offer exactly that.

Tourism, in this sense, is no longer a transactional industry. It is a medium through which the world re-encounters China outside the metropolis, and through which villagers meet the world without leaving home.

The keyword is resonance. Rural tourism works only when multiple actors see one another: Farmers want income yet wish to keep their rhythm of life; visitors seek novelty yet treasure sincere encounter; operators expect returns; and government must balance development, conservation and the public good. The task is not to erase these differences but to convert them into shared values. The most moving village scenes are about how a craft survives, why an old tree is never cut down, and how a festival turns a Tuesday into a ceremony. They are entries into Chinese society, written not on the page but in soil, thread and blossom.

The ancient pear orchard system, home to more than 9,400 pear trees over a century old in Shichuan town, Gansu province, was inscribed in 2025 as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems site by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. The village did not fence the trees into a museum. It banned new construction in the core zone, gave every old tree a digital file, paired traditional pruning maintenance with modern sensors, and stretched a seasonal economy into a year-long cycle of blossoms, homestays, pear vinegar and farming workshops. During the 2026 pear-blossom season, Shichuan town drew over 1 million visitors; more than 85 percent of local households now earn from tourism-related work.

Conservation of the agricultural heritage is funded by the very revenue it helps generate. Heritage, in other words, is not the opposite of development. Handled well, it is the engine.

However, rural tourism depends on a delicate social compact. A village is a place to visit, but above all, a place to live: those who do not run guesthouses still breathe the noise, traffic and price vibrations. Outside capital brings markets but can leak profits; visitor cameras amplify praise and grievance alike. Whether tourism ends in co-creation or joint destruction depends on one central thing — fairness. Not simply equal splits of the ticket money, but proportionate voice and return. Villagers, as permanent stakeholders, must share both the benefit and the decision. Young returnees must find reasons to stay, as true wealth lies not in annual dividends but in accumulated skills, collaborative abilities and market insights — assets no external investor can take away.

Digital technology connects villages to broader markets and carries travel experiences farther. Short videos can take China's tea terraces to a screen in Lisbon; a visitor who keeps posting such videos, unknowingly becomes a narrator of China's story.

Scale, too, needs redesign. A single village has finite resources and reception capacity. For rural tourism to go further, villages must form a division of labor among themselves. For instance, Xidi, Xixinan and Nanxinan villages, in Anhui's Huangshan area, coordinate rather than compete on tourist resources. Xidi leans on cultural heritage, Xixinan on eco-art and Nanxinan on tofu cuisine and suburban leisure. They greet guests together at the high-speed train station. Xidi's "village partnership" model was showcased at the UN Tourism "Best Tourism Villages" 2025 annual conference and cited as a good-practice example. Neighboring places moved from poaching tourists to piping them to one another, from solo branding to shared brand.

The numbers give the trend its spine. China now has 19 villages on the UN Tourism "Best Tourism Villages" list — the most for any country — after the 2025 round added Digang in Zhejiang province, Huanggang in Guizhou province, Jikayi in Sichuan province and Dongluo in Jiangsu province.

Rural tourism, seen this way, is not a soft sidebar to China's development story. It is a hard case of how governance philosophy becomes lived income: protect the old tree, include the quiet villagers, let the visitor become a witness, let the neighboring village be an ally. The West often narrates rural revival as preservation versus progress. China's villages are suggesting a different equation — heritage as attraction, hospitality as diplomacy, and a single blossom season as a meeting point between the local and the global.

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WU HEPING / FOR CHINA DAILY



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XU HONG AND HUANG CHENGKUN

From 'building villages' to 'developing villagers'

The country should combine investment in physical assets with investment in people to promote high-quality development of rural tourism



Xu Hong



Huang Chengkun

At the first meeting of the Central Commission for Financial and Economic Affairs under the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee in May 2023, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, stressed that "investment in physical assets should be closely integrated with investment in people".

The fourth plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee last October and the Central Economic Work Conference held at the end of 2025 made corresponding arrangements, while the outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for national economic and social development further specified relevant tasks. The concept of "investing in people" represents a concrete application of the people-centered development philosophy in China's economic and social development in the new era.

As an essential component of Chinese modernization, rural vitalization is ultimately about the vitalization of people. In recent years, rural tourism has played an increasingly important role in promoting rural industrial integration, expanding channels for villagers' income growth, and unlocking the value of rural resources. However, it should also be recognized that rural tourism development should not be limited to "building attractions, upgrading spaces and attracting visitors". In some areas, villagers still have a limited role to play in decision-making, lack sufficient capacity to participate in tourism development and are weakly connected to the distribution of tourism benefits. Consequently, tourism development has not yet been fully aligned with the broader goal of improving the overall well-being and capabilities of rural residents. Achieving high-quality development of rural tourism requires closely combining investment in physical assets with investment in people.

First, rural tourism should shift from "building villages" to "developing villagers" by strengthening residents' capacity to participate in development. For a long time, some rural tourism initiatives have placed greater emphasis on external investment, infrastructure construction and landscape transformation, treating rural tourism simply as the process of "creating a tourism destination". Although roads have been improved, villages have become more attractive and tourist numbers have increased, local residents' capacity to participate in tourism industries, manage businesses and create value has not necessarily improved at the same pace. They are often involved only as land providers, low-skilled workers or service providers, becoming supporting actors rather than core participants in tourism development.

Sustainable rural tourism should enable local residents to become participants, operators and beneficiaries of tourism development. This requires not only continued investment in transportation, environmental improvement and public facilities, but also greater efforts to enhance villagers' entrepreneurial skills, service capabilities, market awareness and digital literacy. By helping residents develop modern tourism management skills in areas such as product design, brand marketing, customer service and e-commerce operations, rural residents can transform from passive recipients of tourism development into active creators of value.

Second, rural tourism should expand from "increasing economic income" to "improving quality of life", ensuring that local residents share the benefits of development. In the past, some regions focused primarily on attracting tourism projects and increasing consumption by visitors, while paying insufficient attention to the relationship between tourism development and villagers' everyday lives. As a result, some residents living in the tourism destinations have not been able to fully benefit from the growth of tourism.

High-quality rural tourism should integrate industrial development with community development by linking tourism initiatives with improvements in public services, living environments and cultural life. Tourism development can help upgrade rural infrastructure, improve living conditions and strengthen community cohesion through cultural activities. It can also create new opportunities to attract young people back to rural areas for entrepreneurship, transforming villages from simple tourism consumption spaces into places suitable for both living and working. At the same time, more effective benefit-sharing mechanisms should be established. Through the participation of village collective economic organizations, cooperative business models, and mechanisms such as equity participation based on local resources, tourism revenues can be distributed more equitably among residents. This can prevent tourism development from becoming a process that benefits only a small number of investors or operators.

Third, rural tourism should shift from "prioritizing investment in physical assets" to "empowering people", achieving coordinated progress between material development and human development. Physical construction alone provides only the "hardware" foundation for rural tourism. The capabilities, creativity and active participation of people ultimately determine the quality and sustainability of development. Therefore, rural tourism development requires an organic integration between investment in physical assets and investment in people. Infrastructure projects, digital platforms and tourism industries should be designed and implemented in ways that can better serve residents' development needs, allowing material investment to become a foundation for enhancing human capabilities and improving livelihoods. Meanwhile, by strengthening residents' abilities and encouraging their active participation, rural communities can further unlock the value of physical resources, enabling rural spaces, cultural heritage and tourism facilities to generate lasting vitality.

Over the 15th Five-Year Plan period, high-quality development of rural tourism requires a transition from simply investing in physical assets toward combining investment in physical assets with investment in people. Investment in physical assets provides the foundation for development, while investment in people stimulates endogenous vitality. Integrating industrial growth with human development is the essential path for rural tourism to become a sustainable force that advances rural revitalization and improves people's well-being.

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BUSINESS

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Innovation boosts China's trade tempo

Industrial upgrades, robust supply chains create more choices for global consumers

By ZHONG NAN
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On the factory floor of Warsonco Intelligent Technology (Guangdong) Co in Dongguan, South China's Guangdong province, palletizing robots lifted cartons from conveyor belts and stacked them neatly onto pallets in late July, while engineers carried out routine performance checks before shipment.

Replacing labor-intensive manual handling, the palletizing robots can stack between eight and 12 cartons per minute. They can be programmed with up to 800 palletizing patterns and simultaneously handle two different product types, making them well suited for industries such as food processing, pharmaceuticals, consumer goods and printing.

The scene reflects a broader shift taking place across China's manufacturing sector, where artificial intelligence and automation are making industrial robots easier to deploy, operate and scale.

Xiao Fageng, the company's sales director, said as manufacturers worldwide face rising labor costs and growing demand for flexible production, Chinese robotics companies are increasingly developing AI-powered systems that lower technical barriers while expanding their presence in overseas markets.

Demand for the company's robots has been growing both in China and overseas. Its products are now sold in more than 50 countries and regions, and Warsonco expects total shipments to reach between 8,000 and 10,000 units this year, up about 60 percent from a year earlier, according to information released by Huangpu Customs in Guangdong.

Customs data showed China's industrial robot exports exceeded imports for the first time in 2025, making the country a net exporter of industrial robots. In the first half, China's industrial robot exports reached 6.29 billion yuan, up 18.6 percent year-on-year, with products shipped to 141 countries and regions.

Industrial robots are not the only high-end Chinese-made equipment riding the AI boom, as power infrastructure hardware has also seen surging global orders.

At a workshop of Jiangsu Yawei Transformer Co in Nantong, East China's Jiangsu province, workers were racing to complete large-capacity power transformers and dry-type distribution transformers destined for countries in the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

As power consumption per server rack at data centers has climbed from around 10 kilowatts to several hundred kWs — and in some cases even megawatt levels — reliable, high-capacity electricity supply has become critical. Once regarded as conventional grid equipment, transformers are becoming a cornerstone of AI infrastructure, said Li Luosheng, the company's manager for customs affairs.

"In the past, most of our exports were conventional transformer models," said Li. "Now, a growing proportion of our orders comes from AI data centers and overseas power grid upgrade projects, where customers place much higher demands on energy efficiency, reliability and delivery speed."

Jiangsu's exports of electrical equipment, including transformers, electrical control devices and wires and cables, reached 140.56 billion yuan in the first half of 2026, up 23.5 percent year-on-year, statistics from Nanjing Customs showed.

China's export mix has undergone a profound transformation over the past four decades. In the early years of reform and opening-up, labor-intensive products such as garments, furniture and household appliances helped Chinese manufacturers gain a foothold in global markets by leveraging competitive production costs.

With the country's industrial capabilities advancing, exports increasingly moved up the value chain, with higher-value and technology-intensive products taking a larger share.

Chen Bin, deputy director of the expert committee of the Beijing-based China Machinery Industry Federation, said the transformation has accelerated in recent years.

After electric vehicles, lithium batteries and photovoltaic products emerged as China's "new trio" of export growth drivers, a new wave of products — including industrial robots, commercial drones, 3D printers, artificial intelligence applications and innovative pharmaceuticals — is rapidly gaining global traction, said Chen.

Backed by a comprehensive industrial ecosystem, a deep engineering talent pool and sustained innovation, China's foreign trade is increasingly being driven by technological advancement rather than traditional cost advantages, he added.

The shift is already evident in China's latest trade figures. Alongside notable export growth in tech-intensive green products such as energy storage systems and electric-powered trucks, China's trade in hardware supporting computing power, including electronic components and computer parts, surged 56.6 percent year-on-year to 5.13 trillion yuan between January and June, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.



An aerial photo shows a bustling foreign trade container terminal with constant truck and vessel movements at Shanghai Port on July 14. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Customs officers from Ningbo Customs learn about the features and export demand for a new ice cream maker at a home appliance firm in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, on July 21. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Workers load trucks for export onto ships at Yantai Port in Shandong province on July 15. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Wang Jun, the administration's vice-minister, said the country's AI-powered smart glasses, translation devices and robotic exoskeletons are among a growing range of intelligent products undergoing rapid innovation.

The rising contribution of these innovation-driven products has helped underpin China's broader trade growth. The country's foreign trade expanded 16.9 percent year-on-year to 25.47 trillion yuan in the first half, with imports growing faster than exports. Exports rose 13.4 percent, while imports climbed 22.1 percent, exceeding export growth by 8.7 percentage points, according to customs data.

Pushing back against the so-called "China Shock 2.0" narrative, which portrays China's development as a disruption to the global economy, Li Jiaying, an assistant researcher at Renmin University of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies in Beijing, said China's export growth is increasingly driven by innovation rather than low-cost manufacturing.

The country's industrial upgrading has expanded global supply, improved production efficiency and created more choices for consumers and businesses worldwide.

"Rather than displacing other economies, China's technological progress strengthens global industrial and supply chains by delivering competitive products, accelerating innovation and supporting the worldwide green and digital transitions," she said.

Echoing that view, Ding Rijia, a professor of industrial economy at China University of Mining and Technology-Beijing, said that following Europe's energy shortage, demand for imported green equipment has risen sharply, while many developing economies are only beginning their energy transition, leaving substantial long-term demand unmet.

"China's export growth of technology-intensive and green products reflects its ability to respond to genuine global demand, with additional supply emerging because demand already exists," said Ding, adding the narrative that China's exports are driven by "overcapacity" and are undermining Western manufacturing is not supported by market realities.

That assessment is also reflected in the investment strategies of multinational companies operating in China. Stefan Floeck, ABB's division president of IEC Low Voltage Motors, said China will remain central to the Swedish-Swiss technology company's global motor business as the country's industrial upgrading and green transition continue to drive demand for more energy-efficient equipment.

"To capture these opportunities, we will continue investing in local research and development, manufacturing and supply chains to better serve Chinese customers while reinforcing China as an innovation hub and export base within the company's global network," said Floeck.

ABB's low-voltage motor business has invested more than 150 million yuan in recent years to upgrade its Shanghai manufacturing base, including research and development testing laboratories and production lines. Its domestic supply chain also supports exports from China to overseas markets.

Despite headwinds such as rising trade protectionism and persistent geopolitical uncertainties, China's exports are likely to remain resilient in the second half, said Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank. He attributed the outlook to the global AI investment cycle, the United States' relatively moderate tariff policy and measures to strengthen manufacturers' competitiveness.

Similar views were expressed by Lynn Song, chief economist for China at Dutch bank ING. "Exports have been one of China's primary growth engines in recent years, and this year's acceleration continues to beat expectations," he said.

"China's exports over the first half of the year already nearly match the levels seen through the first seven months of 2025, and the base case is for solid export growth to continue. Strong external demand remains one of the key pillars supporting China's industrial activity," said Song.

"It remains a key engine of growth for China and is likely to continue playing that role for the rest of the year," he said, while cautioning that potential new tariffs from the European Union and proposed US secondary sanctions related to Russian energy exports could pose risks to the country's export outlook.

Nation's shipbuilding edge runs deeper than shipyards

REPORTER'S LOG

By Zhong Nan

After covering China's shipbuilding industry for nearly a decade, I have recently noticed a new trend that is not immediately visible in global order books or production rankings.

Experts at the Beijing-based China Association of the National Shipbuilding Industry told me the industry's ecosystem is expanding beyond shipyards and traditional suppliers to include robotics, industrial software, artificial intelligence, advanced materials and clean-energy companies.

Modern shipbuilding has evolved far beyond assembling steel plates into a hull. Today it integrates millions of components and hundreds of mechanical, electrical and digital systems.

Nothing illustrates this transformation better than *Adora Magic City*, China's first domestically built large cruise ship constructed by China State Shipbuilding Corp in Shanghai.

Calling it simply a ship almost feels inadequate. It is, in many ways, a floating city. The vessel, which celebrated its maiden voyage on Jan 1, 2024, contains roughly 25 million individual parts, 107 integrated systems, 55,000 pieces of equipment and 4,750 kilometers of electrical cables, according to its builder.

What impressed me most was not simply its scale, but the way the project had to be organized. The vessel was constructed in sections before its major blocks were joined together. Electrical cabinets, piping units, cabins and interior spaces were prefabricated in workshops and later installed like pieces of a giant puzzle.

Walking through a shipyard in Dalian, Liaoning province, it became clear why robotics and digital technologies are finding a place alongside traditional manufacturing. Welding robots can work in narrow or hazardous spaces and help shipyards improve precision and productivity. Machine-vision systems can detect welding defects, while digital platforms can coordinate design, procurement, production and delivery.

Technology alone, however, is not enough. Behind every intelligent shipyard are experienced engineers, skilled workers and decades of industrial know-how. Shipbuilding remains a business where expertise is built over generations rather than acquired overnight.

During previous industry downturns, many countries lost experienced workers as shipyards cut capacity or closed. Once those skills and production knowledge disappeared, they proved difficult to rebuild without losing valuable time or knowledge.

Chinese shipyards took a different approach. Even during difficult years, major builders continued training engineers and skilled workers, investing in research and improving construction techniques.

Universities in Shanghai, Harbin, Heilongjiang province, and Wuhan, Hubei province, also maintained shipbuilding and marine engineering programs when many regarded them as offering limited career prospects. Some expanded into new maritime specialties.

When global demand recovered, Chinese shipyards already had the people needed to handle sophisticated projects. This long-term investment also explains why China's shipbuilding success cannot simply be attributed to subsidies.

Financial support, including subsidies, may help companies weather downturns or purchase equipment, but it cannot train welders, develop naval architects or rebuild supplier relationships overnight. If money is not an issue, many governments could rebuild their shipbuilding industries simply by having their finance ministries write ever larger checks. In reality, rebuilding an industrial system takes years, often decades.

The answer lies in the industrial ecosystem behind China's shipbuilding success. Building a large vessel requires hundreds of suppliers, ranging from steelmakers and engine manufacturers to cable producers, software developers, equipment makers and interior specialists. The absence of any critical supplier can delay an entire project.

Some countries still have shipyards and dry docks, but many no longer have the dense supplier networks that once surrounded them. A shipyard may be able to build a hull, but delivering a vessel requires the coordinated support of suppliers across the entire industrial chain.

As robotics, AI, batteries, alternative fuels, advanced materials and industrial software become more deeply integrated into shipbuilding, China's shipbuilding sector is evolving into a testing ground for advanced manufacturing. Increasingly, each new vessel serves as a platform where advanced manufacturing technologies are developed, tested and applied at scale.

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BUSINESSINSIGHT

Chinese AI strengthening economic resilience

EAGLE EYE
By Fu Minjie



ILLUSTRATION GENERATED BY AI

The technological and pricing shock brought by Kimi k3 to the large-language model ecosystem continues to reverberate through capital markets, with some US media outlets even describing it as a "DeepSeek Moment 2.0". It is widely believed within the industry that the six-to-12-month innovation gap between China and the United States in large models has been largely closed. Although product iteration may lead to periodic fluctuations in specific technical indicators, China's artificial intelligence innovation has remained among the global leading group, with its overall capabilities comparable to those of any leading AI power.

However, China's AI progress should not be assessed only by isolated benchmark scores. Its distinctive path lies in broader technological coverage, richer application scenarios and stronger empowerment of the macroeconomy. By extending AI across industries and into the real economy, China is reinforcing economic resilience and improving development quality across multiple dimensions.

The recent 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference, held in Shanghai, offers a vivid demonstration of China's broad-based AI innovation. With three major venues — Expo, Zhangjiang and West Bund — the exhibition covered more than 100,000 square meters and brought together over 1,100 domestic and foreign enterprises. More than 3,000 cutting-edge achievements were on display, with over 300 hard-tech products making their global debuts or industry premieres. These exhibits covered the full industrial chain, from chips and foundation models to intelligent robots and terminal devices, presenting a comprehensive picture of AI and the emerging intelligent society.

US economists originally defined AI as a technological revolution mainly in the services sector and as an extension of the internet services revolution, which led to relatively concentrated innovation tracks, limited technological penetration and expectations that the main impact would fall on mid and low-skilled white-collar workers. Yet China's AI practice has already moved beyond this early assessment, building a complete innovation chain that covers computing power, infrastructure, general-purpose large models and intelligent applications.

More importantly, China is accelerating AI's movement from the digital world to the physical world. The speed of this transition and the richness of application scenarios both rank among the highest globally. Coordinated innovation across industries and scenarios is reshaping global understanding of AI's application scope, innovation breadth and social significance. Meanwhile, diverse application scenarios can improve enterprises' digital foundations and technological adaptability, lower cross-sector innovation expenses, strengthen synergies among different fields, and continuously raise industrial technological capacity and total factor productivity.

China's technological innovation has always been anchored in the real economy, with the high-end transformation of manufacturing as its core direction. The recommendations for the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period make clear that China should build a modern industrial system supported by advanced manufacturing and accelerate high-level technological self-reliance. This requires sustained efforts to strengthen foundational manufacturing technologies, address weaknesses in basic industrial capabilities, upgrade traditional manufacturing, expand emerging manufacturing sectors and make forward-looking arrangements for future manufacturing. Taken together, these efforts are expected to systematically enhance manufacturing capacity and strengthen the ability to respond to risks.

Unlike the US path, which places greater emphasis on AI applications in service-sector innovation and substitution, China's AI development focuses more on connecting with the physical world and deeply integrating with real industries. Its core effort is to empower advanced manufacturing and connect the entire manufacturing chain. Relying on 520,000 industrial enterprises above designated size, 39 major industrial categories and 191 medium industrial classifications, China's complete industrial system can fully unleash AI's value as a general-purpose technology, accelerating full-domain penetration and forming a virtuous cycle of technological iteration and efficiency gains.

Practical cases are already abundant. Sinopec's "Fenghuo" industrial intelligence agent integrates more than 1 billion pieces of industry expert knowledge and achieves four-layer technological coupling across platform, model, digital twin and intelligent agent, helping reduce energy consumption per unit of output. Zhenhua Heavy Industries' welding defect recognition model has achieved an accuracy rate of over 98 percent, replicating the practical experience and image-recognition logic of senior craftspeople, making it a benchmark for "AI + manufacturing". Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding uses AI to streamline shipowner compliance verification, while Shanghai Turbine Works relies on intelligent algorithms to control blade production parameters more precisely. These examples show how AI is being embedded in large manufacturing enterprises.

At the policy level, the 15th Five-Year industrial internet action plan proposes that by 2028, the penetration rate of industrial internet platforms should exceed 55 percent and the total number of connected devices should surpass 120 million. The aim is to build a new-generation industrial internet ecosystem featuring ubiquitous connectivity, digital-intelligent integration, deep collaboration and open-source openness, thereby providing long-term support for the intelligent upgrading of the whole manufacturing chain.

China's AI ecosystem also contributes to global development by providing inclusive intelligent public goods.

Cost-effective open-source models are already benefiting global markets. Leading Chinese large models generally follow open-source and open-weight strategies, featuring intensive and efficient research and development models and low deployment costs. Their usage prices are only about one-tenth of comparable overseas products. Grounded in the principles of peaceful development and serving the people, these technologies provide affordable and easily deployable AI tools for developing countries. In essence, their low-cost model is strongly inclusive and has accelerated the global diffusion of large-model technologies.

Industry estimates show that Chinese open-source and open-weight large models are priced 60 to 90 percent lower than similar US products from OpenAI and Anthropic, while still covering most routine office and production needs. Their cost-performance advantage has made them popular among global tech start-ups, especially enterprises and consumers in developing countries and the Global South. Data show that US companies' use of Chinese AI models, measured by token share, averaged more than 30 percent per week and peaked at 46 percent.

Beyond market access, China is also actively supplying global AI public goods and promoting collaborative governance. China's AI development path balances industrial application with public value and actively participates in global AI governance. Following President Xi Jinping's proposal of the Global AI Governance Initiative, China has continued to position itself as a provider of international public goods in the AI field. It has released the AI Capacity-Building Action Plan for Good and for All and the "AI Plus" International Cooperation Initiative, while advocating for the establishment of a World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization.

Inclusive measures are also being implemented globally. China has announced the construction of an international AI application cooperation center, promoted the wider deployment of the MAZU intelligent meteorological early warning solution in more countries, and offered 5,000 specialized AI training opportunities for developing nations. These efforts help AI technologies take root more quickly across countries, improve production and public services and strengthen developing countries' ability to manage natural disaster risks.

Ultimately, general-purpose AI can help countries address gaps in industry and scientific research, thereby strengthening overall economic resilience. This is an important expression of AI's general-purpose capability and a core value of China's AI development. Meanwhile, China is improving AI-related laws, regulations and supervisory systems, using both legal constraints and technical controls to prevent potential risks and ensure that AI always serves humanity and remains under human control.

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The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

More patient policy framework for China's economy

MAIN STREET
By Luo Zhiheng

China's economy can no longer be described simply as either strong or weak. Its defining characteristic is a structural transition accompanied by growing divergence, often described as K-shaped recovery. New growth drivers — such as artificial intelligence and advanced manufacturing — are gradually replacing traditional engines, including real estate and infrastructure. Against this backdrop, two trends stand out.

First, overall economic growth remains under pressure, as the property downturn continues to weigh on related sectors, including home appliances, furniture, ferrous metals and machinery, while also weakening local finances and local governments' capacity to support growth.

Second, economic divergence has become increasingly pronounced, as indicated by widening gaps between supply and demand, across industries, among income groups and between regions. This has created a gap between official macroeconomic indicators and the actual economic experience of households and businesses.

Over the medium and long term, China's economy has followed an L-shaped path. The slowdown began around 2010 when the country entered a period of growth deceleration and transition from old to new growth drivers. GDP growth fell from 10.6 percent in 2010 to 5 percent in 2025, more than halving in just 15 years. This year, growth has moved into the 4.5-5.0 percent range, marking the beginning of what may be called an era of "around 4 percent growth". Japan stayed in the 4-5 percent range for about two decades before slowing further, but by then its per capita GDP had reached around $30,000 and its social security system was relatively mature. China's per capita GDP remains below $14,000, making it essential to settle into a stable medium-growth range of 4-5 percent during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period.

Each year, the economy has exhibited a U-shaped rhythm: a strong first quarter, pressure in the second, policy support in the third and a year-end lift in the fourth. After the September 2024 policy package, fourth-quarter growth reached 5.4 percent, following 5.3 percent, 4.7 percent and 4.6 percent showings in the first three quarters. This pattern reflects two underlying features: the economy remains highly dependent on policy support, while self-sustaining growth momentum is still weak and the vitality of households, businesses and local governments has yet to be fully restored.

The strong first-quarter performance is largely the result of policy-driven economic mobilization. After the Central Economic Work Conference sets annual priorities, fiscal and monetary policies are often front-loaded, and local governments accelerate projects and resource allocation, pushing construction and investment activity to a high level. By the second quarter, policy momentum naturally moderates, putting pressure on growth. This year, combined spending under the general public budget and government-managed funds rose 6.1 percent year-on-year in January-February, but fell to minus 0.3 percent in January-May, partly reflecting a limited pipeline of shovel-ready projects. The consumer goods trade-in program also boosted home appliance consumption with double-digit growth, but base effects and demand front-loading later became more evident.

Self-sustaining momentum remains weak. Falling property values have encouraged households to reduce debt, with the household leverage ratio edging down from 60.5 percent to 59 percent as many repaid mortgages early. Enterprises face weak demand, pressure along the property supply chain and low capacity utilization. Local governments' land sale revenue fell from 8.5 trillion yuan ($1.25 trillion) in 2021 to 4.2 trillion yuan last year, and declined another 28.7 percent year-on-year in the first five months of 2026, weakening their capacity and willingness to promote growth. Weaker local finances have also affected payments to firms and public services, further impeding household consumption. Government spending under the two budgets dropped from 30.6 percent of GDP in 2021 to 28.6 percent last year, meaning that 2-3 trillion yuan less flowed into the economy as income for enterprises and households.

Growth in the next stage will hinge on the performance of real estate and exports. AI-related products now account for about one fifth of China's export value and roughly half of export growth, making overall export outlook increasingly linked to AI development. Real estate is likely to remain a drag, while AI-supported exports may provide upward support, with a lower base also improving headline data.

The property downturn persists and three issues must be addressed. First, prices remain unstable. Although secondhand home prices in first-tier cities have risen for three consecutive months, national prices, sales and investment are still falling. In smaller cities, some inventory may become permanent as populations decline and outflows continue. Pressure comes from developers' cash-flow constraints, new-home discounts, higher-quality and "fourth-generation" housing products, and rising foreclosure sales. Second, a self-sustaining stabilization process has yet to take hold in the real estate sector. Local governments alone cannot break the cycle of property adjustments, falling fiscal revenue and weakened stabilization capacity. Therefore, central government support is needed to fill fiscal gaps. Third, fiscal pressure in some cities continues to worsen supply-demand conditions, as land supply increases despite high inventory. Stabilization therefore requires both supply control and demand support, backed by stronger transfer payments.

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CHINA

Coffee carnival opens



Performers dressed in coffee-themed costumes take part in a parade during the opening of the 2026 Dianchi International Coffee Culture Carnival in Kunming, Yunnan province, on Saturday. Featuring more than 200 specialty coffee trucks from 52 Chinese cities, the carnival includes over 300 themed activities and more than 200 live music performances, using coffee as a bridge to promote the integration of culture and tourism.

LI JIAXIAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Rules regulate juveniles' liability

New measures standardize handling of cases involving suspects aged 12 to 14

By CAO YIN
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China has introduced stricter and clearer rules for handling serious crimes committed by younger offenders, as part of broader efforts to curb violent crime while safeguarding the rights of juveniles.

The measures are outlined in a recent 15-article regulation jointly issued by the Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Ministry of Public Security. The regulation provides detailed guidance for implementing provisions of the amended Criminal Law, which took effect on March 1, 2021.

Under the amended law, the age of criminal responsibility in China is generally 16. However, minors aged 14 to 16 can be held criminally liable for serious violent offenses, including intentional homicide, intentional injury, rape and robbery.

Children aged 12 to 14 may also face criminal liability if they commit intentional homicide or intentionally inflict injuries that result in death or severe disability through extremely cruel means, with prosecution requiring approval from the SPP.

The regulation standardizes procedures for handling cases involving suspects aged 12 to 14 accused of such violent crimes and establishes clear criteria for prosecution.

Public security authorities must transfer such cases to the local procuratorate, which is required to investigate not only the suspect's age and details of the offense but also the individual's upbringing, family background, personality, social relationships, motives and conduct after the crime.

The findings must then be submitted to the SPP for final approval. During the review process, police may place the minor suspect in criminal detention in accordance with the law.

The regulation also specifies that determining whether a case is "heinous" should take into account factors such as the cause, motive, method, target and consequences of the crime, as well as the suspect's potential danger, likelihood of reoffending and broader social impact. In cases involving multiple suspects, each individual's role and level of participation must be assessed separately to determine whether the criteria are met.

To better protect the rights of minors, the regulation requires a suspect's legal guardian to be present during questioning and to be informed of the minor's legal rights. If the guardian is unable to attend or is also a suspect, investigators should notify another adult relative, the suspect's school or employer or a local community organization to participate.

Tian Yingjun, a lawyer from Yunnan province, said the regulation further improves China's legal framework for handling serious violent crimes committed by young minors by providing clear procedural guidance.

"The rigorous procedural design and comprehensive review requirements reflect China's cautious approach to protecting minors' rights while balancing punishment and rehabilitation," he said.

In recent years, China has strengthened measures to prevent and address juvenile delinquency while maintaining a zero-tolerance approach to crimes against minors.

According to the SPP's annual work report released in March, 24 minors aged 12 to 14 were prosecuted for serious violent crimes in 2025, underscoring the need to punish particularly heinous offenses. The Supreme People's Court reported that 2,356 juveniles convicted of serious violent crimes received prison sentences of more than five years in 2025, while 5,822 juveniles who committed relatively minor offenses received lenient treatment.

The report also said efforts are underway to strengthen the development of specialized schools and improve a graded intervention and rehabilitation system for minors engaging in misconduct as part of broader judicial measures to address juvenile delinquency.

Young Chinese embrace task of 're-raising' parents

By ZOU SHUO
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In a reversal of traditional family roles, a growing number of young Chinese people are taking on the task of "re-raising" their parents — teaching them digital skills, purchasing their health supplements, planning holidays and even escorting them to concerts — all in a bid to help them navigate a fast-changing world.

The trend, which has gained traction on social media under the hashtag "I re-raised my parents after growing up", has drawn widespread attention for redefining filial piety from passive duty to active, creative care.

At the heart of the trend is a widening digital divide. While older generations grew up in a relatively stable world, their children came of age in an era of smartphones, livestreaming and algorithm-driven recommendations.

As a result, young people often have a clear advantage in accessing information and navigating online services — skills that many parents have yet to master.

For many, re-raising begins with small but meaningful acts.

Hang Yunjie, an 18-year-old freshman at Beijing University of Chemical Technology, discovered the gap when he decided to buy fish oil for his father and reading glasses for his mother.

His parents had long relied on television advertisements or pharmacy recommendations when purchasing health supplements. Hang instead consulted online review forums and comparison blogs before making his purchases.

"My father admitted that my choice was better than his usual brand, but he still expects me to handle everything next time," Hang said. "He doesn't want to learn how to find the information himself."

Helping parents adapt to the digital age means encouraging them to recognize that some of their knowledge and habits have become outdated, he said.

"I managed to convince him that his old brand was inferior, but I failed to spark his curiosity about the digital world."

For Xu Yu, a 31-year-old office worker in Beijing, the most meaningful change came after buying his parents new smartphones and teaching them how to use food delivery apps.

"They used to come home exhausted from work and still had to cook. Now they can order whatever they want," he said.

He patiently guided them through registration, logging in, setting delivery addresses, choosing payment methods and adding notes for special requests.

"When I was a child, they worried about my meals. Now I want to make their lives easier."

Some young people are also helping their parents enjoy experiences they might never have pursued on their own.

Zhang Anning, a 22-year-old postgraduate student in Beijing, began her re-raising journey after realizing that her parents would never take the initiative to travel.

Inspired by trips she had taken with friends, she started planning holidays for them, from renting a car in Guizhou province so her father could drive to see blooming azaleas to booking sea-view rooms in Hainan province.

"I want them to experience the joy of traveling, just as they made sure I enjoyed my childhood," she said.

Zhang also serves as the family's photographer, using film cameras to document their trips.

"When I was little, they recorded my growth. Now it's my turn to record their travels and preserve these treasured memories."

> Conventional filial piety is about repaying a debt — they raised me, so I accompany them in old age. But going to concerts with my mother comes from genuine love because we have a close relationship."
>
> **Yu Tianxin,** a 19-year-old freshman at Beijing Foreign Studies University

Yu Tianxin, a 19-year-old freshman at Beijing Foreign Studies University, took an even more hands-on role by accompanying her mother to three concerts by pop singer Zhang Jie, arranging everything from tickets to hotel reservations.

Her most memorable moment came when her mother went to the restroom without her phone, forgot their seat numbers and wandered around the arena calling out Yu's name.

After concert personnel directed her mother to the general floor area, Yu eventually spotted her and, as she put it, "reeled her back" to her seat.

"It was exhausting, but also deeply satisfying," Yu said. "My mother was overjoyed. She had always wanted to see Zhang Jie, and spending that time together brought us much closer."

Yu distinguishes her actions from the traditional understanding of filial piety.

"Conventional filial piety is about repaying a debt — they raised me, so I accompany them in old age," she said. "But going to concerts with my mother comes from genuine love because we have a close relationship."

She has also stepped in to protect her parents from online scams.

When her father was about to spend 30,000 yuan ($4,400) on a fake antique promoted during a livestream, Yu uninstalled the shopping app from his phone and linked the account to her own device, preventing him from logging back in.

"He scolded me for three days, but I still think it was worth it," she said. "Both my parents are trapped by outdated perceptions. Sometimes I have to pull them into the present."

Yao Huasong, a sociology professor at Guangzhou University, views the trend as a positive evolution in intergenerational relationships.

In an article published by China Youth Daily, Yao said the phenomenon rests on three conditions: young people's stronger digital and information literacy, their willingness to invest time and patience in communicating with their parents, and parents' growing readiness to set aside traditional authority and engage in more equal dialogue.

Generational differences are inevitable, he wrote, but what matters most is how both sides respond to them.

He cited practical examples such as making regular video calls, ordering groceries online, arranging health check-ups and taking occasional family trips as meaningful expressions of "home-making".

"This represents a new interpretation of the traditional idea of raising children for support in old age," Yao wrote. "It deserves recognition and encouragement."

Wang Nasi and Guo Yuhe contributed to this story.

Abandoned coal mine cools homes in Jiangsu

By CHEN MEILING
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This summer, 96 households in Xuzhou, Jiangsu province, have abandoned noisy air conditioners in favor of an innovative floor cooling system that provides comfortable temperatures, stable humidity and near-silent operation.

The system circulates naturally cool underground mine water through pipelines installed beneath the floor, creating radiant cooling throughout homes. Compared with conventional air conditioning, it consumes less energy and costs residents significantly less.

At the end of July, with outdoor temperatures in Xuzhou reaching about 36 C at noon, Wang Qingmei, 76, was observed at home cooking in comfort. A wall-mounted thermometer displayed an indoor temperature of 26 C.

"The floor is pleasantly cool, just the right temperature. It feels best to walk on it barefoot," she said.

Mine water is pumped to a heat exchange station, where a heat exchanger stabilizes the circulating water temperature in the pipeline network at between 20 C and 25 C before it is distributed to homes.

For Wang, the savings are substantial. In previous summers, running air conditioners to keep herself and her husband cool cost about 400 yuan ($59) a month for electricity. If the air conditioner stayed on for too long, her husband's neck would ache. If they turned it off, it became too hot to sleep.

Under the new system, residents pay 4 yuan per square meter for the entire cooling season. For Wang's home, a four-month cooling period costs about 410 yuan while maintaining a comfortable temperature around the clock.

"It's both quiet and comfortable," she said, adding that many neighbors have visited to experience the system and plan to use it next year.

What makes the project even more remarkable is that the cooling source comes from an abandoned coal mine that was once considered an environmental and financial burden.

After the Woniu Mountain coal mine was shut down, its mined-out voids gradually filled with groundwater, forming a vast underground cold-water reservoir. For years, the abandoned mine generated ongoing costs for safety monitoring and ecological restoration without creating economic value.

The turning point came when researchers from Xuzhou Coal Mining Group, which owns the mine, discovered that the mine water remains at a stable temperature of between 15 C and 20 C throughout the year and is available in abundant quantities.

The constant temperature makes the resource suitable for both winter heating and summer cooling. Heat can be extracted from the water during winter, while the naturally cool water provides cooling during summer.

The project also benefits from Xuzhou's existing infrastructure. The city operates Jiangsu's only large-scale centralized heating pipeline network, which can circulate hot water in winter and switch to cold water in summer, allowing dual-purpose use without installing an additional pipeline system.

"As a traditional industrial city, Xuzhou has many closed coal mines whose stored water is like a giant green charger, transforming abandoned resources into low-carbon energy carriers," said Zhang Tao, who oversees scientific research projects at Jiangsu Xukuang Thermal Power Co, a subsidiary of Xuzhou Coal Mining Group.

According to Zhang, surveys show strong public acceptance of centralized heating and cooling services, indicating solid market demand.

He added that the city's heating season lasts only about 110 days, from November to March. Extending infrastructure use with a 120-day cooling season from June to September can significantly improve utilization efficiency and asset returns.

The project's biggest technical challenge is Xuzhou's humid summer climate. Condensation can form on low-temperature pipelines and indoor surfaces, particularly in bathrooms and other high-humidity areas. Opening windows allows moist outdoor air inside, making condensation more likely on metal fixtures and tiled surfaces.

To solve the problem, the company partnered with Yunlong Lake Laboratory of Deep Underground Science and Engineering to develop a dedicated water-cooled dehumidifier that maintains indoor humidity at around 50 percent, a level considered comfortable for occupants.

The company is currently installing the dehumidifiers in residents' homes free of charge this year. The first group of users also received free cooling services from June 1 to July 31 and began paying for the service from Aug 1 to Sept 30.

The environmental benefits are equally significant, Zhang said.

According to the company's data, the system reduces energy consumption by about 50 percent compared with conventional air conditioners and cuts annual carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 50 metric tons.

Unlike air conditioners, which rely on air-to-air heat exchange and gradually lose efficiency because of heat waves, dust, willow catkins and restricted airflow through outdoor units, the floor cooling system uses liquid-to-liquid heat exchange, maintaining high efficiency with minimal performance degradation.

Conventional air conditioners also discharge heat into the atmosphere, contributing to the urban heat island effect. In contrast, the floor cooling system transfers heat back underground through mine water, achieving virtually zero atmospheric heat exchange, Zhang said.

The company plans to collect operational data after the cooling season ends before deciding on a broader rollout. It is also experimenting with using mine water for winter heating. Previously, the city's centralized heating relied on hot water supplied by power plants.

Zhang said a researcher from the United Kingdom visited to inspect the project and expressed strong interest in introducing the technology to a British town.

Although mine-water-based heating and cooling systems have been introduced elsewhere in China, they have all been installed in newly built residential communities. The Xuzhou project is the first to retrofit an existing residential community with the technology.

"It unlocks the energy potential of billions of existing buildings for the low-carbon transition, providing a replicable model for resource-exhausted cities across the country," Zhang said.

Guo Jun in Nanjing contributed to this story.

C919 experience



Visitors experience a C919 flight simulator during a national aviation science education exhibition in Tianjin on Saturday. The exhibition ran from Thursday to Sunday, featuring three themed exhibition zones, more than 60 booths and a total exhibition area spanning 3,850 square meters. TONG YU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

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

Remote prefecture turns excess solar into big data

Qinghai leverages cool climate, legal frameworks and massive solar output to create low-cost green computing hub

By **LI MENGHAN**
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On the windswept Talatan plain in Northwest China's Qinghai province, thousands of sheep graze beneath vast canopies of cobalt solar panels. For a decade, this fusion of pastoral agriculture and renewable energy turned a barren highland desert into an ecological success story. Today, however, regional authorities face a far more complex structural challenge: what to do with an overwhelming surge of green power that far outpaces local demand.

In response, Hainan Tibetan autonomous prefecture is executing a major strategic pivot, leveraging its massive energy surplus to transform from a simple power exporter into a high-altitude big data hub.

Local authorities have approved a 93-hectare green computing industry park in Chabcha town, the administrative seat of Gonghe county. The development has already secured 17 major projects representing 16.2 billion yuan ($2.3 billion) in total planned investment. The project is designed to process data for computing-intensive industries along China's populous eastern seaboard, including artificial intelligence model training, autonomous driving simulation and financial technology back-office operations.

The initiative directly addresses a severe economic imbalance. Last year, Hainan prefecture's clean-energy installations generated 47.7 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity, yet local industrial and domestic consumption absorbed just 1.7 billion kWh — less than 4 percent of the total output. While ultra-high voltage transmission lines export a significant portion of this surplus across eastern provinces, grid constraints and line capacity limits during peak production hours continue to pose long-term curtailment risks.

"We are turning watts into bits," said Ma Xianping, deputy director of the Hainan Prefecture Data Bureau, describing the strategy to consume excess energy locally rather than relying exclusively on long-distance transmission infrastructure.

Chabcha town has natural advantages for developing data centers. With an average temperature of 4 C, the town enables fresh-air cooling for 330 days a year, reducing cooling costs — which typically account for nearly 40 percent of a facility's power consumption — by an estimated 30 percent and shortening payback periods by around two years. Additionally, the thin, dust-free highland air reduces particulate buildup on server components, extending hardware lifespans.

These conditions, Ma said, make green computing a natural fit.

Clean energy makes up 97.26 percent of the park's power supply, with a power usage effectiveness of about 1.1 — well below the national average of 1.35. Electricity costs of around 0.42 yuan per kWh are among the lowest in China.



Clockwise from top: A concentrated solar power plant, with a molten salt tower at the center and heliostats around, is part of the Talatan Photovoltaic Park in Gonghe county, Qinghai province. LI XIAOGANG / FOR CHINA DAILY Sheep graze under photovoltaic panels in Talatan in July 2023. FENG LI / FOR CHINA DAILY Workers inspect panels at the industrial park in March last year. ZHANG ZHONGPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Pastoral power

The digital expansion is being powered by the Talatan Photovoltaic Park, planned to cover 609 square kilometers on the plain. It is one of China's major gigawatt-level solar hubs and was certified in the Guinness World Records as the world's largest installed-capacity photovoltaic power generation. The green transformation is anchored in decades of ecological restoration efforts and rural livelihood gains, underpinned by legislative support.

Across Hainan prefecture, clean energy capacity has reached 36.58 million kW — 46 percent of the province's total — with cumulative investment of 180 billion yuan, and 68 major photovoltaic enterprises operating across the region.

The prefecture takes its name from its location south of Qinghai Lake. The Yellow River runs 411 kilometers through its five counties, while the headwaters of the Yangtze and Lancang rivers also originate in the broader Qinghai highland, making the region one of China's most ecologically consequential landscapes and one where the stakes of any industrial development are unusually high.

"With just one storm a year, from spring to winter's end; stones roll with the wind, and nothing will grow," said An Fengjun, deputy director of the prefecture's development and reform commission, reciting a local proverb. He said this used to be the stark reality of Talatan — roads swallowed by endless dunes, making every step a struggle.

The turnaround began in 2012, when construction of the photovoltaic park began. Local authorities realized the latent value of what had long been dismissed as wasteland. While facing severe desertification, Talatan offered nearly 3,000 hours of annual sunshine and vast stretches of flat, unused land — ideal conditions for utility-scale photovoltaics.

"What surprised us most was how quickly the land responded," An said. "The panels acted as windbreaks, cutting near-ground wind speeds by around half. Their shade reduced evaporation by about 30 percent, and rainwater together with panel-cleaning runoff seeped down along the supports, irrigating the soil."

An said that the ecological transformation came as an unexpected dividend. Within just a few years, vegetation cover, once negligible, recovered to more than 80 percent across the park. "On my way here this morning, I saw a hare darting across the road, and you can see foxes and even birds that had never been spotted here before," he said.

The lush growth, however, created a new problem: tall grass shading the panels and reducing power output, while dried winter grass raised wildfire risks. Manual clearing cost over 4 million yuan annually across the park before the arrival of what locals now call "photovoltaic sheep".

"The sheep eat the grass, and their manure fertilizes the soil, forming a virtuous cycle. Companies no longer spend huge sums on grass cutting, and herders get free pasture. It's a win for ecology, production and livelihoods," An said.

The park operates 14 photovoltaic pastures where more than 20,000 sheep graze from June through October under a scientifically managed rotation system. Panels are raised to around 1.5 meters and spaced wider to accommodate the herds. Surplus grass that the sheep cannot consume is given free to surrounding villages as winter fodder.

Zhou Jia, a deputy to the agriculture and environmental resources committee of the prefecture's people's congress, said the benefits extend beyond the fenced perimeter of Talatan. Given the plain's exceptional solar conditions, all five counties of Hainan prefecture have consolidated their village-level photovoltaic capacity — 50.5 megawatts shared across 173 villages.

"The model supports poverty alleviation," Zhou said, adding that village-level photovoltaic stations generated 32.78 million yuan in revenue in the first half of the year, averaging 189,500 yuan per village. Additionally, the stations fund 1,566 public welfare positions with monthly stipends of around 1,000 yuan.

Legal outreach

The transformation rests on a multitiered legal architecture.

At the national level, the Law on Prevention and Control of Desertification was adopted in 2001 and amended in 2023. Drawn from lessons learned in local practices, the Ecological and Environmental Code, which will take effect on Aug 15, stipulates that operators of photovoltaic projects and other commercial activities in desertified areas must implement measures to curb sand expansion. These laws have laid the groundwork for what has become the defining feature of Talatan — using photovoltaic installations as a tool for sand stabilization.

Zhou also pointed to the law on ecological protection of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau, which came into force on Sept 1, 2023, giving statutory backing to the integrated clean-energy approach the prefecture has pioneered.

The law stipulates that the country supports building a clean-energy system dominated by sources including wind, solar, hydro, hydro-solar hybrid and geothermal across the plateau, while advancing green, low-carbon energy transitions. That provision codifies the plateau model of integrated renewable development that Hainan had been testing on the ground for more than a decade.

The Hainan model is anchored in the pairing of solar with the river. The Longyangxia Hydropower Station in the prefecture — known as the "first dam on the Yellow River" — is the backbone for China's first hydro-solar complementary system. The 850-megawatt Talatan Photovoltaic Park feeds its output into Longyangxia, with the two working as a single dispatchable unit.

"During the day, as solar output rises, hydropower dials back and water is stored. At night, the dam takes over, switching between sources within milliseconds," An said, noting that the hybrid model earned a Guinness World Record in 2022 as the world's largest water-solar complementary power station, and has since expanded past one gigawatt.

Building on these national and provincial legal frameworks, the prefecture's people's congress spent more than a year drafting its own regulation on promoting the development of the clean energy industry. The 34-article regulation, which will take effect on Sept 1, addresses grid integration bottlenecks, pricing mechanisms, storage infrastructure gaps and administrative procedures.

"Through legislation, clean energy development will become more standardized," said Ning Jianming, a deputy of the finance and economic affairs committee of the prefecture's people's congress. The drafting process began in 2024 with enterprise consultations, expert reviews and field investigations.

The regulation enshrines ecological protection as a nonnegotiable bottom line and mandates a recycling system for retired solar panels — a forward-looking provision given that the park's oldest arrays, installed around 2013, will approach their 25-year design life within a decade.

Ning said that the regulation is designed to align with those higher-level frameworks, turning policy guidance into tangible rules.

Zhou said that as legal outreach work continues, environmental stewardship has taken root in people's hearts. "The father protects the land, and the son inherits the benefit — that awareness is now deep in the bone," he said.

Rural vitalization law drives Datong's success

By **LI MENGHAN** in Xining

A plateau county in Xining, Qinghai province, has placed its yak products in 3,500 retail outlets nationwide while keeping livestock herds within ecological protection limits, supported by China's first county-level legislation on the vitalization of rural industry.

Datong Hui and Tu autonomous county is home to China's largest yak breeding base — the Qinghai Yak Breeding and Promotion Service Center — which spans more than 247 hectares and manages over 300 breeding bulls across all yak breeds found in Qinghai.

Hu Guangwei, deputy director of the center, said the Datong yak — introduced by the center in 2004 as China's first artificially bred yak variety — was developed over two decades through crossbreeding wild and domestic yaks.

"The offspring of the Datong yak are roughly 1.2 times heavier than ordinary domestic yaks, with some adult males reaching over 600 kilograms," Hu said, highlighting its potential to transform yak farming and boost herder incomes across Qinghai.

That potential is being realized at the county level. Li Cunde, deputy head of Datong's veterinary station, said that the county has promoted artificial insemination techniques for Datong yaks among local farming households, and this year alone has contributed to the upgrading of 3,700 head across 69 households.

"The Datong yak has a half wild yak bloodline, giving it strong adaptability to high-altitude, cold environments," Li said, adding that the calves grow faster than other Qinghai plateau breeds.

Li said that the county is home to 123,700 Datong yaks, accounting for 51 percent of the total cattle population, with annual sales of 38,000 head and a meat output of 5,600 metric tons. To bring these gains to herders, the county has been training farmers in artificial insemination and scientific breeding techniques.

"We shifted from traditional extensive grazing to standardized scientific breeding. Through winter-spring supplementary feeding and full-calf nursing, the growth cycle has been shortened by about half a year, and each Datong yak now brings herders an additional 2,000 yuan ($295) or more," Li said.

Three standardized slaughter facilities in the county process up to 60,000 head per year. Products carry traceability QR codes and are sold at major supermarket chains such as Metro and Sam's Club, he added.



Veterinary workers vaccinate yaks in Datong, Qinghai province, in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Li said that industrial expansion remains within strict ecological protection bounds. The county has six natural usable grasslands spanning over 166,700 hectares. This has created a virtuous cycle between production and ecological conservation.

Large-scale farms achieve manure resource utilization rates above 94 percent, and much of that manure is processed into organic fertilizer and applied to the county's expanding cool-climate vegetable fields, closing the loop between livestock and crop production.

"Cool-climate vegetables are varieties adapted to elevations between 1,800 and 3,000 meters, where cool temperatures, wide day-night swings and long sunshine hours give them a natural advantage," said Zhang Guangsheng, director of the county's vegetable technology service center. "They accumulate more dry matter and vitamins — they're sweeter, crisper and store longer."

Datong sits at an average altitude of 2,200 to 2,800 meters, with clean soil, minimal industrial pollution and irrigation from highland runoff — conditions that have earned the county national recognition as a "golden zone" for cool-climate vegetable production.

The county has 5,333 hectares under cultivation, producing 256,100 tons annually with an output value of 790 million yuan, Zhang said, adding that 39 products have received organic or green food certification, and pesticide residue compliance has remained above 98 percent.

More than 60 percent of output ships to areas including Shanghai, and Guangdong and Fujian provinces, with 11 dedicated supply bases covering over 667 hectares serving the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Specialty varieties such as pea shoots and broccoli sprouts can reach southern markets within 48 hours, Zhang added.

"Chemical fertilizer use has been cut by 20 percent through organic replacement, including yak manure from local farms," he said.

Through land transfers and on-farm employment, hundreds of households have joined the vegetable supply chain, boosting both incomes and local job creation.

Underpinning both industries is the regulation on the promotion of rural industrial vitalization, enacted by the county's people's congress in 2022 as China's first county-level legislation of its kind.

Drafted to address short value chains, weak branding and scattered resources, the 26-article regulation institutionalizes support for agricultural and livestock development, forming an effective policy support system — from conserving germplasm resources and building seed breeding bases, to providing financial incentives, promoting green organic production, cold-chain logistics, e-commerce, and the use of geographical indication brands such as Datong yak and locally designated vegetable labels.

"The regulation consolidates proven practices into legally binding norms, ensuring stability and continuity in our rural industry revitalization efforts," said Xie Ji, deputy head of the county government.

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LIFE





Bilibili World 2026 takes place in Shanghai from July 10 to 12. It's one of Asia's largest gatherings for ACGN fans. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Unlocking the fan-verse

International musicians and cosplayers converge at Bilibili World 2026, proving global pop culture knows no real borders, **Wang Xin** and **Wu Wanzhen** report in Shanghai.







Top: Chinese singer Tan Jing performs at the *Bilibili Macro Link* concert. **Above left:** Cambodia's Princess Norodom Jenna (right) is among the celebrity guests at Bilibili World 2026. **Above center:** Medovvika (right) and Armeyes from Russia draw attention with their cosplay of fairy-tale characters at the event. **Above right:** Cosplayers pose at the event.





Left: Voice actors attract a large crowd of fans at Bilibili World 2026. **Right:** The three-day event attracts a total of 400,000 visitors.

Viktoria Chernenkii and Denis Chernenkii — better known as Medovvika and Armeyes — are among Russia's best-known cosplayers. Recently in Shanghai, they transformed into Rapunzel and Flynn Rider from the Disney movie *Tangled*, bringing the fairy tale to life at the intersection of fantasy and reality.

Making their second trip to China, the couple flew from Moscow to attend Bilibili World 2026 from July 10 to 12 in Shanghai.

The event is one of Asia's largest gatherings for ACGN (animation, comics, games and novels).

They began preparing for their BW debut months before departure. Determined to portray her favorite character as authentically as possible, Medovvika commissioned a seamstress to handcraft her "historically accurate" costume six months in advance.

As for Rapunzel's iconic long, gorgeous blonde braid, Medovvika turned to China. About a month before leaving, she did what many Chinese cosplayers do — she reached out to a Chinese platform and placed a rush order to customize the wig.

"Only Chinese wigmakers know how to make the wig light, beautiful and detailed," recalls Medovvika excitedly.

The couple also researched BW's traditions and discovered that attendees often exchange handmade gifts. They prepared their own freebies for Chinese fans: beautifully printed cards featuring their cosplay photographs, paired with pieces of Russian chocolate.

Although they are leading cosplayers in Russia, they were still amazed by BW's scale, inclusiveness and the creativity of Chinese participants.

"Chinese cosplay is on another level when it comes to craftsmanship and detail. We don't have a venue this large in Russia. This festival isn't just huge — it has something for everyone, from gamers and photographers to anime fans," she adds.

Despite the language barrier, the eye-catching pair was frequently stopped by fellow attendees asking for photos.

They described Chinese fans as "polite, friendly, lovely and always ready to help", and hoped to meet more Chinese cosplayers in Russia in the future.

This year marked the first time BW sold tickets to overseas fans. The three-day event attracted a total of 400,000 visitors from over 30 countries and regions across the world, and featured 170 global exhibitors, more than 60,000 cosplayers and nearly 1,000 *itasha* exhibits — vehicles decorated with vibrant ACGN-themed artwork, according to video-sharing platform Bilibili, the event's organizer.

Among those spotted in the crowd was Cambodia's Princess Norodom Jenna. Kevin Feige, president of Marvel Studios, dropped teasers for the highly anticipated *Avengers: Doomsday*, drawing large crowds of fans like South Korean YouTuber Kim Chae-ho, who joined enthusiastic audiences eager for every new reveal.

Allison Franco and Alberto Franco, a couple in their 30s from the United States, even applied for passports and traveled abroad for the first time specifically to attend BW.

Wearing matching custom outfits inspired by video games, they spent six weeks preparing for the Shanghai trip and were particularly struck by the warmth and hospitality of the local people.

"We haven't had any issues that we thought we might have. Everyone has been so kind and gone out of their way to make sure we have a great experience ... I wanted to be one of the people who come over here (at BW), experience it and show my fans what it's like," says Allison Franco, a content creator with over 1.2 million social media followers.

She adds that Chinese ACGN-themed productions, such as *Heaven Official's Blessing* and *Link Click*, are "insanely popular" in the US.

Alongside the fan carnival, musicians from both China and abroad also came together for the annual ACGN-themed *Bilibili Macro Link* concert.

Now in its 14th edition, this year's concert featured music from seven popular Chinese games, including *Arknights*, *Azur Lane*, *Genshin Impact*, and *Wuthering Waves*.

Casey Lee Williams, a 27-year-old American vocalist who began recording music for animation at 14, says she is grateful to be part of the event.

After first singing for a Chinese game soundtrack in 2017, she has come to appreciate the industry's strong commitment to music and musicians.

Williams says China has given her "incredible" opportunities to perform over the past decade. Dressed as a character from *Wuthering Waves*, she performed one of the game's songs at the concert before embarking on a tour spanning Asia and the US later this year.

"Being together is the most important thing in the world. China's ACGN community really captures that spirit and brings people together in such a special way. On a global scale, togetherness is what matters most," she says.

Celebrated Chinese singer Tan Jing also drew inspiration from the passion of ACGN fans. Having released her first ACGN cover song in 2021, she performed her first video game song at this year's concert, prompting a sing-along from the audience.

"I'm delighted to see younger generations helping Chinese culture continue to evolve and gain global influence. More international participants are joining the event, and our traditional culture is crossing borders through music. I also hope to further explore cultural integration and musical innovation," Tan says.

Industry data show that in 2025, the revenue generated by China's independently developed games in overseas markets exceeded $20.45 billion.

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Online
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Urban parks help in cockatoo conservation





Left: Winster Wong teaches students about cockatoos at St. Louis School in Hong Kong. **Right:** A snapshot taken by a student, Rooney Cheung, shows cockatoos flying to an artificial nest. XINHUA

HONG KONG — With fewer than 2,000 yellow-crested cockatoos left in the wild, Hong Kong may play a significant role in the species' survival.

In a recent study published in the international academic journal Evolutionary Applications, researchers from the University of Hong Kong found that these introduced cockatoos in Hong Kong retain unexpectedly high genetic diversity, potentially serving as a genetic reservoir for the species.

"It could function as a backup population for this species, which is critically endangered," says Astrid Andersson, lead author of the study.

Native to Indonesia and East Timor, yellow-crested cockatoos have seen their numbers plummet due to massive trapping for the pet trade and habitat loss. Currently, the vast majority of them are scattered across various islands of Indonesia.

Around 200 yellow-crested cockatoos have found refuge in Hong Kong, making up about 10 percent of the remaining global population. Andersson describes this number as ideal in comparison with the situation on some islands in Indonesia.

Surprisingly, instead of the countryside, these striking snowy-white visitors choose to live in bustling areas on Hong Kong Island. Victoria Park in Causeway Bay and Hong Kong Park in Admiralty serve as their main habitats.

"The cockatoos eat fruits, nuts, seeds, leaves and flowers. They find a lot of food in these urban parks," Andersson says, adding that the older, larger trees at these sites offer ideal nesting holes for the birds.

The research team has partnered with a local arborist to design and install artificial nest boxes to monitor the cockatoo population.

They place the boxes in areas where cockatoos are frequently seen, prioritizing spots where natural nests were lost to typhoons or safety-related tree pruning, thus ensuring the birds remain in familiar habitats.

Over the past year, more than a dozen nest boxes have been installed across various locations in the city, including urban parks and schools.

In October last year, Winster Wong, a teacher at St. Louis School in Sai Ying Pun, saw a pair of yellow-crested cockatoos repeatedly pecking at a hole in a campus tree, a behavior that lasted for about two weeks.

Realizing the birds were trying to nest, Wong remembered a video on the internet by the HKU team about artificial nest boxes and reached out to them. This led to the successful installation of two boxes at the school this April, with Andersson subsequently invited to speak at a morning assembly about the birds' plight.

"We want the students to be involved in it, not just bystanders. At this stage, we are trying to increase their awareness," Wong says, noting that the school plans to partner with HKU to launch cross-disciplinary activities that are professional yet accessible for students.

With the installation of the nest boxes, the cockatoos have been visiting the school more often.

Rooney Cheung, a student at the school, recalls spotting the cockatoos flying through the trees during a morning recess. He quickly grabbed his camera and captured the moment when they returned to the artificial nest, a snapshot that later clinched an award in a competition themed around the environment and humanity.

"The nest box is a human creation, while the cockatoos represent nature. I submitted the photo because it felt like a perfect fit for the theme," the 15-year-old says.

Other students have also found creative ways to engage. Owen Yu built a model tree with blocks to create an ideal habitat for the birds.

"I used to have little interest in nature, but now I know the birds are precious, and I hope to help them thrive," Yu says.

This shift in perspective resonated across the campus, even among those who initially found the birds' famously loud calls a little annoying.

The artificial nest boxes were carefully designed with Hong Kong's climate in mind, particularly its high temperatures and extreme rainfall. Built to prevent rainwater from seeping in, the structures also provide protection against predators such as civet cats, snakes and other birds.

Furthermore, each box is equipped with a live camera that enables the researchers to monitor the birds' behavior. Yet, the cockatoos, with strong beaks, frequently damage the boxes and appear particularly sensitive to cameras, sometimes breaking the devices.

Andersson notes that while the cameras are "not cheap" and pose maintenance challenges, they are vital to showing whether the nest boxes are being used. They allow researchers to track eggs, chick survival and parental feeding.

"This type of information has never been recorded for this species," she says.

Beyond scientific research, the live feeds carry significant educational value. Andersson notes that some schools use tablets in the classroom to stream the footage, so students can observe what is happening in the nest boxes in real time.

Marking a clear success for the project, at least one chick has already hatched in one of the boxes. "It's very hopeful for the continuation of this project," says Andersson, who aims to increase the number of boxes to around 50.

Moving forward, the team plans to partner with more schools, corporations and individuals, while hosting public talks and nest box design workshops to keep raising awareness.

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LIFE



Shedding light on ancient history

Suspended 60 meters above the valley floor, the Hanging Temple transforms into a canvas for a breathtaking show, revealing the secrets of its 1,500-year existence, report **Bai Shuhao** and **Zhu Xingxin** in Datong, Shanxi province.

Before the sun slips behind the mountains, no one quite knows how the Hanging Temple will appear after dark.

For nearly 1,500 years, the monastery has clung to a sheer cliff face in northern China's Shanxi province, suspended between rock and sky. It appears almost frozen in time, but at night it waits for light to awaken it again.

"I'd seen so many photos and videos of it on social media," says Joe Burns, a British travel vlogger visiting the temple for the first time. "But in reality, it's much smaller than I imagined."

Perched more than 60 meters above the valley floor on the cliffs of Hengshan Mountain near Datong, the Hanging Temple is one of China's oldest and best-preserved cliffside wooden structures. From a distance, its red timber columns and yellow, glazed roof tiles resemble a finely crafted wooden box tucked into the mountain.

The temple occupies just 472 square meters. Some corridors are so narrow that only one person can pass at a time. On one side stand statues representing China's three major philosophical and religious traditions — Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. On the other is open air. Visitors inch carefully along the walkways, gripping the railings as they search for an answer to a question almost everyone asks upon arrival: How can a temple seemingly float in midair?

"People's first reaction is always the same," says Yang Jianlin, director of the nighttime multimedia production *Why Hanging Temple Endures*. "Why was it built here? What was the purpose?"

His work, staged against the cliffs surrounding the temple, attempts to answer a mystery that has endured for more than a millennium.

The projection spans more than 37,000 sq m of cliff face and recently received Guinness World Records recognition as the world's largest cliff projection show. Since tickets went on sale in late May, every performance has sold out, drawing more than 2,000 visitors each evening.

Yang grew up in Shanxi, not far from the temple. After more than a decade working in live tourism performances, he says one unlikely source of inspiration for the show was *Black Myth: Wukong*, the blockbuster Chinese video game that introduced many international audiences to Shanxi's ancient architecture.

"It made me realize these buildings shouldn't only be places people visit," he says. "They can become immersive experiences where people step directly into history."

But transforming one of China's most treasured ancient monuments into a stage for a large-scale light show has also raised questions.

Supporters hope the production reveals dimensions of the temple that daytime visitors cannot see. Critics worry that dazzling projections might disturb the quiet dignity of a sanctuary that has overlooked the valley in solitude for centuries.

Before the performance, Burns imagines what awaits him.

"I think there will probably be lasers, projections, all kinds of effects to make the place stand out," he says.

Painter Li Zhengming, a member of the China Artists Association, is more cautious. Having sketched historic architecture across Shanxi and watched similar productions elsewhere, he worries that many light shows emphasize spectacle while neglecting the history and culture of the buildings themselves.

"Light shows are fine," Li says before the performance. "The key is whether they handle the details well."

At 8 pm, just before the show is due to begin, a loudspeaker announces a 10-minute delay because the sky is still too bright.

Then darkness arrives.

The temple disappears almost completely into the mountain. Even those who have spent the afternoon touring it struggle to locate it against the black cliffs.

The performance opens not with the temple itself but with an herbal merchant carrying astragalus, a medicinal plant long cultivated in the region. Speaking directly to the audience, he reflects on the crowds that hurry through the temple each day.





Top: A scene from the nighttime multimedia production *Why Hanging Temple Endures*. **Above:** British travel vlogger Joe Burns (in pink shirt) and other international visitors wait for the performance to begin. **Left:** The show features both digital projections and live-action performances. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

"People visit in daylight," he says. "It's too noisy, too rushed. They never hear what the temple is trying to tell them. That's why you've stayed — to wait for this moment."

The audience slowly follows guides toward the cliff as a narrator repeats the question that gives the production its title: Why Hanging Temple endures?

The answer unfolds not through architecture alone but through history.

The projections first transform the cliff into a battlefield. Horses charge. Weapons clash. Blood-red light washes over the mountainside.

During the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534), when the imperial capital was established in Datong, Taoist reformer Kou Qianzhi is believed to have envisioned an "airborne temple", elevated above worldly noise and closer to the heavens. Yet, even as the monastery sought spiritual distance, the land beneath it remained a frontier marked by centuries of warfare and shifting dynasties.

Datong stood between the agrarian empires of central China and the northern nomadic peoples. Its very name — meaning "Great Harmony" — reflected a long-standing hope for peace.

The projections then reconstruct the temple's construction. Craftsmen appear suspended from the cliff, chiseling into solid rock one hammer strike at a time. The audience watches as cantilevered beams are driven into the mountainside, re-creating the engineering method that still supports the temple today.

Historical figures, including Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Li Bai and Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) traveler Xu Xiake, also appear, recalling their own journeys to the site and their admiration for its improbable beauty.

Burns records much of the performance on his phone.

"The projections cover the entire mountain. It's hard to believe you're looking at the real Hanging Temple.

"I didn't think it would incorporate the actual Hanging Temple into it," he adds. "Now I can see why it's a world-record show. The whole cliff face becomes part of it, and the temple itself is only a small part. Really, really spectacular."

Li, who was skeptical when he arrived, finds himself persuaded.

"They've explained the entire historical process so clearly," he says. "The visual impact of every scene is beyond words."

However, Yang insists that protecting the monument remained the project's priority.

The production uses cold-light projection equipment positioned more than 100 meters away from the temple. No permanent hardware has been installed within the protected heritage zone, and the light exposure is significantly lower than ordinary sunlight, he says, allowing the performance to avoid any direct impact on the structure.

In its final movement, the battlefield disappears.

Spring blossoms spread across the mountains. Summer forests return. Autumn paints the valley in crimson leaves. Winter covers the cliffs in snow.

"Kou Qianzhi never lived to see the temple completed," Yang says. "But through technology and animation, people today can finally witness how his vision became reality."

In the end, the production returns to the question with which it began: Why Hanging Temple endures?

If its construction began with one man's aspiration, Yang suggests, it has survived because generations of ordinary people continued to repair it, preserve it and bring their own hopes there.

"A thousand years later, it is our generation that protects this ancient building," he says. "Back then, it carried people's wishes for peace and a better world. Today the country is peaceful, the mountains are beautiful. The ancient wishes have, in many ways, become our own."

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Online
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Cultural performances let villagers find new voices in the arts





Left: Villagers perform in a short stage play in Yinan county, Linyi city, Shandong province, in October 2024. **Right:** Another short play presented by Yinan villagers on June 10. PHOTOS BY XINHUA

JINAN — On mornings during the slack farming season, Yang Suhua, a villager from Beicun in Yinan county, Shandong province, hurries to a scenic spot in neighboring Changshanzhuang village, where she now works as a performer in addition to her farm work, a role she never could have imagined just a few years ago.

This scenic area offers a well-preserved rural landscape that dates back to the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

Local authorities there have turned old courtyards and revolutionary heritage sites into open-air stages, with no raised platforms or elaborate lighting. The performers are largely local villagers like Yang, who, after training, stage skits and plays in the local dialect. These performances bring to life the stories of the village women who risked their lives during the war to deliver supplies, tend to the wounded and relay messages.

"Now we don't have to leave home to chase our dreams, and we get paid for it too," Yang says during a break between performances.

"As the story unfolds, the audience is often drawn into the narrative, transitioning from being mere spectators to becoming part of the story itself," says Li Xipeng, chairman of the scenic area management. "This immersive experience allows visitors to truly feel the revolutionary culture as if they were there."

These folk performances have revived the region's revolutionary heritage while also boosting the local economy. Beyond performing on stage, villagers from surrounding communities have found multiple ways to raise their income, such as leasing land, taking day jobs at the scenic site, and selling local products to tourists. Now, the annual per capita disposable income in the area exceeds 15,000 yuan ($2,208).

Across China, new forms of cultural expression are lowering the barriers for rural communities to engage in creative activities. Farmers are no longer just characters in stories told by others. Instead, they are increasingly becoming storytellers, performers and beneficiaries in their own right.

In Tandi village of Sishui township, Guangdong province, a short-drama crew had set up cameras right next to lychee orchards. Wang Youxiang, a local villager taking part in the production, stood nearby, listening to the director's instructions and occasionally offering her own suggestions on how rural life should be shown on screen.

Wang recalls that in the past, all she knew was growing lychees. During the off-season, her only pastime was watching TV. Now, she has appeared in several short-drama productions. "I get to act and I get to make friends," she says.

Short-drama crews have brought more than cameras to the village — they've brought new business. Villager He Qinghai says the productions have put money in locals' pockets through acting fees and opened up new markets for their lychees.

Keen to look good on screen, families have tidied up their courtyards and spruced up village lanes. Neighbors are now swapping acting tips and learning from each other. The village looks different and so do its people.

Meanwhile, in the mountainous regions of Guizhou province, music is playing a similar role in transforming rural lives. Yu Chengliang, a teacher from Maluhe village in Tunjiao township, has introduced "rare" instruments including the saxophone, trumpet and drum set to the local school, establishing a village orchestra.

Through self-study, he turned himself into a multi-instrumentalist proficient in over a dozen instruments, and has taught the children hands-on. With his mentorship, more than 300 students have acquired instrumental skills, and music now serves as both their hope and their driving force to be able to step out of the mountains for a different future.

Yu's efforts have also touched the left-behind elderly in the village. Luo Kailian, 74, has been a member of the village orchestra for more than a decade.

"I used to think that playing musical instruments was a pastime for city dwellers and had nothing to do with us rural seniors," she says. "But over the years, learning music from Yu has kept me cheerful every day and made life feel more promising."

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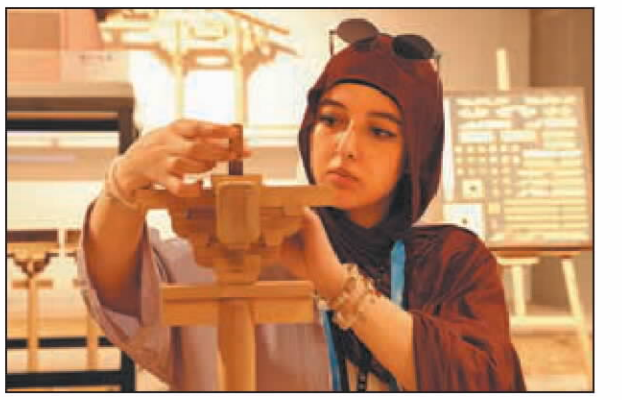
LIFE

Ancient craftsmanship meets modern creators



Liao Dynasty wooden masterpieces are getting a meticulous miniature reboot, **Zhu Xingxin** and **Zhou Huiying** report in Datong, Shanxi.

Despite having visited the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda in Yingxian county, Shanxi province, and Huayan Temple in Datong, Veldesen Yaputra was still astonished when he stood before the miniature models of Liao Dynasty (916-1125) architecture at the Datong Sculpture Museum.

Yaputra, from Indonesia, is a graduate student majoring in architecture at Tsinghua University. As an internet celebrity blogger, he was invited to participate in Discovering Shanxi's Ancient Chinese Architecture — A Visual Journey Through Cultural Heritage held from July 15 to 20.

More than 10 visual artists and overseas bloggers from nine countries explored Shanxi's rich architectural heritage, including a visit to an exhibition on the construction techniques behind the "eight great Liao structures", which opened on June 13 at the Datong Sculpture Museum.

It is the first time that the eight surviving wooden structures from the Liao Dynasty in China have been showcased together in the form of detailed models.

"These models faithfully reproduce the buildings' colors, carvings and intricate decorative details," he says. "When viewing the actual buildings, it's impossible to appreciate every element at once. But in miniature, the relationships between the structures — especially the complex *dougong* interlocking bracket system — become immediately clear.

"Visiting the original sites gives you a sense of how the architecture blends with the surrounding mountains and streets, while the miniature models offer a completely different perspective, allowing you to closely examine the construction techniques," he adds.

Liao Dynasty wooden structures inherited the robust style of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and incorporated the intricate elegance of the Song Dynasty (960-1127), holding a significant place in the history of ancient Chinese architecture.

Renowned architect Liang Sicheng once described these buildings as "millennial national treasures".

Today, only eight complete Liao Dynasty wooden structures remain in China — the Mahavira Hall of the Shanhua Temple, and the Bhagavad Sutra Hall of the Huayan Temple, both in Datong, and the Wooden Pagoda of the Fogong Temple in Yingxian county, all in Shanxi province; the Manjusri Hall of the Geyuan Temple in Laiyuan county, and the Mahavira Hall of the Kaishan Temple in Gaobeidian city in Hebei province; the Guanyin Pavilion and the gate of the Dule Temple in Tianjin's Jizhou district; and the Mahavira Hall of the Fenguo Temple in Yixian county, Liaoning province.



A young visitor looks at a model of the Guanyin Pavilion of Tianjin's Dule Temple at the exhibition. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

"With two national-level precious relic sites — the Mahavira Hall of the Shanhua Temple and the Bhagavad Sutra Hall of Huayan Temple, Datong naturally bears the responsibility of preserving this architectural heritage and passing on its construction techniques," Yin Xuenian, director of the city's cultural relics bureau, said at the exhibition's opening ceremony.

"In recent years, Datong has been actively promoting the restoration, research, and utilization of ancient buildings from the Liao and Jin (1115-1234) dynasties, continuously improving the protection system for cultural relics, exploring the craftsmanship and architectural philosophy embedded in Liao buildings, and breathing new life into these thousand-year-old masterpieces."

The exhibition showcases physical models of the "eight great Liao structures", covering eight major ancient construction techniques, including brickwork, tilework, stonework, large woodwork, small woodwork, ridge decoration, and ironwork.

It also displays traditional building tools, offering visitors a comprehensive look at the craftsmanship and aesthetic principles behind ancient Chinese architecture.

Wang Xiaolong, deputy director of Shanxi Academy of Ancient Building and Painted Sculpture & Fresco Preservation, says Liao Dynasty wooden structures represent a crucial stage in the evolution of Chinese architecture and reflect the cultural integration of multiple ethnic groups.

"The 'eight great Liao structures' are essential benchmarks for the study of architectural styles and historical periods," he says. "Shanxi preserves three of the finest surviving Liao buildings, each possessing exceptional architectural and research value.

"Timber-frame construction, defined by its wooden framework, *dougong* bracket system and mortise-and-tenon joints, is one of the most distinctive achievements of Chinese civilization," he says. "The Yingxian Wooden Pagoda, for example, demonstrates remarkable innovation through its alternating bright and hidden structural layers, reflecting ancient builders' exploration of stability in tall wooden buildings."

Treasure house

Shanxi is widely regarded as a treasure house of ancient Chinese architecture. According to Wang, every major surviving Tang Dynasty timber structure is located in the province, and wooden structures from the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960) period, Song Dynasty, Jin Dynasty (1115-1234), and Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) here account for more than 70 percent of the nation's surviving examples from each period.

Wooden structures from before the Yuan Dynasty make up 82.5 percent of the national total.

"Although Shanxi also has the largest number of surviving Liao Dynasty wooden structures, they account for only 37.5 percent of the national total," Wang says. "The province's three surviving examples are exceptionally valuable and were included among China's first group of nationally protected cultural relics in 1961."

As a young architectural creator and international cultural communicator, Yaputra believes the preservation of ancient architecture should resonate with today's generation.

"Young people today cannot simply repeat the construction methods of ancient craftsmen," he says. "Every era has its own cultural mission, and new technologies and fresh perspectives are how contemporary society can continue this cultural legacy.

"I have the deepest respect for the generations of architects, conservators and researchers devoted to restoring and studying ancient buildings," he says. "Their dedication has preserved the construction techniques of these thousand-year-old Liao structures, providing invaluable physical references for architecture students and researchers around the world."

Chinese architectural illustrator Qin Zhizhen and his team have developed cultural products inspired by the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda and other historic Shanxi buildings, including refrigerator magnets, blind boxes and collectible figurines, bringing ancient architecture closer to the public through creative design.

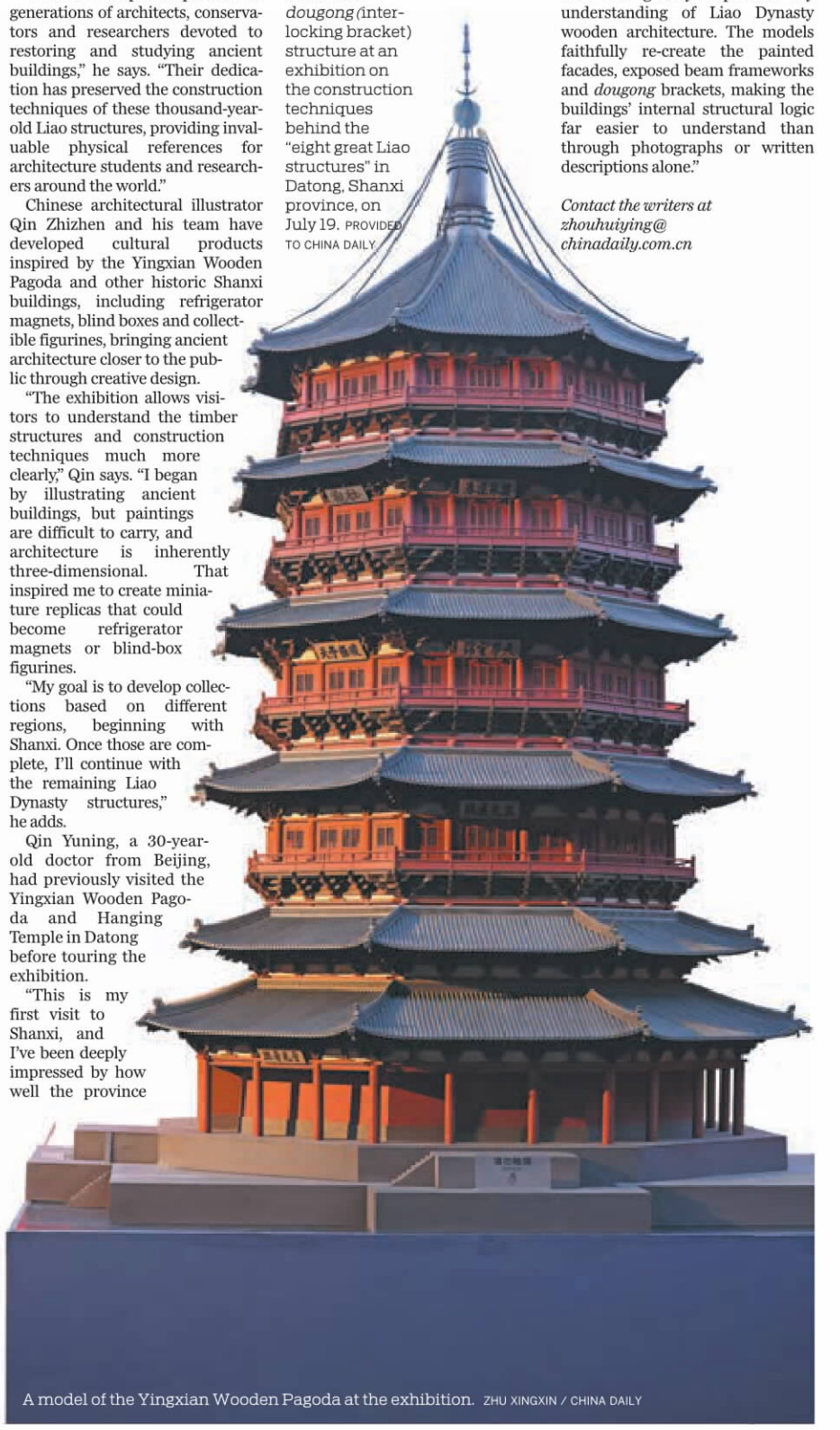
"The exhibition allows visitors to understand the timber structures and construction techniques much more clearly," Qin says. "I began by illustrating ancient buildings, but paintings are difficult to carry, and architecture is inherently three-dimensional. That inspired me to create miniature replicas that could become refrigerator magnets or blind-box figurines.

"My goal is to develop collections based on different regions, beginning with Shanxi. Once those are complete, I'll continue with the remaining Liao Dynasty structures," he adds.

Qin Yuning, a 30-year-old doctor from Beijing, had previously visited the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda and Hanging Temple in Datong before touring the exhibition.

"This is my first visit to Shanxi, and I've been deeply impressed by how well the province has preserved its ancient architectural heritage," he says. "The exhibition has greatly expanded my understanding of Liao Dynasty wooden architecture. The models faithfully re-create the painted facades, exposed beam frameworks and *dougong* brackets, making the buildings' internal structural logic far easier to understand than through photographs or written descriptions alone."

Contact the writers at zhouhuiying@chinadaily.com.cn



Moroccan blogger Fatima Zahra builds a *dougong* (interlocking bracket) structure at an exhibition on the construction techniques behind the "eight great Liao structures" in Datong, Shanxi province, on July 19. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A model of the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda at the exhibition. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

China's scenic peaks welcome a new robotic workforce

JINAN — On the misty stone trails of Mount Tai in East China's Shandong province, an unusual new worker is turning heads. A robotic dog now carries supplies uphill and hauls waste back down, blending cutting-edge technology with one of China's oldest pilgrimage routes.

About a meter long and finished in silver-gray, the four-legged robot climbs the mountain's steep stone steps with remarkable stability. Strapped to its back is a bulging nylon canvas bag filled with bottled water. Moving at a constant pace alongside tourists, this four-legged machine is not a sci-fi prop, but the latest member of the mountain's workforce.

Famed for its challenging terrain, Mount Tai has relied on human porters for centuries to transport goods. Now, robotic dogs are taking on part of that physically demanding work.

Despite its compact size, the machine can carry a static load of up to 120 kilograms and operates for four to six hours on a single charge. Equipped with high-resolution cameras, LiDAR, and multiple sensors, it can detect obstacles and negotiate slopes of up to 45 degrees, according to officials at the scenic area.

The technology is also helping tackle a long-standing environmental challenge. Mount Tai generates about 24,000 metric tons of waste every year, and removing it across the rugged landscape has traditionally depended on manual labor.

"The robotic dog is expected to significantly reduce physical strain while improving efficiency," says Wang Yunpeng, a manager at the scenic area.

Each trip carries 30 to 45 kilograms — similar to what a human porter would transport. With quick battery replacements, the robot can keep working throughout the day. Since entering service, it has also become a tourist attraction, with hikers regularly stopping to photograph its sure-footed climb.



A robotic dog that would be deployed to deliver heavy loads including garbage on a test run at the Mount Tai scenic area in Tai'an, Shandong province, in 2024. SUI XIANG / XINHUA

Posing for a picture alongside the robotic dog, Wang Liang, a visitor from Qingdao, Shandong province, says he hopes the machine will see continuous upgrades to better serve Mount Tai's tourism.

The robotic dog is part of the broader Smart Mount Tai initiative. Last year, the scenic area introduced AI-powered climbing exoskeletons, among the first large-scale deployments of the technology in tourism.

Weighing just 1.8 kilograms, the wearable device uses artificial intelligence algorithms to reduce a climber's physical effort by over 30 percent.

These technological integrations are part of a comprehensive digital transformation at Mount Tai, which has incorporated AI, IoT, cloud computing and VR/AR to build an intelligent management system covering fire dispatch, crowd control and smart tourism services.

This localized evolution aligns with China's broader push to integrate AI into daily life and key industries, a strategy outlined in national guidelines last year. The AI Plus Initiative targets extensive AI adoption across six key areas by 2027: technology, industry, consumption, social services, governance and global cooperation.

Other scenic destinations are moving in the same direction. At Mount Huangshan in Anhui province, AI travel assistants, cargo drones and climbing exoskeletons have already been introduced.

In Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang province, tourism departments have introduced biomimetic robotic fish to West Lake, one of China's most iconic and historic scenic destinations. This autonomous device patrols the water to monitor temperature and pH levels, detect invasive species, and transmit real-time ecological data to command centers.

Together, these projects illustrate how AI is rapidly moving beyond research labs and into practical, everyday use across China's tourism sector.

XINHUA

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SPORTS

BASKETBALL



Just like LeBron James on July 26, back in 2019, first baseman Bryce Harper chose Philadelphia in free agency. He led the Phillies to the 2022 World Series, but couldn't quite finish the job. "The city loves a winner," Harper said of the 76ers' new signing. **Inset:** James, then with the Los Angeles Lakers, talks with Philadelphia 76ers' forward Joel Embiid (right) after an NBA game in 2022.
AFP / AP

Like Harper, James wants to win Philly a title

Both chose the city as free agents on a mission to fulfill their respective teams' championship ambitions

LeBron James and Bryce Harper spent their careers on a parallel path toward stardom.

They were teenage phenoms who graced the cover of Sports Illustrated (back when magazines were cool) and both prodigies were No 1 overall draft picks straight out of high school.

When Harper earned his first chance at testing free agency, there was only one city, one contract that was right for him.

Philadelphia.

It took a few years, but Harper has some company to fight with him on the short list of top elite athletes who have signed in Philadelphia.

Harper and the Phillies in MLB.

Pete Rose and Kyle Schwarber and the Phillies.

Saquon Barkley and Reggie White and the Eagles in the NFL.

With perhaps the most significant signature to be scrawled in Philadelphia in any July since 1776, James has followed Harper from free agency to Philly, rocking the NBA and signing a two-year deal for the bargain-basement price of $8 million — only a smidge more per season than the 76ers' first-round pick Labaron Philon Jr will earn — that stamped the Sixers as the most compelling team in the league this season.

Keeping tabs on the much-hyped deal, Harper noted: "He's going to have a great couple of years here, and obviously everyone's going to expect him to win a championship here like everywhere else."

"So nothing new for him. He's had all the pressure since he was in high school, or younger than that."

Here's the difference between James and all the superstars in the city that played before him.

He's LeBron James.

Meaning, his reach is so far beyond the court — from fame around the globe and his bank account, to the cash register and pop culture — that there is no fair comparison. He is No 4 on Forbes' real-time list of wealthiest athletes at $1.4 billion, so his pay cut may not even be noticed in the ledger book. James has commercials and movie roles, and endorsement deals that alone would out-earn every single player on the Sixers.

Joel Embiid, league MVP and two-time scoring champ. He's not LeBron.

Jaylen Brown, NBA Finals MVP and champion. He's not LeBron.

Tyrese Maxey, an All-Star and the real franchise player in Philly. He's not LeBron.

"I think it's pretty cool to have one of the greatest basketball players ever to play in the same city," Phillies shortstop Trea Turner said. "So I'm excited for those who haven't gotten a chance to see him play."

Who those people might be is anyone's guess. James is a 22-time All-Star, a 21-time All-NBA selection, a four-time Most Valuable Player, a four-time NBA Finals MVP, a three-time All-Star Game MVP, and was a member of the NBA's 75th anniversary team.



Back in 2018, three billboards near a highway in Cleveland tried to entice LeBron James, then with the Cleveland Cavaliers, to sign for Philadelphia. Eight years on, and it seems James finally took notice. AP

He's also coming off a season where he averaged 20.9 points, 6.1 rebounds and 7.2 assists per game. For his career, he's averaged 26.8 points, 7.5 rebounds and 7.4 assists in more than 1,600 games.

"He's played in big markets before," Harper said. "He knows exactly what he needs to do."

Harper has largely lived up to the 13-year, $330 million contract signed ahead of the 2019 season, when he spurned the Washington Nationals for the Phillies and owned the richest contract in baseball history. He led the Phillies to the 2022 World Series, but came away empty-handed, won the National League's MVP award in 2021 and helped win back-to-back NL East titles.

Barkley rushed for more than 2,000 yards in his first season with the Eagles and led them to a Super Bowl championship, and Rose was the missing piece to help Hall of Famers Mike Schmidt and Steve Carlton win the Phillies a World Series in 1980 — the first MLB title in the franchise's history.

The 76ers have almost seemed to wait as long for a parade down Broad Street.

They have won titles in Philadelphia in only 1967 and 1983 and have improbably failed to advance out of the second round of the Eastern Conference playoffs since 2001.

And yet, somehow, one of the most famous athletes — strike that, people — walking and dunking in America today decided he wanted to play in Philadelphia.

"I'm not going for money. I'm not going for family," James posted on social media on July 24. "What am I really playing for at this point? I still want to sacrifice. I still want to work. I still want to grind. I still want to compete, to win and to have a chance at the feeling of winning."

James celebrated his decision on Instagram with a career highlight reel set to Philadelphia rapper Meek Mill's *Dreams and Nightmares*, the adopted sports anthem of the city's teams that is blasted ad nauseam throughout Philly's respective sports complexes.

The video ends with the lyric, "hold up, wait a minute. Y'all thought I was finished?" and cuts to a 76ers' logo.

James isn't finished — even if his best isn't yet to come.

He won NBA titles at each of his three previous NBA stops in Cleveland, Miami and the Los Angeles Lakers and could be the first player to ever win a title with four teams.

The countdown to opening night is on.

The stakes have really never been higher for the franchise. If they can't win with LeBron, Embiid, Brown and Maxey — can they ever?

Get ready, everyone.

And skip the advice.

James doesn't need any tips on surviving the deep fryer of fandom in Philly.

"He can do whatever the hell he wants," Harper said.

"But the city loves a winner. So win."

AP

RUGBY

Lafaele was a star for Japan, now he's not sure he belongs

TOKYO — Timothy Lafaele is among the many rugby players who have not only made their lives and playing careers in Japan, but hold Japanese passports, even though they were born outside the country.

In Lafaele's case, he has played 28 times for Japan's national team, including a monumental victory over Ireland in the 2019 Rugby World Cup, which Japan hosted.

He was a star back then, as Japan's rugby prowess shocked many.

But, under new rules proposed by local rugby officials that are set to go into effect in December when the Japan Rugby League One season opens, Lafaele and the others will be classed as foreigners, clouding their future in Japan.

This will limit their playing opportunities on domestic teams where Japan-born players are given preference.

Seiji Makino, a lawyer who is representing 24 players in a suit pending before several Japanese courts, said he's hopeful changes can be made before the season opens — through the courts or through negotiations with rugby officials.

"This is a very simple story," Makino said Thursday. "It is about players who built their lives and careers in Japan under one set of rules and are now having the ground moved from under their feet."

He and Lafaele spoke on Thursday in Tokyo at a news conference hosted by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan.

Lafaele said the rule change came "out of the blue".

He declined to discuss any link to current politics around immigration in Japan, and also declined to talk about the effect on his contract.

The rugby rule change comes as Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi has been pushing tougher policies on immigration and foreigners. Many Japanese complain of struggling with stagnant salaries and rising prices — and some link it to a surge in foreigners to sustain a shrinking workforce as Japan's aging population declines.



> It quite saddens us. To come to Japan, having given so much to the rugby here and the community, and being treated this way, it just saddens us."
>
> **Timothy Lafaele,** on Japanese rugby's changing eligibility rules

Lafaele, who is Samoan-born, came to Japan at 18, played for a Japanese university and now has a Japanese passport.

But that's no longer good enough to guarantee playing time in Japanese rugby's top professional league.

The new rules specify that players had to reside in Japan for "at least six of nine years" of elementary and junior high school to qualify for the highest category of eligibility.

"I probably could answer for all the boys that are represented on this case," Lafaele said.

"It quite saddens us. To come to Japan, having given so much to the rugby here and the community, and being treated this way, it just saddens us."

Lafaele added. "To me, when this rule first came, I did feel insulted."

Of the 24 players who filed the case, only five want to be identified. Many fear that speaking out could cause more problems.

Makino was asked if there was a racial element to the new rules, and he said he didn't think "of it as racism" at the core of the dispute.

Players, though, are left in the lurch wondering about their future.

"It's been a hard time for the players these last couple of months," Lafaele said. "Some players are forced into retirement. Some players are just waiting at home at the moment for this decision to change so they can have the opportunity to provide for their families and get playing contracts. It's been a tough time for most of the players."

Many sports bodies across the globe consistently bend eligibility rules for commercial reasons, or to gain a competitive edge, and changing eligibility rules often faces pushback, particularly when local players seem to be sidelined.

Japanese rugby officials say the player pool of Japan-born players is shrinking, and limiting foreigners will help boost it.

Lafaele said he supports the idea of nurturing more native players, but doubts limiting the foreign influence will help.

"I don't think kids will look at this competition and say 'there are too many foreigners, I'll stop playing,'" Lafaele said.

"I see both sides of it. I see where the Japanese boys are coming from. They see it as more opportunities for them to play."

AP

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Peace under pressure
Attacks on Gaza continue despite disarmament deal
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Astronauts harvest rice at space station
CHINA, PAGE 11



Trailblazer on court
Han Xu inspires Chinese players to compete in Australia's top league
SPORTS, PAGE 16

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2026

Ferry disaster



Above: Plumes of smoke rise from the *Mutiara Sentosa 2*, an Indonesian ferry carrying more than 270 people, after it caught fire on Sunday in the waters off the country's East Java province. Five people are confirmed dead, while 229 have been rescued, officials said on Monday, adding that the cause of the fire remains under investigation. REUTERS **Left:** Passengers evacuated from the ship arrive on Monday at the Gapura Surya Nusantara port terminal in Surabaya, East Java. DIPTA WAHYU / REUTERS

WORLD WATCH
By Jeppe Søe

Narrative a comforting illusion for bruised egos

Before visiting Wuhan, I carried an image of the city shaped largely by distant impressions and secondhand narratives. I expected a place defined by concrete, technology and surveillance. Instead, I found something far more familiar: neighbors sharing food, children playing and people gathering in courtyards between apartment buildings.

The experience revealed a simple truth: distance is not always measured in miles. Sometimes it is created by the assumptions we carry about people and places we do not truly know.

That same distance is now shaping the way nations see one another. We have replaced genuine global cooperation with silent trenches and protectionist walls. We have stopped talking to each other. Instead, we are exclusively talking about each other.

If you listen to the political debates in Western Europe right now, the narrative around China is too often reduced to a trade deficit and supply surplus. It is a comforting illusion that nurses our bruised egos. Since Europe lags severely behind in artificial intelligence and other technologies, we console ourselves with arrogance.

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A TRIP TO PINGSHAN MOUNTAIN WILL REALLY FLOAT YOUR BOAT

Overseas tourists looking to escape sweltering summer temperatures are discovering a slice of paradise in a Hubei province canyon

By LI LEI in Beijing and **LIU KUN** in Enshi, Hubei

Jonathan Ng, a 37-year-old financier from Singapore, had never heard of Enshi in Hubei province until a social media clip caught his eye.

The footage showed a wooden boat drifting across water so crystalline that it seemed to float in midair, flanked by sheer karst cliffs — a scene reminiscent of Malaysia's famed Semporna archipelago.

But it was the climate that sealed the deal. With summer averaging just 22 C — a welcome respite from Singapore's tropical heat — he booked a flight within weeks.

After touring Pingshan Canyon, Ng was full of praise. "The boat ride, the scenery, the cool air — it was all stunning," he said, adding that he would recommend it as a summer escape to friends back home.

Ng is part of a growing tide of travelers fleeing sweltering city summers for wallet-friendly cool retreats in China. With temperate climes and tour packages costing a fraction of those in Semporna, Enshi stands out as a particularly tempting option.

The canyon's signature attraction is the "suspended boat" effect, created by exceptionally clear water and narrow cliff walls that minimize surface ripples.

Chen Kun, operations director at the Pingshan Canyon scenic area, has repeatedly witnessed how the canyon overwhelms first-time foreign visitors. Many arrive having seen its "China's Semporna" nickname on social media, but the actual experience, he said, far exceeds the online hype.

"Most people stop in their tracks and fall silent," Chen said. "They look down at the water, then up at the boat, checking the reflection again and again, and say it feels like it's floating in the sky — like a sci-fi movie."

He added that nearly all foreign guests immediately reach for cameras or drones, jockeying for the perfect light. European and US photography enthusiasts sometimes linger for one to two hours just to capture the ideal shot. Many share their footage in real time during their visit and continue posting on YouTube, Instagram and Facebook long after they have left.

"The feedback is unanimous," Chen said. "Pingshan is an unparalleled wonder — karst cliffs, primeval forest and crystalline water all in one, with no equal anywhere else."

See ***Canyon,*** *page 3*

XI'S VISION | EAST-WEST COLLABORATION

Once-barren region now a growth hub

Xi's long-term view for Ningxia partnership plan helped turn area into land of prosperity

By XU WEI, HU DONGMEI and **ZHANG CHUNYAN** in Yongning county, Ningxia

Even today, Hai Guobao still vividly remembers the moment his family first stepped into their new home in Minning township more than a decade ago.

The family moved into a house in the new settlement near the Helan Mountains in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, where rows of brick homes and broad, paved roads stood in sharp contrast to the rugged mountain villages they had left behind.

After the long journey from Xihaigu, long known as one of China's harshest environments for human settlement, his family paused at the doorway before doing anything else.

Inside, they tested the most basic features first: a switch on the wall, then a tap in the kitchen. A light came on. Water flowed immediately. "We could never have imagined it even in our dreams," Hai recalled. "It was the first time we were leaving our home in Xihaigu for good. Many of us shed tears — both out of sadness and hope."

For his family, that moment marked the end of a way of life defined by scarcity. In Xihaigu, drinking water seeped through cracks in the rocks and had to be carried long distances back to villages scattered across steep hillsides. Droughts frequently brought crop failures, trapping generations of families in a cycle of hardship.

Hai's journey to Minning was part of a vision first set in motion nearly three decades earlier. In 1996, Fujian province and Ningxia were paired under a national poverty-reduction initiative designed to channel resources, investment and expertise from China's more developed eastern coast to its less developed western interior.

Xi Jinping, then deputy secretary of the Communist Party of China Fujian Provincial Committee, played a leading role in advancing the cooperation mechanism.

During a research trip to Ningxia in April 1997, Xi visited a relocation site in Xiji county, where he proposed building what would become Minning township. He called for pooling resources and investment to create a model of Fujian-Ningxia cooperation, whereby relocated residents could move out of the mountains, settle down and build prosperous lives.

At a Fujian-Ningxia poverty alleviation coordination meeting in 1998, Xi stressed that the partnership should focus on meeting the basic needs of poor residents.

In the years that followed, he continued to advocate expanding cooperation, innovating assistance mechanisms and broadening participation, laying the groundwork for a partnership that evolved from poverty relief to long-term regional development.

The idea gradually took shape at the foot of the Helan Mountains. Waves of migrants left Xihaigu for Minning, where irrigation from the Yellow River turned arid land into farmland and where new roads, schools, clinics and homes replaced the barren landscape.

Over the past three decades, Fujian has provided 7.68 billion yuan ($1.14 billion) in assistance funding for infrastructure projects in Ningxia's formerly impoverished areas and encouraged more than 1,600 enterprises to invest in the region, bringing over 100 billion yuan in actual investment.

The impact has been profound. According to Wang Jian, head of Ningxia's regional department of agriculture and rural affairs, all 803,000 rural residents who once lived below the poverty line in the region have been lifted out of poverty. Xihaigu has shed its long-standing reputation for extreme hardship, while 1.13 million people have gained access to safe drinking water.

Annual per capita disposable income for rural residents in Ningxia has risen from about 1,400 yuan in 1996 to more than 20,000 yuan in 2025.

See ***Growth,*** *page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Intervention on yen seen as short-term fix

By HOU JUNJIE in Tokyo
houjunjie@chinadaily.com.cn

The first coordinated intervention by the United States and Japan in 15 years to prop up the Japanese yen can only offer the currency a temporary boost, as reversing the yen's long-term downward trajectory will require broader fiscal and monetary policy adjustments, experts said.

They made the remarks after Japanese Finance Minister Satsuki Katayama confirmed on Monday that Japan conducted a coordinated yen-buying intervention with the US Department of Treasury on Friday. The move was aimed at countering "excessive volatility and disorderly movements", she said, adding that Japan "will not hesitate to conduct further coordinated interventions in the future" and remains in close communication with the US Treasury.

At 5 pm on Monday, the yen strengthened to 156.76 against the dollar after briefly hitting 155.20, its strongest level since early May.

US President Donald Trump said on Sunday that the US intervened in Japan's currency market on its request to boost the weakening yen.

Data from the Bank of Japan, the country's central bank, indicated that Tokyo may have sold almost $59 billion to buy yen when it intervened in New York markets on Thursday, before the joint move.

The yen has been under sustained pressure this year, weakening to around 164 per dollar in late July, a 40-year low. The Japanese government and the central bank carried out large-scale yen-buying interventions between late April and May. However, the effects quickly faded, and the yen continued to decline.

Joint intervention by Japan and the US is extremely rare outside periods of financial crises or major disasters. The last such action took place in 2011, when the yen surged following the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Naomi Muguruma, chief bond strategist at Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley Securities, said the coordinated intervention reflects growing concerns in Japan and the US over the yen's rapid depreciation.

The yen's depreciation stems from concerns over Japan's fiscal expansion and the perception that its central bank is "behind the curve" on interest rate hikes, she said, adding that currency intervention could only provide temporary relief without addressing the underlying causes.

Takahide Kiuchi, executive economist at Nomura Research Institute, said that strengthening the yen and sustaining that strength would require improved economic fundamentals or weaker expectations of further US Federal Reserve rate hikes.

To ease market concerns over Japan's fiscal outlook, Kiuchi said the government should present a stable funding source for its planned consumption tax cut and dispel the notion that it has pressured the central bank into delaying further rate hikes.

In late July, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi unveiled a plan to reduce the consumption tax on food and beverages from 8 percent to 1 percent for a two-year period starting in April 2027. The measure, which is aimed at mitigating the impact of rising prices, has sparked a debate within the ruling coalition and among opposition parties over the absence of a clear alternative source of revenue.

Masafumi Yamamoto, chief foreign exchange strategist at Mizuho Securities, told the Asahi Shimbun newspaper that the joint intervention appears to be intended to slow the yen's decline while leaving the broader policy stance of the Takaichi administration unchanged.

The move could buy time against the yen's rapid depreciation and help avoid inflation that could weigh on the government's approval ratings, he said, but warned that the pressure on the yen would continue unless broader fiscal and monetary policy concerns were addressed.



A man walks past an electronic screen in Tokyo, Japan, displaying the yen's exchange rates against the US dollar and other foreign currencies on Monday. ISSEI KATO / REUTERS

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INDEPTH



Vineyards at the eastern foothills of the Helan Mountains in Ningxia Hui autonomous region now attract wine lovers from all over the world. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinese wines' potential uncorked in Australia

Restaurants, sommeliers and sellers trumpet international quality of Ningxia varieties



Chinese wines from Ningxia are displayed at a bottle shop in Perth, the capital of Western Australia.

By **XIN XIN** and **ALEXIS HOOI** in Sydney

In June, Australian wine shop owner Ann Marie Tamburri made a personal trip to Northwest China's Ningxia Hui autonomous region and visited five wineries in two days.

"I was curious and wanted to learn more. So I paid for my own trip there," said Tamburri, who owns the La Vigna wine and liquor store in Perth, Western Australia.

Tamburri's interest in Chinese wines began when she first tried them about a year ago.

"We tasted about 18 wines from China. We were impressed with some of the wines ... They're outstanding," she said. "We were curious to know more, and that's how it started. And so from there, we went on to list some (Chinese) wines in our wine shop."

Her positive take reflects how one of China's top winemaking areas is making headway in Australia, a leading player in the global industry.

Niu Xiaotong, general manager of Australia Northwest Liquor Trading company in Perth, promotes wines from the eastern foothills of the Helan Mountains in Ningxia.

Reaping the rewards from decades of major investment, the winemaking hub in Ningxia's capital, Yinchuan, with its high-altitude, desert-like climate near the Yellow River, has won international acclaim for its products.

Niu, who introduced Ningxia wines to Tamburri, said Western Australia's strong economy and consumer purchasing power made it a suitable location to introduce the region's premium wines.

He started promoting Chinese wines in Australia in October 2023, when the first shipment of Ningxia samples, including about 200 cases, arrived in the country.

"After about a year and a half of market promotion, research, and exploration, we selected 18 products from the initial range and shipped another 803 cases to Australia in mid-2025," Niu said.

By then, the number of distributors selling Ningxia wines had grown to 86 across Australia, covering mainly local bottle shops, fine dining restaurants, and wine bars, he said.

"At present, we are the largest importer and wholesaler of Chinese wines in Australia."

Niu said another key reason Ningxia wines have been relatively well received in Western Australia is their similarity to local wine styles.

"Australian wines are generally known for their prominent floral and fruit aromas, approachable style, and easy-drinking characteristics, while wines from the eastern foothills of the Helan Mountains share some similarities with those from Western Australia's renowned Margaret River region," he said.

The advantage of Ningxia wines in Australia lies in their novelty. They also satisfy the curiosity of many local consumers, he said, adding that the differences in grape varieties and winemaking methods allow Ningxia wines to complement Australian ones.

Experts impressed

Gianmattia Giordano, group sommelier for Hunter Street Hospitality, which is behind award-winning, high-end restaurants in Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth, said the company recently introduced a selection of Chinese wines. Diners can explore not only Ningxia's wines but other leading Chinese products.

While it is a relatively new category, awareness is growing and Chinese wines have generated strong interest, particularly in Australia's sommelier community, he said.

"We believe it's important to showcase outstanding wines regardless of where they come from, and Ningxia has established itself as one of the world's most exciting emerging wine regions," he said.

"Ningxia's high altitude, dry climate and significant day-to-night temperature variation produce wines with concentrated fruit, fresh acidity and well-structured tannins," Giordano said.

The region is best known for its cabernet sauvignon and French Bordeaux-style wine blends, although varieties such as marselan are also showing great promise, he said.

"One of Ningxia's greatest strengths is that it combines exceptional natural resources with the expertise of leading winemakers and viticulturists from around the world, many of whom have been drawn to the region's potential and are helping shape its evolution into a world-class fine wine region," Giordano said.

Jase Wong, owner of Shanghai-inspired Modu Bar and Kitchen in Perth, said it introduced Ningxia wines this year as part of its commitment to showcase the diversity of modern Chinese food and beverages.

"As an Asian fusion venue, we wanted our wine program to go beyond the familiar and offer guests something unique that complements our cuisine," he said.

"We currently feature a selection of premium wineries from Ningxia, with an emphasis on cabernet sauvignon blends that pair well with our menu."

Tamburri said one of the things that stood out during her Ningxia visit was the strong presence of women winemakers.

Many were entrepreneurial, had studied or worked overseas, and were bringing international experience back to their own estates.

There is also a cultural shift in Ningxia, similar to what is happening in Australia, with younger winemakers "beating the drums for the region", she said.

Feedback from her customers has been very positive, she said. Many didn't know that China produces wine, where Ningxia is located, or even that there was a wine region in China, she said.

Tamburri said customers became interested after she explained the story behind the wines and were pleasantly surprised by how good and well-made they were, which she described as "the exciting part for us as retailers".

"Consumers are coming back and repurchasing, like they would any wines from other international regions."

Rapid development

Ningxia's wine industry has recorded rapid development in recent years, with the Helan Mountains area now producing 140 million bottles a year, nearly half of China's total estate wine production, according to regional statistics.

Last year, Ningxia's wine exports reached about 14.49 million yuan ($2.14 million), a year-on-year increase of more than 5 percent.

Gao Tianshu, director of the marketing division of the management committee of the Ningxia Helan Mountain East Foothill Wine Industry Park, said as the region pursues high-quality development and greater international openness, Australia provides many benefits.

Rather than simply viewing Australia as an export market, Ningxia sees it as an important platform for benchmarking against international standards, strengthening two-way exchanges, and expanding its overseas presence, he said.

Ningxia can learn from Australia's well-established wine industry, while the Australian market itself offers many advantages, including a mature consumer base, Gao said.

China is the top destination market by value for the Australian wine sector, accounting for 36 percent of exports in 2024-25, according to statutory authority Wine Australia.

"In recent years, China-Australia economic and trade ties have continued to recover, bilateral exchanges have become smoother, and the overall export environment has steadily improved, creating favorable external conditions for us to further develop the Australian market," Gao said.

Ningxia's short-term goal is to establish a solid presence in mainstream local sales channels and promote the brand of wines from the eastern foothills of the Helan Mountains, he said.

They will be marketed as a distinctive expression of "Eastern terroir" — a combination of soil, climate and sunlight that gives grapes their distinctive character.

In the longer term, Ningxia hopes to leverage Australia's mature and well-regulated market to develop a replicable overseas marketing and operating model, he said.

This will also help accumulate international experience, and support establishing the eastern foothills area as a world-renowned wine region.

A pleasant alternative

Michael Tamburri, Ann Marie's father and former chair of the International Wine and Food Society's Asia-Pacific zone, said marketing Chinese wines to Australian consumers is a crucial step in the expansion of the Chinese industry.

Varieties like marselan that go beyond the strong, heavier styles of cabernet and shiraz that are popular in Australia, could gain a foothold if appropriately priced.

"They (buyers) shouldn't think they're going to get an Australian wine, they've got to think traditional, very well-made Chinese wines," he said.

He also praised Chinese white wine varieties as "very good". "They're very fresh and modern. White wine can be a little bit more delicate, a little softer, easier, and it goes well with all foods, especially Asian cuisine," Tamburri said.

Gaining international exposure for Chinese wines will require winemaking regions like Ningxia to attract tourists to witness the impressive development of the sector, he added.

"China is the best place in the world to see all of that ... Their vineyard management, nothing compares to it," he said, citing the example of how Ningxia grape growers bury their vines in the ground every winter to shield them from the extreme cold.

"It's an incredible practice, but also an incredible story," he said.

Giordano from Hunter Street Hospitality said compared with Australian cabernet wines, those from Ningxia often have a slightly more restrained style, with firm structure, freshness, and excellent aging potential.

"While they remain distinctly Chinese in identity, they are increasingly demonstrating the precision, complexity, and sense of place expected of the world's leading wine regions," he said, adding that Sydney, one of Australia's most dynamic dining and wine scenes, is an ideal city to introduce emerging wine regions.

Educating the public

Restaurants with experienced sommelier teams can educate guests, recommend pairings with food, and build confidence in the category, he said.

Premium dining venues are often where consumers first discover new wine regions before they become more widely recognized.

"Including myself, we're still quite new to the world of Chinese wines," Giordano said. "My sommelier team, our guests, and I, are all on a journey of discovery, and that's what makes it so exciting."

"We want to explore these wines and support what we believe is one of the most promising emerging wine regions in the world. While there's still a lot for us to learn, we're eager to deepen our understanding and share that experience with our guests," he said.

Wong, from Modu Bar and Kitchen, said, the restaurant's philosophy is to celebrate contemporary Asian flavors while respecting tradition. "Ningxia wines align perfectly with that vision — they represent a new generation of Chinese craftsmanship that is innovative, ambitious, and world-class," he said.

Offering Ningxia wines allows Modu to introduce diners to another side of China beyond its cuisine, creating a more complete dining experience and encouraging cultural discovery through food and wine, he said.

Compared with many Australian reds, Ningxia wines often show greater freshness and elegance while still offering good structure. Wong described them as sitting somewhere between the richness of some New World wines and the restraint often found in classic European styles.

Perth is a multicultural city with a vibrant food and wine culture. Diners are curious, adventurous, and open to trying new experiences, making it an ideal market for introducing premium Chinese wines, he said.

"Wine dinners, tasting exhibitions, and staff recommendations all play an important role in building awareness and confidence among consumers," Wong said.

As more Australians discover the quality of Ningxia wines, he believes they will receive greater recognition alongside wines from established areas like Australia, France and Italy, he said.

"The biggest challenge isn't the wine itself — it's familiarity. Some customers are initially hesitant simply because they haven't heard of Ningxia before," he said.

"Once they taste the wines and learn about the region's winemaking story, many become enthusiastic supporters and are happy to recommend them to friends."

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Left: Chinese wines are promoted at a shop in Perth in 2025. **Middle:** Ann Marie Tamburri, owner of the La Vigna wine and liquor store, displays Chinese wine during a wine tasting event in Perth in 2025.
Right: An industry expert samples a Chinese wine during a Chinese wine masterclass in Perth. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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TOP NEWS

Xi's thought resonates with Latin America

Nation's modernization path offers valuable insights for Global South, researchers say

By **YANG GAO** in Toronto
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There is growing interest in Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and China's development philosophy in Latin America, driven by China's economic achievements, its expanding global role and its deepening engagement with the Global South, scholars in the region said.

Luis Antonio Paulino, a professor of international relations at Sao Paulo State University in Brazil, said the number of researchers and students interested in different aspects of Chinese development, culture and Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era has increased exponentially in recent years.

"In Brazil, we have a research network on China, with over 500 members from across the country, and new members apply every month.

"All major Brazilian universities house centers for China studies, and the publication of books and articles on China by the Brazilian academic community has increased significantly in recent years," he said.

Paulino attributed the growing interest to China's development achievements and its vision for international cooperation.

"There is growing recognition and acceptance of President Xi Jinping's proposals for building a more peaceful and just world for all, particularly the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative," he said.

Asked which elements of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era resonate the most with Latin American audiences, Paulino pointed to issues closely linked to the region's development priorities.

For Gustavo Alejandro Girado, director of the postgraduate program on contemporary China studies at the National University of Lanus in Argentina, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era offers a framework for understanding China's long-term vision and its approach to international relations.

"President Xi's thinking is a valuable tool available for us in Latin America to better understand the thinking of the leadership of the world's second-largest economy," Girado said.

"It is an excellent collection of solid and well-structured arguments that summarizes what China intends for itself and for the rest of the world," he added.

He said that Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era helps explain China's priorities in its engagement with developing countries.

Discussing the significance of China's role in global governance, Girado argued that many developing countries are seeking new approaches after decades of uneven development.

"The current global governance models haven't helped us escape poverty and destitution, nor have they improved income distribution.

"This is why China's presence is so beneficial to us. Its presence and it becoming the voice of the voiceless are crucial to ensuring our demands are met," he said.

On Chinese modernization, Girado said that China's experience is inspiring though every country must find its own path.

"It's excellent that China allows us to observe the political and economic process it follows to achieve this modernization," he said.

"For me, it is very useful to know that 'it can be done', that there are possible paths, and that China points them out based on its own experiences," he said.

China and Latin American and Caribbean countries have deepened cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, finance, science and technology, and infrastructure, among others, in recent years. In 2015, the China-CELAC Forum, a ministerial-level dialogue between China and Latin American and Caribbean states, was established, and in May 2025, the fourth ministerial meeting of the forum was held in Beijing.

Last year, trade between China and LAC states exceeded $500 billion for the first time. The two sides also maintain close academic exchanges, which Girado sees as a bridge to foster understanding.

China narrowing gap in high-end phone memory

By **LI JIAYING**
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China is inching closer to plugging a crucial gap in high-end mobile phone memory, with the latest progress made by ChangXin Memory Technologies expected to further deepen coordination among domestic chip designers, handset makers and suppliers in the era of on-device artificial intelligence, said industry experts.

Their comments came as the Chinese company nears the end of its research and development validation for its first LPDDR6 chip — a dynamic random-access memory chip that promises more bandwidth, lower latency, better energy efficiency and stronger reliability.

As the CXMT chip eyes commercial production, experts said they believe the core design is largely settled and has undergone systematic testing for performance, power consumption, compatibility and mechanical reliability. "Under an optimistic timetable, small-batch introduction could begin as early as the second half of this year, followed by volume production in the first half of 2027," said Guo Tao, a member of the Chinese Association for Artificial Intelligence.

According to media reports, the CXMT chip is designed to reach a data rate of 12.8 gigabits per second, with a base operating rate of 10.7 Gbps when paired with a system-on-chip integrated circuit. Its power efficiency and reliability, availability and serviceability, or RAS, functions have been improved compared with the company's previous memory chips.

Guo noted that the CXMT chip is set to enter the leading group of global products in the same technology generation offered by South Korean companies Samsung and SK hynix. "There is no longer a generational gap in the technology. The main differences will lie in process stability after large-scale production and the accumulation of long-term reliability data," he said.

The CXMT chip's peak speed is expected to help meet the high-bandwidth demands of on-device AI, while stronger RAS functions could reduce data errors during sustained AI workloads, Guo added.

Jiang Han, a senior researcher at market consultancy Pangoal, said higher bandwidth could ease a key bottleneck in running large AI models locally, while lower latency would support high-frame-rate gaming and smoother multitasking.

"Flagship smartphones will be the first to generate demand, as their users are most sensitive to such performance upgrades and can afford to pay a premium," he said.

Beyond the chip's hardware specifications, local coordination is also a core strength, Jiang said. "It enables rapid customization backed by strong demand from Chinese phone manufacturers and creates a valuable market opportunity as supply-chain security gains importance."

Suicide bombing



People evacuate an injured man on Sunday after a suicide bomber struck at the site of a protest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan. At least 19 people were killed and several others were injured in the attack. The blast occurred when protesters were demanding government action against escalating violence in the region. ABDULLAH SHEREEN / AFP

Bias: We must travel and disagree openly

From page 1

When we fall behind, we do not run faster or innovate more. We build legal walls, impose tariffs and try to regulate our way out of competition, convincing ourselves that we can thrive in isolation.

But reality tells a different story. Not long ago, I stood in the dusty Gobi Desert in Gansu province and looked straight into the future. I saw a massive solar thermal power plant, its central tower rising 263 meters into the sky — taller than the pylons of Denmark's proudest engineering marvel, the Great Belt Bridge. While European politicians sit at home debating whether China can invent anything of value, China is literally capturing the sun. Europe is coughing in the sand, holding on to a fading illusion of supremacy.

Yet, the geopolitical divide is not just about solar panels, AI, or supply chains; it is fundamentally about how we view humanity. When we stop conversing — because of a war in Europe, political shifts in the United States, or trade panic — we lose the concept of a shared planet. We reduce entire nations to enemy algorithms.

After my visit, some European friends asked whether Wuhan was merely a high-tech metropolis of surveillance systems and concrete towers. Their question reflected how easily a complex society can be reduced to a single image.

What I encountered was something much more ordinary and universal: people sharing meals, chatting with neighbors, raising children and building communities in the spaces between modern buildings. These moments were not uniquely Chinese; the desire for connection, belonging and warmth is equally present in everyday life in Denmark and around the world. No algorithm can fully capture these realities. They cannot be reduced to data points, headlines or political narratives.

Visiting the Hubei Provincial Museum, I looked at the incredible Bronze Bells of Marquis Yi, cast more than 2,400 years ago. I stood there thinking that China essentially invented heavy metal music 2,500 years ago. When you witness millennia of deep cultural history, you realize how foolish it is when the West treats China like a newcomer on the world stage.

But you also realize something else: Great civilizations do not grow in isolation.

In Denmark, the philosopher N.F.S. Grundtvig shaped our entire modern society. He believed that books, laws and written rules are cold and dead if they stand alone. He believed in what he called "The Living Word" — the spoken conversation between two human beings looking each other in the eyes. Grundtvig taught us that society only progresses when we dare to meet the people we strongly disagree with.

Think about how physical warmth is created. If you rub your hands together gently without touching, nothing happens. But if you press them together firmly — if you create friction — you get heat. Friction is warmth. Disagreement is energy.

When countries build trade walls or retreat behind digital and cultural boundaries, we remove the friction. We create sterile echo chambers. If Europe and China only listen to their own voices, both of our civilizations will eventually stagnate. Throughout my political career, I have advocated for listening to "everyday experts" — the people whose lived experiences are often ignored by out-of-touch political systems. On a global scale, our nations are the everyday experts of our own cultures. We must listen to each other's lived realities.

True friendship and genuine dialogue require absolute honesty. I have clearly stated that Europe has lost its way by being arrogant and using tariffs to hide its own weaknesses. But conversation is a two-way street.

China's remarkable technological and social achievements are becoming an increasingly important part of the global conversation. Continued engagement with diverse perspectives and experiences can help foster greater mutual understanding, trust and cooperation. In the long run, global influence is shaped not only by economic and technological progress, but also by the ability to connect, communicate and work with others in an increasingly interconnected world.

We live on a single, fragile planet currently defined by geopolitical fear. The easiest path for any politician today is to build a wall, point at foreigners, and declare self-sufficiency. But that is the road to ruin. We must choose the difficult path. We must choose the Living Word. We must travel, disagree openly, trade ideas and challenge each other's convictions face-to-face.

In the end, understanding between nations begins with understanding between people. When we take the time to meet one another face-to-face, we may discover that what connects us is far greater than what divides us.

The author is former deputy speaker in the Danish Parliament. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Canyon: Connectivity, services upgraded

From page 1

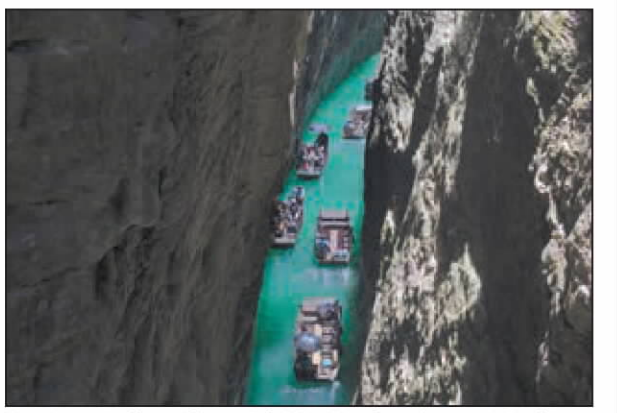
According to the National Immigration Administration, foreign arrivals in China hit 22.9 million in the first half of this year, a 20.4 percent year-on-year increase, while summer inbound bookings have surged more than sixfold as of July 24 — a sign of growing momentum.

That appeal is reinforced by affordability. At Pingshan, a bundled ticket covering entry and the boat ride costs 210 yuan ($31) — roughly one-fifth of a comparable day trip to Semporna, with no mandatory add-ons, according to Chen.

Ng, the Singaporean visitor, said the overall cost — from accommodations to food and transportation — was reasonable and delivered great value compared with other nature destinations.

The Pingshan Canyon scenic area said that foreign visitor numbers surged more than 60 percent year-on-year in the second quarter, with tourists from Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore accounting for over 60 percent of overseas arrivals.

Enhanced air connectivity has further propelled inbound travel. Enshi Xujiaping International Airport now operates direct flights to China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and seven international routes serving destinations including Seoul, Daegu and Busan in South Korea, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia and Bangkok in Thailand.



Tourists enjoy boat rides on July 15 in Pingshan Canyon in Enshi, Hubei province. YANG SHUNPI / FOR CHINA DAILY

"That combination of direct flights and visa-free access has dramatically improved convenience," said Shi Bo, deputy general manager of China Youth Travel Service's Hubei branch, which organizes inbound tours.

To accommodate the growing number of overseas visitors, Enshi's tourism bureau said that it has offered foreign-language tour guide training and talent programs to raise service standards in hotels, restaurants and transportation.

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Growth: Emphasis on rural vitalization

From page 1

Minning's evolution continues to influence China's broader development agenda.

In an instruction published on June 17, President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, called for further improving the country's east-west collaboration mechanism and urged officials to draw on the experience of Fujian-Ningxia cooperation.

He said the model had played a key role in poverty alleviation and coordinated regional development over the past three decades, calling for deeper industrial cooperation, personnel exchanges and technological collaboration while advancing rural vitalization and common prosperity.

For a younger generation, Minning represents something very different from the place their parents first encountered.

Wu Juan, a university graduate and online content creator whose family relocated from Xihaigu when she was a child, the contrast between her early memories and life today could hardly be greater.

"Before I was seven, our staple food was always potatoes," she said. "I'm not exaggerating when I say there are many kinds of fruit I had never even seen."

Water was so scarce that bathing was a luxury, she recalled.

Today, she sees a different future. "If we hadn't moved out of the mountains, we would still be scraping out a living from the land. But here, I feel there are infinite possibilities ahead," Wu said.

For Zhao Chao, head of Minning township, those opportunities are the result of decades of planning and sustained commitment.

"Over the past 30 years, we have witnessed General Secretary Xi's vision of turning a 'sandy land' into a 'land of prosperity' gradually becoming a reality," he said.

According to Zhao, the relocation strategy fundamentally addressed the dilemma that had defined Xihaigu for generations — local conditions could no longer sustain the population.

"The development of Minning did not emerge out of thin air," he said. "It reflects a deep understanding of poverty alleviation, ecological restoration and industrial development."

That confidence is increasingly being reinforced by a new chapter in Fujian-Ningxia cooperation.

The partnership is now turning its focus toward high-quality development, with green energy and the digital economy emerging as new engines of growth.

Ningxia has become one of China's fastest-growing renewable energy bases, thanks to its abundant wind and solar resources, competitive electricity prices and favorable natural conditions.

According to regional government statistics, renewable energy capacity expanded 17 percent on average annually between 2021 and 2025, reaching 57.32 million kilowatts and accounting for 63 percent of the region's total installed power capacity.

Against that backdrop, a growing number of sci-tech companies from Fujian and elsewhere are expanding their presence in Ningxia to boost their computing power resources.

Li Yuanyuan, vice-president of Xiamen Kehua Digital Energy Tech Co, said the company chose to invest in Minning because of both national development priorities and Ningxia's long-term market potential.

The region's transportation network also allows companies operating in Ningxia to serve markets across Shaanxi, Gansu and Qinghai provinces and the Xinjiang Uygur and Inner Mongolia autonomous regions.

"We hope to take root here for the long term and help Minning develop green industries," Li said.

"Our goal is to help transform what was once a sandy land into a digital golden land."

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ASIAFOCUS

Editor's note:

In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.



A boy plays on a hill as the chimneys of Suralaya coal power plant loom in the background, in Cilegon, Indonesia, in 2023. AP

Kicking up dust

Indonesia villagers pay the price for expansion of coal mining

In South Sumatra's Muara Maung village, coal mining has become an inescapable part of daily life, with expanding operations choking the community's air, land and water, leaving residents to grapple with worsening environmental degradation.

For 47-year-old Sumhayana, the impacts are impossible to escape. Since several coal mines began operating near the village, flooding has become a recurring reality.

This year alone, her home has been flooded three times. The latest deluge, in late April, inundated her neighborhood, swept away crops in her farmland, and left her house coated in 10-centimeter-thick mud.

"Flooding brings so much hardship. I spend hours cleaning my house after the water recedes, and I have to be more vigilant about diseases that usually spread during floods," she told The Jakarta Post recently.

Sumhayana said life in Muara Maung has changed profoundly as coal mining operations continue to expand around the village.

The relentless roar of coal trucks now rattles through the village day and night, shattering its once-peaceful atmosphere and leaving roads cracked and damaged under the weight of heavy vehicles.

In the dry season, clouds of coal dust billow through the village, settling on rooftops, yards and furniture, forcing residents to clean their homes almost every day. When the rains come, many roads turn into muddy, waterlogged tracks.

The nearby Kungkilan River, once the village's lifeline, is no longer fit for daily use. As its water quality has deteriorated, residents have been forced to drill wells or buy clean water instead.

Muara Maung village sits in Merapi Barat District, Lahat Regency, at the heart of one of South Sumatra's coal-producing areas.

In 2023, Lahat recorded 171 active mining permits. Mining activities, together with the 220-megawatt coal-fired power plant in the regency, have long been promoted as important pillars of the local economy and a key source of electricity for southern Sumatra.

Yet for communities living alongside these industrial operations, the benefits of development are accompanied by growing environmental pressures.

Melia Santri, a 24-year-old resident of Muara Maung, has spent years struggling with recurring allergies that she attributes to prolonged exposure to coal dust from nearby mining operations.

"It feels as though something is stuck inside my nose, like there is something trying to come out, but nothing does. It is extremely disruptive to my daily activities," she said.

Seeking relief, Melia visited the local community health center, hoping to obtain a referral to see a specialist at a hospital. Instead, she said, her request was rejected, leaving her to manage the condition on her own.



Barges loaded with coal anchor in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, Indonesia, in 2022. AP



Women shuck clams on Jan 29 in Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia, where local people have complained about the decline in marine yields since a coal power plant began operations. BAY ISMOYO / AFP

> "Flooding brings so much hardship. I spend hours cleaning my house after the water recedes, and I have to be more vigilant about diseases that usually spread during floods."
>
> **Sumhayana,** a resident in South Sumatra's Muara Maung village which is influenced by coal mining

Frustrated by the worsening environmental impacts of coal mining around Muara Maung, Sumhayana and other villagers visited PT Muara Alam Sejahtera, or PT MAS, one of three coal mining companies operating near the village, on July 16. The residents urged the company to take responsibility and help address the recurring floods that have plagued the community for years.

Compensation demand

During a meeting with PT MAS representatives and officials from two other mining companies who later joined the discussion, villagers called for compensation, river normalization and the construction of flood barriers to reduce the risk of future flooding.

Sumhayana said the companies' response left villagers disappointed. Instead of offering immediate solutions, she said, representatives asked for a week to consult with their respective management teams.

"I was disappointed with their response. Flooding has happened repeatedly. They should have acted faster. It has been ignored for months, and now they are delaying it again," Sumhayana said.

The Jakarta Post contacted PT MAS seeking clarification on Muara Maung residents' complaints about flooding and environmental impact. The company confirmed the July 16 meeting with residents but declined to address the specific concerns raised.

According to Statistics Indonesia, the country exported roughly 524 million metric tons of coal for all uses in 2025. Data from the International Energy Agency confirms Indonesia holds its spot as the world's largest exporter of thermal coal used for power generation.

The Iran war triggered a brief price spike, increased Asian gas-to-coal switching, and caused Jakarta to loosen strict planned production cuts.

Indonesia initially planned to cut 2026 production down to 600 million tons, but the war prompted the government to raise output quotas back up and consider centralized state export controls, according to Heatmap News, a new media company focused on climate change.

THE JAKARTA POST—AGENCIES

524 million tons

According to Statistics Indonesia, the country exported roughly 524 million tons of coal for all uses in 2025.

The women nursing Malaysian rainforests

As Taisa Mating, a grandmother of nine, bends down to pick up a seed from the forest ground, she sometimes pauses and whispers to it.

"Please don't die. I'm going to take care of you," she would tell the seed. "When you're big enough, I'm going to give you a big playground where you can grow into the tree you're meant to be."

The seeds that Taisa, 67, gathers are destined for Lower Kawag, part of the Ulu Segama-Malua Forest Reserve, where Sabah is restoring one of its most degraded rainforest landscapes. Decades of intensive logging between the 1980s and 2007, together with major El Nino-induced fires, have left large swathes of the forest degraded and vulnerable to recurring fires.

Taisa is one of the women from Kampung Tampenau, a small village on the edge of Sabah's rainforest, who have been trained to sow the seeds of forest regeneration under a scheme that started in 2021. The seeds collected are sown in backyard nurseries in their villages and eventually grown into young trees to replenish the rainforest.

Whenever their backyard nurseries run low on seedlings, the Kampung Tampenau women head to the forest's edge carrying plastic pails or any containers they have at hand. Their eyes scan the ground for fallen seeds — hidden beneath leaves and forest debris.

Most of the seeds are collected from forest fringes surrounding the village, where many native species naturally regenerate. On other days, when certain species can no longer be found nearby, the villagers obtain permits to venture deeper into the shaded forest reserve to gather "wildings" — fragile, inch-tall sprouts which can be found growing quietly in the damp, silt-rich earth where the river slows.

Sabah, in eastern Malaysia, was home to nearly 1.5 million hectares of oil palm plantations in 2025. It is Malaysia's largest producer of the crop while also ranking among the world's richest biodiversity areas.

The palm oil industry has long faced international scrutiny over its role in tropical deforestation. However, through the Malaysian Palm Oil Green Conservation Foundation, or MPOGCF — funded by levies collected from the industry — Sabah has brought the sector into initiatives to help the rehabilitation of 2,500 hectares of degraded forest in collaboration with local communities.

In Kampung Tampenau, the seeds are nurtured in small nurseries beside the villagers' homes. The community nursery raises native seedlings for the restoration program.

To the untrained eye, one seedling looks much like another. The women of Tampenau know better.

Long before the nursery program began, they already understood the forest. The training, conducted jointly by MPOGCF and the Sabah Forestry Department, focused on nursery management and improving the survival of seedlings rather than teaching them how to recognize the trees.

Since the program began five years ago, the community has produced about 80,000 native saplings.

Villagers receive a total of RM7 ($1.7) for every sapling. Out of this, they earn RM5, while the remaining RM2 covers operational and transportation costs.

Once the saplings reach between 1 meter and 1.5 meters tall, they are moved deep into the forest.

Restoring native vegetation improves the habitat of Sabah's estimated 10,800 critically endangered orangutans and other wildlife while helping reduce human-wildlife conflict around the reserve.

Firebreaks, which are nonflammable gaps in vegetation, have also been incorporated into the restoration area to reduce the risk of future fires in a landscape that remains vulnerable during prolonged dry spells.

Fast-growing native species like Laran, Binuang and Talisai Paya — termed pioneer trees — are the first type of trees to be replanted. They quickly establish a canopy over degraded land, shielding the ground from direct sunlight and creating favorable conditions for slower-growing hardwoods to take root. In just three years, some pioneer trees can reach the height of a two-story building.

"You cannot start with hardwoods because they need shade," explained Daniel Pamin, conservation specialist at MPOGCF. "The pioneer trees prepare the forest for everything that comes after."

Only after the canopy is established are hardwoods such as Seraya and Kapur, members of the dipterocarp family that dominate Borneo's lowland rainforests, introduced. They may take between 10 and 20 years to mature but can live for centuries, gradually restoring the layered structure of a tropical rainforest.

Fauna benefits

The sequence is equally important for wildlife.

Orangutans prefer building nests in the softer branches of pioneer trees because they are easier to bend and break, a Sabah Forestry official said. As the forest matures, the returning mix of native trees gradually restores food, shelter and nesting habitats not only for orangutans, but also for sun bears, rhinoceros hornbills and many other species that depend on an intact rainforest.

"Rainforests can regenerate naturally, but the process is much slower once they have been severely degraded," Daniel added.

"Human intervention helps accelerate that recovery."

Jackly Ambrose, a conservation officer at the Sabah Forestry Department, said the primary hurdles in natural regeneration in degraded areas include a severe lack of seed sources, nutrient-depleted soils, and invasive weeds that choke out saplings.

So far, restoration work has been carried out across 225 hectares under the pilot project, which comprises the first and the second phases of the 10-year conservation plan launched in 2019. The pilot project is about 90 percent complete.

The third phase, to commence in October 2026, aims to rehabilitate another 332 hectares through the planting of about 132,800 native saplings, many of them raised in local community nurseries.

For Taisa, however, the work has never been about making money.

The payment is modest, she said, but caring for each seedling over months demands patience more than anything else.

She knows she may never sit beneath the shade of many of the trees she has helped nurture. But she hopes future generations will.

THE STRAITS TIMES, SINGAPORE

Save the tigers



Indian school children wearing costumes and face paint participate in the "Save the Tiger" awareness campaign on International Tiger Day in Bangalore, India, on July 29. EPA

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WORLD

Border barrier



Relatives and friends wait by a fence topped with barbed wire for the return of people who had previously crossed into Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta, at Morocco's Bab Sebta border crossing on the outskirts of Fnideq on Sunday. As many as 60,000 migrants entered Ceuta in recent days, mostly swimming around the small border post that juts into the Mediterranean Sea, in an unprecedented surge that prompted an international crisis for Spain. The mass crossing resulted in at least 72 deaths. ABDEL MAJID BZIOUAT / AFP

Tariffs risk fragmenting trade

Increasingly institutionalized US policy will cause damage to economies: Analysts

By **YANG RAN**
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As a new wave of sweeping US tariffs took effect, experts warned that Washington's tariff policy is becoming increasingly institutionalized, a shift that risks deepening the fragmentation of global trade and causing lasting damage to both the US and world economies.

The latest round of tariffs, ranging from 10 to 12.5 percent on imports from 60 economies, was imposed on July 24 under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, seamlessly taking effect after the expiration of the previous 10 percent global tariffs.

The move is part of a concerted effort by the US government to restructure the legal foundations of its tariff strategy, following the Supreme Court's decision in February to strike down its previous reciprocal tariff policy.

A series of further trade measures are anticipated in the coming months, including the ongoing Section 301 investigations into "excess capacity and production in manufacturing sectors" and pending probes initiated under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 on national security grounds, which could soon translate into new tariffs.

John Ferguson, global head of trade and geopolitics at Economist Enterprise, said the US tariff policy is becoming more institutionalized as the administration seeks a more durable legal footing.

> "The global supply chain will become more fragmented and divided."
>
> **Tu Xinquan**, dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing

"Measures introduced under Sections 301 and 232 are on firmer ground," he said. "Tariffs imposed under these mechanisms are likely to prove more durable because they follow a well-defined statutory process. That gives businesses greater certainty about how tariffs are imposed, but it also makes them harder to challenge in court."

Tu Xinquan, dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, echoed this view, saying the tariff policy is likely to persist for a considerable period, even surviving administration changes. He attributed this to a growing belief in the US that globalization has harmed US interests.

"They see tariffs as correcting past errors in trade policy," Tu said.

Daniel Tannebaum, a partner at Oliver Wyman, an international management consulting firm, highlighted the self-reinforcing nature of restrictive policies in an article for the World Economic Forum.

He said the reallocation of capital and production under such policies creates constituencies that benefit from their continuation, making them politically difficult to reverse.

If the US persists with protectionist tariffs for years, experts warned, the result will be a deeply fragmented global trade and supply chain system.

Wang Yong, a professor at Peking University's School of International Studies, said the US is unilaterally discarding the WTO's principle of nondiscrimination to build a tariff framework that serves its "America First" policy, using its market leverage to force concessions from other nations.

Such a discriminatory tariff policy will further erode the WTO's authority and push the global economy back toward a framework governed by bilateral negotiations, he said.

Ferguson said that companies increasingly expect higher US tariffs to remain in place for years. "In response, many are adopting a 'world-minus-one' strategy, treating the US as a distinct market requiring its own supply chains, sourcing decisions, and investment plans, while expanding elsewhere."

This shift is reinforced by other nations' policymakers signing free-trade agreements to signal their commitment to open and predictable commerce, he said.

Bifurcated supply chain

Tu predicted a bifurcated global supply chain.

"The sheer size of the US market will compel companies to build industrial systems tailored to US policy, creating a system largely separate from the rest of the world," Tu said.

"Meanwhile, a more open system will emerge outside the US, with the Asia-Pacific and Europe playing key roles. Though more integrated and liberalized, it will remain constrained by the US system. Overall, the global supply chain will become more fragmented and divided."

The economic fallout is already visible. A World Economic Forum report released in June estimates that current fragmentation is reducing global GDP growth by between $213 billion and $307 billion and raising inflation by 0.2 to 0.3 percentage points.

For the US, the costs are also substantial. The Tax Foundation estimates that the announced and imposed tariffs will increase household taxes by an average of $900 in 2026 and reduce long-run US GDP by 0.4 percent.

Tu warned that prolonged tariff policies will keep the US economy in a state of high inflation and high costs, raising production costs for US companies and reducing their international competitiveness.

Ferguson said tariffs are likely to weigh on growth over time by reducing trade, competition and productivity.

"But those effects will take time to emerge. The economy continues to benefit from a powerful wave of investment in artificial intelligence, while trade accounts for a relatively small share of US GDP. As a result, the near-term outlook remains stronger than the longer-term trajectory implied by a more protectionist trade policy."

UK's AstraZeneca eyeing $400b merger, report says

By **JULIAN SHEA** in London
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The United Kingdom's second-most valuable listed company, pharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca, has been revealed to have been holding talks for some time with United States-based rival Bristol Myers Squibb, or BMS, about a merger, which could result in a global pharma giant worth nearly $400 billion.

The Financial Times reports that talks have been taking place for some months, although a deal is not yet thought to be close. If the merger between the British company, valued at $264 billion, and its US counterpart, worth around $133 billion, goes through, it would result in the global drug sector's fourth-largest company.

AstraZeneca declined to comment and BMS did not immediately respond to requests for comment, according to the FT.

Around the world, AstraZeneca generated $58.7 billion last year, and it has set itself a target revenue figure of $80 billion by 2030, which is why it is so keen to make further inroads into the US market, which already accounts for almost half of its revenue.

Key role

But the company's involvement in China will also play a key role in efforts to reach that target, especially since in January this year, during then-prime minister Keir Starmer's visit to China, AstraZeneca announced investments worth $15 billion in China up until 2030, to expand its medicine manufacturing and R&D.

Pascal Soriot, AstraZeneca's CEO, said the investment, which will see existing manufacturing facilities in Wuxi, Taizhou, Qingdao, and Beijing developed, plus the establishment of other sites yet to be revealed, "begins an exciting next chapter for AstraZeneca in China, which has become a critical contributor to scientific innovation, advanced manufacturing, and global public health".

In 2014, the US drug company, Pfizer, made a bid for AstraZeneca valuing the drugmaker at around $94 billion, when its reputation had suffered after the late-stage clinical trial failure of several drugs. Soriot was one of those who rejected the bid, and in the subsequent years, under his stewardship, the company's reputation and finances have been restored, with its cancer treatment drugs performing particularly well.

If a deal is reached between AstraZeneca and BMS, however, that would not necessarily be the end of the story, as such a merger would be subject to both political and business scrutiny.

Given that BMS also has a significant cancer division, antitrust scrutiny may be applied to the companies' combined presence in the cancer drug market, and there could also be concerns in the UK that AstraZeneca may use a major trans-Atlantic deal to relocate the heart of its business from its current headquarters in Cambridge, England.

Israel voices concern over Hamas disarmament deal

TEL AVIV/GAZA — Israel has shared "serious security concerns" with the White House regarding the proposed disarmament deal with Hamas, an Israeli official said as Israeli strikes overnight and into Sunday evening killed at least 18 people, including children, in Gaza.

The remarks by Doron Spielman, spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office, were some of the first public comments since US President Donald Trump announced the agreement.

Spielman told The Associated Press that Israel's intelligence assessment is that Hamas remains committed to rebuilding its military rather than genuinely demilitarizing. He said the Israeli military would not withdraw from Gaza — where it controls more than 60 percent of the territory — before Hamas disarms.

"Our assessment is that if we redeploy before Hamas is truly disarmed, it will quickly expand its presence throughout Gaza, rebuild its terrorist infrastructure, once again threaten Israeli communities, and seek to carry out another Oct 7-style attack," he said, referring to the militant attack on Israel in 2023 that set off the latest conflict in the Gaza Strip.

His comments come days after Hamas said it would begin disarming as part of the US-brokered ceasefire signed nine months ago to end the nearly three-year-long conflict. It marks a potential breakthrough in ending the conflict, but many hurdles, conditions and long timelines remain.

Trump's 20-point ceasefire plan calls on the militant group to surrender its weapons and destroy its vast network of tunnels. It also envisions Israeli forces withdrawing from Gaza, the arrival of a new technocratic Palestinian government, deployment of an international security force and the rebuilding of the battered Palestinian enclave.

The disarming of Hamas has been a sticking point and has deadlocked negotiations for months. In announcing the deal on social media on Thursday, Trump said it would be carried out in "carefully structured phases".

A copy of the agreement obtained and verified by the AP said all weapons held by the Hamas-run police will be transferred to the US-backed Palestinian technocratic committee, known as the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, upon its arrival in the enclave.

A process to decommission and store heavy weapons and to dismantle military production sites and tunnels will begin after the arrival of the Palestinian committee and the deployment of international forces. The process will be linked to a phased Israeli withdrawal, according to the agreement.

Since the ceasefire was signed last October, Israel has continued its strikes in Gaza, saying it's targeting Hamas and its infrastructure.

Strikes continue

Israeli airstrikes hit Gaza for the second straight day on Sunday, killing at least 18 Palestinians, medics said. The strikes have continued despite announcements of progress in efforts to implement a ceasefire agreement.

Mahmoud Basal, spokesman for the Civil Defense in Gaza, told Xinhua that Israeli drones and helicopters had carried out more than 10 airstrikes since the early hours of the morning in various parts of the enclave.

The strikes targeted residential apartments, tents sheltering displaced people, civilian vehicles, and Palestinian gatherings from the north to the south of the Gaza Strip, resulting in the deaths of at least 18 people, including four children and two women, said Basal.

In a news statement, Hamas called on the mediators and guarantors of the ceasefire agreement to assume their responsibilities, condemn these "Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people", and to take immediate action to pressure Israel to cease its aggression in accordance with the agreement.

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Briefly

UNITED STATES

Fires in Washington state burn 600 homes

Wildfires in eastern Washington state forced the evacuation of 60,000 people in the Spokane area while destroying at least 600 homes, businesses and other structures, authorities said on Sunday. The fires in and around Spokane, the state's second-largest city, burned about 21 square kilometers over the weekend and were among dozens of wildfires across Western US that stretched the ability of federal, state and local agencies to fight them. About 1,000 square kilometers have burned across the state, and some of the fires, including those in the Spokane area, remain uncontained.

UKRAINE

Umerov to head foreign intelligence service

President Volodymyr Zelensky put Ukraine's chief negotiator in charge of foreign intelligence on Monday, the latest move in an ongoing shake-up that included replacing the defense minister in July. Zelensky said Rustem Umerov, who moved to the post of spy chief from his previous job as head of the advisory Security Council, would remain in charge of peace talks, tasking him with continuing to seek a diplomatic end to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Former interior minister Ihor Klymenko would take over as head of the Security Council. Zelensky has been moving senior officials among top posts since an abrupt cabinet purge last month.

EGYPT

Quake strike activates quick response plans

A magnitude 5.5 earthquake shook eastern Egypt early on Monday, prompting authorities to activate response plans although there were no immediate requests for emergency help. The tremors were felt across a wide area, waking AFP journalists across Cairo and reaching as far as El-Arish near Egypt's border with the Gaza Strip. The quake struck about 40 kilometers north of the city of Suez, according to Egypt's National Research Institute of Astronomy and Geophysics, which revised an earlier estimate of 5.2. The US Geological Survey put the shallow tremor at magnitude 5.0, revising down an earlier reading.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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COMMENT

Editorials

When sneakers, sunflower seeds are policed, 'rights' become a joke

An opinion article published in The Hill on Saturday has an all-too-familiar ring to it. In the article, Sam Brownback, former US ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, and former NBA player and activist Enes Kanter Freedom argue that NBA superstar Stephen Curry's commercial partnership with Chinese sportswear company Li-Ning is a moral failing.

The article makes the so-called Xinjiang "forced labor" issue less a subject for careful inquiry than a convenient stage prop in Washington's favorite geopolitical drama.

Ever since Washington officially embraced its politicized "allegations" surrounding the Xinjiang "forced labor" issue in 2020, a growing chorus of politicians, advocacy groups and commentators have treated normal commercial interaction involving the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region as an ethical litmus test.

In the article, Brownback and Freedom write, "These are not careless accusations. They are specific charges documented by the US government and corroborated by international investigators."

But, documented by whom? The US Department of Labor's own report on the situation in Xinjiang is a principal foundation for the claims. Yet the report itself was produced by the department's Bureau of International Labor Affairs. Its reference list is replete with mentions of US government agencies and congressional bodies, alongside German "anthropologist" Adrian Zenz and reports from Washington- and Taipei-sponsored think tanks.

That does not automatically invalidate the report. But it does complicate the confident image of broad, independent corroboration presented by Brownback and Freedom. When the same network of institutions quote one another to support the same conclusion, skepticism is only due diligence.

The same scrutiny extends to Adrian Zenz, who has become perhaps the most frequently cited Western "researcher" on Xinjiang. But his institutional affiliations, advocacy commitments and methodology deserve far more examination than they typically receive in media coverage. His work is often treated less as a contribution to a contested academic debate than as settled scripture paid for directly or indirectly by Washington.

Curiously, those who constantly urge others to "follow the evidence" seldom encourage readers to follow the footnotes.

Meanwhile, the political economy behind the US' Xinjiang sanctions receives remarkably little attention. On Friday, another 43 Chinese companies were added to the so-called "Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Entity List", bringing the total number of sanctioned Chinese entities to 187. Related restrictive measures take effect on Monday.

The restrictions now extend well beyond cotton to industries ranging from metals and mining to electronics, agriculture and food products. Even Chinese sunflower seeds are regarded as a "concern" to US "national security".

These measures are commonly framed as "human-rights" enforcement. But they are in essence reshapers of markets. By excluding Chinese competitors from US supply chains, they inevitably create opportunities for US producers, alternative overseas suppliers and an expanding compliance industry built around supply-chain auditing, legal consulting and regulatory certification.

Commercial consequences must not be treated as incidental as the "Entity List" becomes longer and longer. What emerges is an ecosystem in which politicians, advocacy groups, think tanks, lobbyists, researchers and "sympathetic" media outlets reinforce one another's narratives, each citing the others as confirmation of a consensus they have collectively constructed.

This echo chamber is presented as the appearance of overwhelming "certainty" while discouraging serious examination of underlying assumptions.

That is why Brownback and Freedom's article ultimately says less about Stephen Curry or Li-Ning than about a political culture increasingly inclined to convert normal business deals into a geopolitical battlefield. It is easier to police sneakers than to scrutinize evidence. It is easier to stage another morality play than to confront the possibility that, in the age of strategic competition, conscience can become just another instrument of a zero-sum game.

Manila's double game puts peace at risk

The contradictory approach the Philippines adopts in its handling of maritime disputes makes one wonder what exactly Manila is hoping to achieve. The recent remarks of Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr serve as the latest evidence of such inconsistency.

According to reports, Teodoro Jr, who has already been sanctioned by Beijing for making unfounded remarks which undermined China's interests and bilateral ties between China and the Philippines, called for Philippine officials "who side with China" on the "West Philippine Sea issue" to resign at a forum on July 29, ignoring the fact that the "West Philippine Sea" is just a term unilaterally coined by Manila to support its unlawful claims in the South China Sea. He is attempting to foster an atmosphere within Philippine political circles in which those who hold differing views on the South China Sea issue from his faction are expected to be silenced or penalized.

On the same day, Manila announced a "nautical chart" of the "baselines of territorial sea" of China's Huangyan Island, a provocation that met with a firm response from China.

On Saturday, the China Coast Guard conducted law-enforcement patrols in the territorial sea of the island; the Chinese People's Liberation Army Southern Theater Command conducted joint naval and air exercises near the island; and China issued a set of regulations to enhance the management of the Huangyan Island National Nature Reserve.

Less than two weeks ago, Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Maria Theresa Lazaro told China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi that her country looks to address maritime disputes through dialogue and improve relations with China. But the latest development of the situation caused by the continued provocation by Manila, as well as Teodoro Jr's dangerous remarks, only raises doubt over whether the Philippines is sincere about engaging in dialogue or just obstinate in following the wrong path of challenging China's sovereignty.

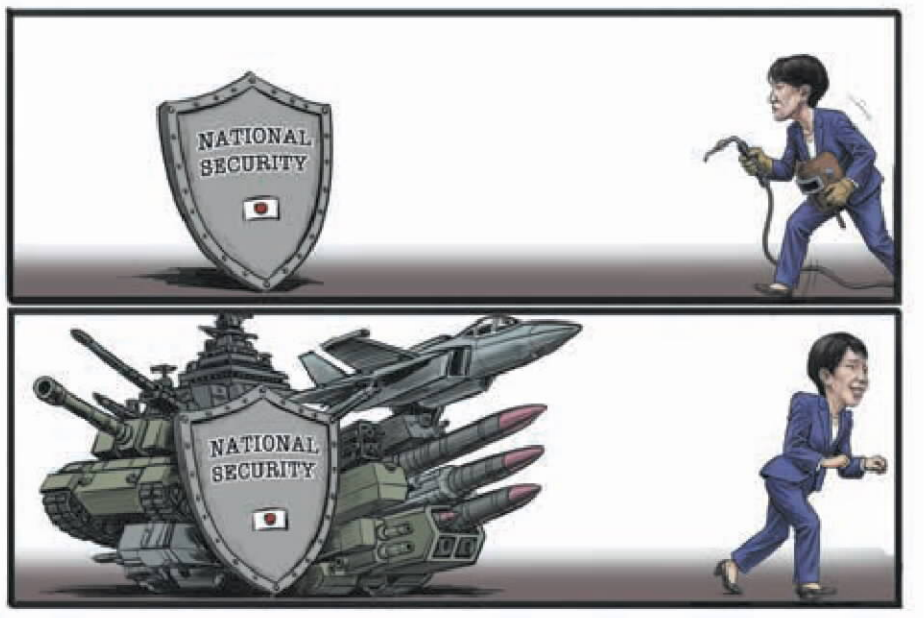
The territory of the Philippines has been defined by a series of international treaties, and Huangyan Island has never been a part of it, rendering the Philippines' claims over the island completely baseless under international law.

After two Philippine Navy boats confronted China Coast Guard's vessels near China's Ren'ai Reef on July 20, Manila said the next day that it wants to avoid similar incidents and "reset" relations with China, only for the Philippines to then send more ships to intrude in the waters of Huangyan Island on July 24.

Whenever China and the Philippines prepare to launch dialogue, certain forces within the Philippines, particularly those from the military and law enforcement, such as Teodoro Jr, deliberately stir up trouble to derail dialogue progress. These parties harbor malicious intentions: rather than prioritizing the well-being of the Filipino people, they act on the instructions of external forces to advance personal interests.

Manila should be wary of these forces' damaging effects, rein in their dangerous games, and get rid of delusions that the Philippines will obtain illegal gains by acting as a proxy for external forces to contain China.

Jin Ding



Opinion Line

Washington's 'renewed negotiations' tactical pause to manage expectations

Just two days after learning US economic growth slowed to 1.5 percent in the second quarter, down from 2.1 percent in the first, Washington called off an imminent strike on Iran on Saturday and announced a restart of diplomatic negotiations.

The scenario is familiar: a social-media proclamation, a promise of diplomacy and a reminder that the US military remains "locked and loaded". This is less a commitment to peace than a tactical pause driven by oil prices, midterm electoral arithmetic, financial markets and the mounting economic costs of another Middle East conflict.

The Strait of Hormuz is a barometer of presidential economic stewardship in the United States. Any prolonged disruption would reverberate through fuel prices, inflation, shipping costs and consumer confidence. For a president who campaigned on lowering living costs, an energy shock would be politically toxic. The sharp decline in oil prices after Washington announced the suspension of military action reflected investors' judgment that the risk of escalation had eased. Markets interpreted diplomacy, however tentative, as preferable to another cycle of confrontation.

The calculation extends beyond the battlefield. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has championed efforts to "stabilize" the dollar, including unprecedented "coordination" with Japan to support the yen in the US interest. Those initiatives would prove unsustainable if the Gulf conflict sends crude prices soaring. As one of the world's largest energy importers, Japan would suffer a deteriorating trade balance, reigniting pressure on the yen and undermining broader financial campaigns. It makes little sense to devote political and financial capital to outmaneuvering markets, while simultaneously permitting a regional escalation to undo the very US profits those efforts are meant to capture.

Domestic politics reinforces the same conclusion. Public appetite for another prolonged Middle East crisis remains limited, while inflation and living costs continue to rank among the foremost concerns of the US public. Gasoline prices are one of the most visible measures of US economic performance. Every rise at the pump carries far greater political weight than distant military gains.

A pause in military operations therefore allows the White House to project strength while avoiding the immediate economic costs of escalation.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect is the confusion openly expressed by Israel. According to Israeli media, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and senior officials learned of the suspension only after the US president's public announcement — which looks like a smokescreen itself — allegedly leaving Tel Aviv scrambling to determine whether the move was genuine or merely another negotiating tactic.

With these reports, Tel Aviv wants to indicate that Washington's priorities do not always perfectly align with those of its closest regional ally. Publicly highlighting differences can also serve Washington's political interests by reinforcing the perception that US policy is driven by its own calculations rather than by Israeli preferences.

That further proves that the latest pause announced by Washington is anything but a window for real ceasefire talks. Israel knows it and nods to it, but pretends otherwise. In putting on that performance Israel shows its "thoughtfulness" to the US' acute needs to simultaneously manage inflation, financial markets, alliance politics, domestic elections and global economic stability.

Washington is not pursuing a single objective — least of all peace for its own sake. It seeks to pressure Iran without becoming mired in another round of costly conflict, reassure Israel without surrendering strategic flexibility, contain oil prices without appearing weak and project strength while limiting the economic consequences of military escalation. The announcement of renewed negotiations serves primarily as an exercise in managing expectations, rather than signaling a diplomatic breakthrough. Iran, meanwhile, has its own incentives to avoid uncontrolled escalation. Tehran has continued consultations with regional countries while Omani-mediated discussions over the Strait of Hormuz reportedly continue.

Neither side wishes to appear to retreat, yet neither has much to gain from a new escalation that would impose enormous economic and political costs.

The strikes have been postponed, not abandoned. Negotiations have been announced, not concluded. Military pressure remains available if diplomacy falters. This is not simply the "art of the deal"; it is the art of preserving options. For Washington, the pause itself may be the strategy — buying time, calming markets and maintaining leverage while keeping every path, diplomatic or military, open.

But a sustainable ceasefire and long-term stability in the Middle East cannot be achieved through short-term, improvised calculations; they require a genuine and steadfast commitment to peace. It is earnestly hoped that the US and Israel, as the parties that initiated the conflict, will take the lead in demonstrating that commitment and bring about an early resolution to the crisis they have engendered.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Corporate governance will be crucial benchmark

Editor's note: *Four Chinese financial regulators have jointly released a document outlining 22 targeted measures to improve the governance of financial institutions. The 21st Century Business Herald spoke to Dong Ximiao, chief economist at Merchants Union Consumer Finance and executive director of the Shanghai Institution for Finance and Development; and Lou Feipeng, a researcher at Postal Savings Bank of China, about the measures. Below are excerpts of the interviews. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

By 2029, China will establish a desired governance framework for financial institutions. The document focuses on strengthening and improving shareholder governance. It underscores the importance of identifying major shareholders and actual controllers, which is a manifestation of thorough supervision. This approach extends regulatory oversight beyond registered shareholders to the individuals who ultimately control and are accountable for institutions, shifting the focus of supervision from mere compliance to substantive governance.

The framework also operationalizes the higher-level legal principles set out in the draft revision to China's banking supervision and regulation law. It refines the law's regulatory mandate over major shareholders and ultimate controllers into actionable rules for ownership identification and monitoring of related-party transactions.

Regulatory oversight will examine the genuine commercial purpose of related-party dealings, significantly reducing the scope for regulatory arbitrage through complex corporate structures.

The document calls for stronger risk monitoring and early-warning mechanisms in corporate governance. Tougher penalties for violations, together with a lifetime accountability mechanism, are expected to have a cleansing effect on the financial sector.

The new framework will also prevent individuals with serious compliance issues from moving freely between financial institutions, thereby reducing the risk of misconduct spreading across the sector.

In addition to stronger disciplinary measures, the document aims to improve internal governance by guiding financial institutions to establish incentive and accountability mechanisms that support sustainable development and long-term strategic objectives.

Institutions with sound governance, clear allocation of responsibilities and robust risk management will be better positioned to earn regulatory confidence and market recognition.

For large financial institutions, the primary challenge lies in managing extensive business operations and subsidiary networks, where sheer size can make effective oversight difficult. Their priorities should therefore include strengthening top-level governance, improving board oversight, checks and balances, and building group-wide look-through risk management frameworks to prevent risks from spreading across different business lines.

Smaller financial institutions should focus on removing noncompliant shareholders, eliminating hidden related-party transactions and establishing streamlined internal control systems with clearly defined responsibilities, rather than attempting to replicate the governance models of large institutions.

Institutions with stronger governance will enjoy superior risk management and greater capacity for sustainable, long-term growth, while the traditional growth model driven primarily by rapid expansion will become increasingly unsustainable, reshaping the competitive landscape.

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VIEWS

Selçuk Ünal

From Bosporus to Yangtze: Turkiye-China ties at 55

Relations between the Republic of Turkiye and the People's Republic of China have gone through significant phases since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1971. Turkiye-China relations, actually, date back to centuries. This historical bond forms the foundation of our ever growing diplomatic, economic and cultural ties.

The centuries-long trade along the Silk Road forged a path for cultural interaction between the Turkish and Chinese peoples, leading to many cultural similarities in our daily life rituals and traditional beliefs, especially regarding the importance of family and community.

Interactions between Turkish and Chinese people increased between the Ottoman Empire and Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, with many Turkish and Chinese travelers journeying through the Silk Road and emperors exchanging gifts including Ottoman rifles, Chinese porcelain and silk.

In addition to those cultural interactions, both peoples also share similarities in their history. They faced external pressures, changed power balances in the international system and experienced significant transformations throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Turkish victory in the War of Independence was hailed by many Chinese intellectuals and political leaders of the time. Communist Party of China leaders such as Cai Hesen stated that the Anatolian victory of the Turkish people against imperialism was a development that would encourage all oppressed nations.

Turkiye has supported China's territorial integrity. Establishment of the diplomatic ties in 1971 marked the beginning of a new era in the Turkiye-China relations.

As both countries underwent processes of opening up to the outside world in the 1980s, the relationship took on a more dynamic character. Mutual contacts increased, political dialogue strengthened, and economic and trade relations gained new momentum.

Our relations have further advanced by the Chinese state visit to Turkiye in April 2000 at the invitation of Turkiye. The Joint Communique signed during the state visit expressed both sides' determination to expand the friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation, while pointing out the need for the restoration of the ancient Silk Road, paving the way for our early support to the Belt and Road Initiative.

Following that mutual visionary approach, today, connectivity is encompassing trade security, supply chains, energy flows and digital networks in our ties. For this reason, Turkiye's Middle Corridor Initiative and China's BRI provide two complementary visions. The will to align the two initiatives shows that two countries can view Eurasian connectivity from a shared perspective.

This joint perspective was underlined by the presidents of the two countries. The shared commitment of our President, H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and President Xi Jinping to develop bilateral relations provides a strong political foundation for our future. Numerous meetings between the two leaders, the latest being the meeting at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Tianjin Summit on Aug 31, 2025, constitute a concrete demonstration of this dialogue.

Within the context of this shared vision, our economic relations developed in recent years. Trade volume increased 40-fold in the last two decades, transportation projects multiplied and mutual investments expanded.

While current economic relations unfortunately still do not fully reflect the true potential of both countries, we believe that this can be remedied by investments, tourism and other measures that are at our disposal to have a more fair, balanced, diversified and mutually beneficial relationship.

In this vein, high-quality direct investments from China into our country will create a true win-win foundation for the sustainability of our economic relations, while offering Chinese companies significant advantages in terms of access to markets adjacent to Turkiye.

Airlines connectivity have an important role not only in our economic relations, but in people-to-people contacts as well. Since tourism is the strongest point of convergence in people-to-people ties, increasing frequency of flights to 56 times per week in 2026, strengthens direct connections for tourism, trade and business. Our decision, on the occasion of the 55th anniversary, to grant visa exemptions to Chinese citizens for touristic travel and transit starting on Jan 2, 2026, demonstrates our strong commitment to increasing people-to-people contacts.

Today our world is undergoing a profound transformation. Turkiye and China stand as two ancient civilizations at the heart of this transformation.

In such an atmosphere, Turkiye's commitment to multilateralism and strengthening its relations with China is a natural reflection of our multi-dimensional foreign policy. At a time when conflicts, instabilities and uncertainties are rising, increasing mutual dialogue is more important than ever.

Turkiye-China relations should further develop on this framework. What needs to be done today is to translate this political will into more concrete projects, efficient mechanisms and active private sector participation.

We hope that the 55th anniversary of the establishment of Turkiye-China diplomatic relations will present more opportunities to transform our connection through history into a vision of partnership that is richer, more balanced and more sustainable.

The author is ambassador of the Republic of Turkiye to China.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Imran Khalid

NDB building bridges, not barriers in global finance

Monopolies in international affairs rarely collapse overnight. They tend to erode quietly, losing their grip as alternative choices emerge and parallel pathways take shape.

For generations, the plumbing of global finance was routed through a single, heavily guarded intersection in the West. If a sovereign nation wanted to build a road, modernize a power grid or stabilize a national currency, it had to navigate a rigid labyrinth of conditionalities and approvals managed by institutions headquartered in Washington and Geneva.

But now, that map is being redrawn. The change is not happening through loud diplomatic confrontations, but through the quiet architecture of institutional choice.

Zimbabwe's recent admission to the BRICS New Development Bank, announced by the country's Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube in Harare, is a striking example of this global realignment.

After years of struggling with a complex economic landscape constrained by Western sanctions, limited liquidity, and restricted access to traditional international lending markets, Zimbabwe has unlocked a vital alternative channel for development finance by joining the Shanghai-based multilateral institution.

Focused squarely on infrastructure, industrialization, and long-term economic resilience, the NDB offers Harare an opportunity to pursue its development priorities through a broader range of financing options.

This milestone is more than a routine bureaucratic measure. It is a practical blueprint for how emerging markets facing economic duress can bypass traditional bottlenecks and secure sustainable growth outside Western-dominated corridors.

The significance of this shift becomes clearer against the backdrop of starkly divergent global economic policies. In the United States and Europe, policymakers increasingly treat global commerce as an instrument of national security, erecting protectionist tariffs, subsidizing domestic manufacturing through heavy state intervention, and weaponizing financial networks to isolate perceived adversaries. The underlying philosophy in these traditional centers of power is exclusion.

Smaller and vulnerable economies are routinely expected to absorb the collateral damage of these fractured trade policies, facing sudden capital outflows and inflationary pressures driven by decisions made far beyond their borders.

By contrast, the institutional machinery in the Global South is built on a foundation of inclusiveness and connectivity. The NDB was established not to replace the existing global financial system, but to correct historical imbalances and bridge the wide infrastructure gaps across the developing world. Traditional multilateral lenders often imposed stringent, politically punitive conditionalities that compromised local sovereignty and destabilized domestic societies.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

The center of economic gravity is shifting, and the future belongs to nations that choose open connectivity over defensive containment.

The NDB offers a financing model centered on tangible infrastructure and sustainable development without political interference.

When nations locked out of conventional markets gain access to these independent credit lines, the unipolar monopoly of Western finance naturally begins to fray.

The implications of this model extend well beyond infrastructure development. Membership in alternative multilateral institutions offers developing nations greater flexibility in managing macroeconomic risks.

For decades, dependence on a single global reserve currency and centralized lending hubs meant that emerging economies absorbed every shock generated by foreign monetary authorities. Diversified sources of financing, and the possibility of lending in local currencies, provide a structural cushion to mitigate the risk of sudden debt distress and shield domestic markets from exchange rate volatility. It is a sophisticated mechanism for risk management, allowing sovereign states to conduct trade and development planning with greater predictability.

Zimbabwe's decision also reflects a broader trend across Africa, Asia and Latin America. Increasingly, governments are unwilling to tie their economic fortunes to a single, Western-centric system that leaves them acutely vulnerable to unilateral policy shocks, arbitrary sanctions, and sudden currency shifts.

Participation in alternative multilateral networks enables these states to insulate their domestic markets from external volatility, ensuring that local development plans are driven by national priorities rather than foreign oversight.

Moreover, this institutional expansion highlights the growing maturity of South-South cooperation. For generations, development finance was used as a tool of geopolitical compliance, ensuring that recipient nations toe a specific ideological line.

The emergence of alternative credit sources introduces a healthy element of competition and choice into the global marketplace. Sovereign states can now shop for development partners, negotiate terms that align with their domestic growth targets, and integrate more fully into regional and global supply chains without sacrificing their political autonomy.

Ultimately, the widening gap between Western economic fragmentation and the institutional growth of the Global South will dictate the contours of the global order in the 21st century.

While Western policymakers persist in building protective silos and deploying restrictive measures, the rest of the world is quietly constructing a parallel, resilient framework for international cooperation.

Zimbabwe joining the NDB is a clear reminder that when global financial institutions are weaponized for political leverage, emerging economies will inevitably build other doors. The center of economic gravity is shifting, and the future belongs to nations that choose open connectivity over defensive containment.

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How to make citizens permanent residents in name and nature

Chinese cities planning to expand in scale should rethink their approach. Besides creating jobs to attract newcomers, they will also have to invest much more in housing, education and healthcare.

A document issued by the State Council, China's Cabinet, earlier this year made it clear that all city governments are obliged to provide basic public services — including education, housing, social security, and medical care — to all permanent residents who have not formally registered their household registration (*hukou*) in the place where they live.

In China, permanent residents traditionally referred to people who had *hukou* in the place of their birth. But thanks to millions of farmers migrating to the cities in search of jobs in the past decades, permanent residents can even include those who might have their *hukou* elsewhere but have been living, working and studying in a particular city. Of late, such numbers have been rising rapidly, as millions of university graduates get jobs in big cities where they don't have a local *hukou*.

It is estimated that nearly half of the residents in cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen have their *hukou* elsewhere.

China had been an agricultural society for thousands of years. Until 50 years ago when I was young, about 70 percent of the country's population lived and worked in rural areas.

Today, it is the opposite. Under the household registration system, people used to be registered in their place of birth and relied on the local government there for social welfare benefits.

To make their environment more migrant-friendly, many cities have taken their own measures to help migrants settle down.

That system made human mobility difficult, if not impossible. But with the gradual elimination of the ration system in the late 1980s, millions of farmers left home for higher-paying jobs in the cities.

It is estimated that about 300 million former farmers and their families now live and work in cities other than the ones where they have their *hukou*.

But despite living, working and studying in the cities for years, they and their families remain "farmers from outside the city". In the absence of local *hukou*, they have been denied the benefits of many welfare projects, such as low-rent housing, seats in public schools, urban medical insurance and other benefits that residents with *hukou* take for granted.

Transferring *hukou* from their hometowns to the cities they live in now remains a difficult task. China is promoting urbanization and many cities, in order to grow in population size and influence, are working hard to attract migrant workers from other regions. However, the migrants are not being welcomed unconditionally.

Some tier-1 cities offer *hukou* only to those who are young, have at least a bachelor's degree or hold stable professional jobs. Smaller cities are willing to accept those who purchase houses or run businesses in the area.

As for those who don't have a good educational background and/or substantial money, a point-based household registration system has been adopted. Under this system, applicants for *hukou* can keep accumulating points on the basis of duration of stay, taxes paid, investments made and professional positions held until they have enough points to obtain a local *hukou*.

For years, there have been suggestions to do away with the *hukou* system. But apparently the central authorities have decided to take a more cautious approach. The *hukou* system has been in place for a long time and a hasty withdrawal may lead to consequences we are not prepared for.

To make their environment more migrant-friendly, many cities have taken their own measures to help migrants settle down.

Social security and medical insurance now cover more permanent residents, including those who don't yet have a local *hukou*. Local public schools are offering more seats to migrants' children.

The new State Council document can be regarded as a nod in this direction and requires local governments to do more. When making future development plans, urban planners will have to increase the supply of low-rent housing not only for the disadvantaged groups with local *hukou* but also for the permanent residents without *hukou*.

The cities may have to build more kindergartens, public schools and other facilities for children of these new residents.

According to the document, all permanent residents, with or without local *hukou*, should be treated equally with regard to housing, job opportunities, poverty relief, education, social security, medical care and access to public services.

Once all these requirements are effectively met, *hukou* would become less important and permanent residents would become permanent residents both in name and nature.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

POMPEO DELLA POSTA

Change of perspective

The problem is not economic globalization per se, but the neoliberal belief that it does not need to be regulated and managed



For many years, economic globalization was presented in developed countries as a great promise. The opening of markets, the expansion of international trade and the integration of economies were expected to generate greater prosperity for everyone. The most common metaphor was that of a rising tide lifting all ships: If the global economy grew, all countries and social groups would eventually benefit. Moreover, trade liberalization, the removal of economic barriers and the expansion of global value chains were considered almost inevitable processes. The dominant belief was even that there was no real alternative to a more open global economy, as synthesized by the famous slogan "There is no alternative" (TINA), coined by the former United Kingdom prime minister Margaret Thatcher.

Today, however, in advanced economies that narrative has changed dramatically. Economic globalization is increasingly portrayed as one of the causes of their industrial decline and growing inequality, despite the fact that the GDP per capita of the United States, for example, has continued to grow faster than that of most other advanced economies.

At the same time, advanced countries accuse China of being one of the main beneficiaries of economic globalization due to the adoption of what they usually call "unfair" measures, resulting in a development strategy, which is different from the model promoted by Western economies.

It is certainly true that China combined openness to international trade with a strong role for the government in building productive capacity, infrastructure and technological capabilities. Yet the Chinese approach is not an unprecedented exception in economic history. Practices that are now criticized as unfair or distortionary were used by today's advanced economies during their own rise. The UK protected its economy before embracing unconditional free trade, made possible by the technological superiority it had gained through the Industrial Revolution. In France, in the late 17th century, Jean-Baptiste Colbert theorized mercantilist policies to favor his country's economic development. The US, following Hamilton's "Report on Manufactures" (1791), protected emerging (infant) industries through moderate tariffs, "bounties" (subsidies) and other public policies designed to foster industrialization. Those policies were instrumental in transforming the US into the world's leading industrial economy. Germany emphasized the importance of building domestic productive capabilities before fully exposing its economy to international competition. Japan's postwar economic transformation was supported by close cooperation between government and industry through the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, which promoted targeted industrial policies.

To borrow a famous metaphor, all of today's advanced countries developed by "climbing a ladder" made of mercantilism, industrial policies and public subsidies, but once they reached the top, namely their economic development, they "kicked that ladder away", arguing that public intervention would not be legitimate anymore and embracing neoliberal policies, those that allowed them to preserve their technological and economic leadership: it is probably no coincidence that when Western economies held a dominant position in many technological sectors, they were widely in favor of global openness, while today, as China has become a major competitor in several high-value industries, their view has changed.

Economic globalization has undoubtedly produced enormous benefits both in advanced and emerging economies. It has allowed consumers around the world to access cheaper products and enabled Western companies, aided by technological advances, to expand internationally and dramatically increase their profits. It has also contributed to lifting hundreds of millions of people — especially in China — out of poverty.

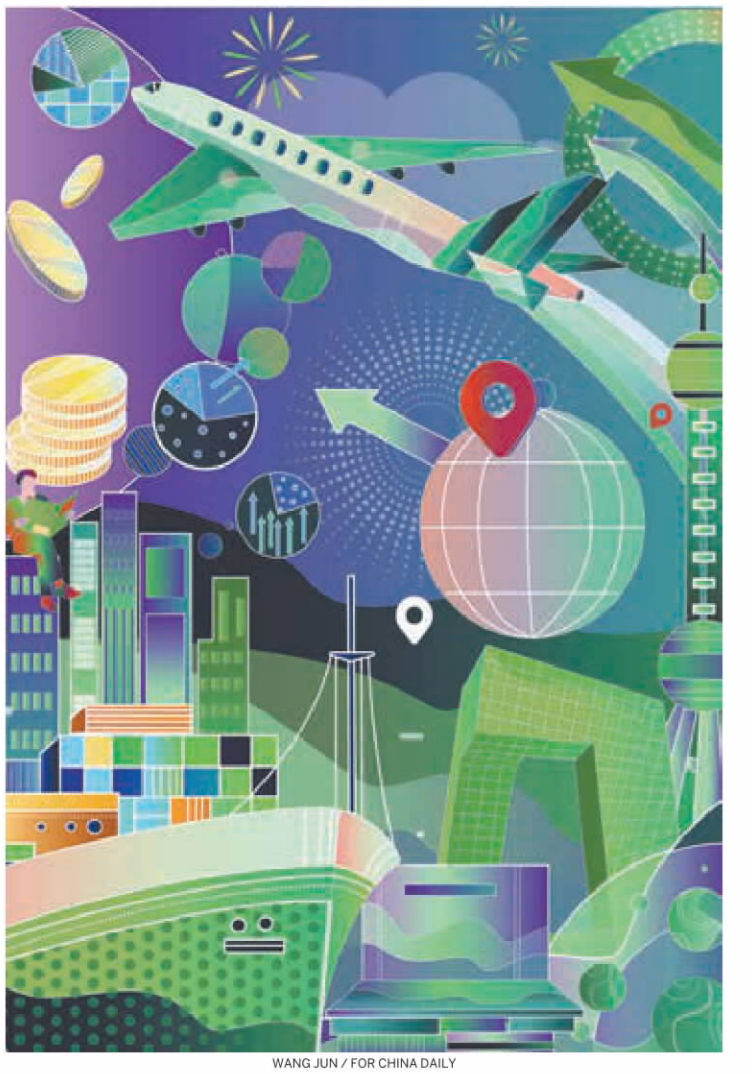
However, it has also imposed costs on specific social groups in advanced economies. Some industrial regions, unskilled workers and vulnerable communities experienced significant disruption, mostly because of the lack of sufficient support to adapt to new economic conditions, while gains concentrated at the top. The faith in the self-regulating virtues of free markets and in neoliberal principles was such that they refused the idea that economic globalization should be accompanied by regulatory and compensatory measures.

When the financial crisis of 2008 hit Western middle classes as well, after the disruptions suffered over the previous couple of decades by blue-collar and unskilled workers, however, confidence in that promise began to weaken and the narrative on economic globalization changed dramatically.

When that happened, China became the ideal scapegoat and started being blamed, especially because it emerged as a credible competitor in areas such as electric vehicles, batteries, semiconductors and artificial intelligence: the same governments that for decades had been preaching free markets started rediscovering the vocabulary of industrial policy, national security and strategic autonomy, and tariffs on Chinese EVs, export controls on chips and investment screening mechanisms started being introduced.

The problem, however, is that rather than acknowledging the economic, protectionist nature of those measures, the US-led Western countries mostly justify them with the need to protect their national security. Protecting certain strategic economic sectors, investing in research, supporting technological capabilities and caring about the most vulnerable citizens, can be legitimate and even necessary protectionist policies: however, they should not be disguised as measures of "protection" against generic, hypothetical and unjustified foreign threats, since doing so risks undermining peaceful relationships between countries, therefore creating an unnecessary and dangerous new Cold War environment.

Advanced countries should not fear calling "protectionism" by its proper name, instead of disguising it as "protection" of national security. They should recognize explicitly that the problem is not economic globalization per se, whose overall benefits are undeniable, but its lack of management and regulation, implemented through redistributive policies.



WANG JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

The world needs a different form of globalization, what I would call "enlightened globalization": One that abandons the prescriptions resulting from neoliberal economics, is better governed and is capable of protecting those who bear the costs of economic transformation. This objective can only be achieved by combining a cooperatively open international environment with effective domestic public policies: advanced economies should invest in education and skills, support innovation and strategic infrastructure, adopt redistributive policies to be financed through progressive taxation, and implement measures to contain their quasi-monopolistic market structures.

The author is a professor at the Belt and Road School at Beijing Normal University Zhuhai Campus. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

ZHANG GUIHONG

A call for transformation

In the age of multilateralism, a new leadership will herald a more efficient, fair and powerful 'UN 2.0', steering it forward against multiple challenges to its authority, efficacy and representation



The world is watching closely as seven candidates move into the final stages of the race to become the 10th secretary-general of the United Nations.

In recent months, UN General Assembly President Annalena Baerbock has facilitated interactive dialogues and held a town hall debate among the candidates, member states and civil society representatives. Each candidate has articulated his/her vision for the UN's three pillars — peace and security, development, and human rights — and answered rigorous questions.

According to current rules, the secretary-general must be recommended by the Security Council and appointed by the General Assembly. The Security Council will conduct closed-door straw polls, and a candidate must secure at least nine votes without a veto from any of the five permanent members to move forward. Traditionally, from the perspective of regional rotation practices, the next secretary-general should come from Latin America. From the perspective of historical fairness, the UN has never had a female secretary-general in its 80-plus years of existence, and the calls for a woman to hold the position are growing louder. Four candidates meet both criteria, yet none has secured unanimous support from the five permanent members.

However, the question of "how to lead" outweighs "who will be elected". UN General Assembly President Baerbock emphasized the need for strong, principled and effective leadership.

The multilateral system centered on the UN faces its toughest time since the end of the Cold War, including erosion of its authority, ineffectiveness of its resolutions and operations, geopolitical fragmentation, distrust among major powers, financial crises and unbalanced global governance. The UN requires a transformative leader; not a conventional "chief administrative officer", but a "new leader" who is bold, connective and courageous.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

This new leadership should manifest in nine key dimensions.

First, rebuilding trust and reducing division. Amid unilateralism, major-power competition and regional conflicts, the international community suffers from a severe trust deficit. The new secretary-general should act as a bridge-builder, fostering trust not only among member states but also between the UN and the global public. This role demands not just an administrative leader but a political leader capable of uniting a divided world.

Second, balancing the three pillars of peace. Peace and security, development and human rights are intrinsically linked and interdependent. While balancing these pillars is a global consensus, member states have divergent interests. The new secretary-general should possess systemic thinking and strategic coordination skills to find common ground and translate ideals into practical results.

Third, resolving financial crises. With some major powers chronically defaulting on dues, the UN faces a liquidity crisis, forcing budget and staffing cuts. The new secretary-general should drive fundamental financial reforms to restore member states' trust in the UN, demonstrating excellent management skills to both "increase new revenue" and "cut expenses", while exploring new partnerships with the private sector for diverse and stable funding.

Fourth, upholding UN authority and effectiveness. In a rapidly changing global landscape, maintaining the UN's authority and effectiveness is the secretary-general's most fundamental and challenging mission. The future leader must reform the UN to reclaim its credibility, helping it better balance the interests of all member states and grow into an effective platform to lead global agendas and solve practical problems.

Fifth, accelerating the 2030 agenda and planning beyond. With only four years left until 2030, Sustainable Development Goals lag significantly behind schedule, with massive funding gaps amid multiple crises. The future secretary-general must act as both mobilizer and designer, sprinting toward current goals while strategically planning the post-2030 global development agenda, requiring diplomatic wisdom and strategic foresight.

Sixth, addressing underrepresentation of developing countries. This issue is not just about human resources but fundamentally concerns the UN's credibility and legitimacy. Many small and medium-sized countries are long underrepresented — a structural institutional flaw. The next secretary-general should go beyond symbolic appeals and traditional manager roles, driving substantive change with political resolve, diplomatic skill and execution capability.

Seventh, advancing systematic UN reforms. From Our Common Agenda to the Pact for the Future and the UN80 Initiative, the vision, goals and paths for reform are clear. The key lies in execution. The next secretary-general should steer reforms to strengthen the UN, including translating visions into actionable plans, enhancing work quality and efficiency, and leading the UN's active role in governance of emerging fields, such as artificial intelligence, to tackle future complex challenges.

Eighth, strengthening relations with civil society and the private sector. As transnational challenges grow more complex, global governance demands higher standards. The next secretary-general should connect governments, civil society and the private sector — a necessity for achieving the 2030 goals and rebuilding trust and effectiveness in multilateralism. The secretary-general must have political appeal and action-oriented leadership, innovatively building inclusive, effective partnership networks to inject new vitality into the UN.

Ninth, building relationships with the secretariat, member states and global citizens. The post of the UN secretary-general carries extremely heavy responsibilities and the new secretary-general must build a team that efficiently serves member states and global citizens as the Secretariat's "chief executive officer". As a servant and coordinator of 193 member states, the secretary-general must carefully balance service and independence; they must advocate for the vulnerable. Building these relationships requires moral courage, political wisdom and excellent communication skills.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, China plays a crucial role in the election of the UN secretary-general. China has expressed its commitment to participating responsibly in the electoral process, supporting the UN in revitalizing its authority and energy to better serve as the core of global governance. China's criteria for the next secretary-general are clear and firm: adherence to the Charter, outstanding capability, fairness and accountability.

The world stands at a crossroads of multilateralism. A secretary-general with new leadership could help transform the UN into a more efficient, fair and powerful UN 2.0, helping the UN overcome its current difficulties, shortcomings and deficiencies.

The author is the director of the Center for the Study of the United Nations and International Organizations at Fudan University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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BUSINESS

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8 new nuclear reactors given full approval

Nation cementing dominance in global push for next-generation clean energy

By ZHENG XIN
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China recently greenlit eight new nuclear reactors, accelerating its atomic energy expansion and cementing its dominance in the global push for next-generation clean energy.

With a pledge to construct and operate the units according to the world's highest safety standards, the move underscores the nation's commitment to achieving its ambitious climate targets — peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060.

Six of the new reactors will employ the domestically designed Hualong One, China's third-generation nuclear power technology with full intellectual property rights. It is also one of the most widely accepted series of third-generation nuclear power reactors in the world.

For industry observers, the timing of these approvals carries immense strategic weight. As the inaugural batch of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, these projects set a definitive tone for China's energy blueprint during the most critical window for its climate commitments.

The 15th Five-Year Plan period represents the decisive sprint toward China's goal of peaking carbon emissions before 2030, said Li Jinkai, a distinguished professor at the School of Economics at the Beijing Institute of Technology.

"As a clean and stable baseload power source, the approval and construction of these new projects signal that China's nuclear power construction has firmly entered a stage of large-scale, batched and normalized development," Li said.

Nuclear projects also help promote investment growth, stabilize economic operations and attract private capital, he added.

The maturity of Hualong One has been fully validated through its large-scale deployment. Currently, 10 Hualong One units are in commercial operation domestically and internationally, with another 37 approved or under construction.

This cements its position at the forefront of global third-generation nuclear power, according to China General Nuclear Power Group.

A single Hualong One unit generates nearly 10 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually. This output can meet the demand of a medium-sized city of over 1 million people for a year, it said.

Furthermore, its research and construction have integrated a complete supply chain of nearly 6,000 upstream and downstream enterprises, effectively steering the upgrading of China's manufacturing sector, it said.

The steady approval pace — with 10 or more reactors greenlit annually from 2022 to 2025 — has translated into robust green energy output.

According to the National Energy Administration, the country's nuclear power generation reached approximately 467 billion kWh in 2025, drastically cutting standard coal use and reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

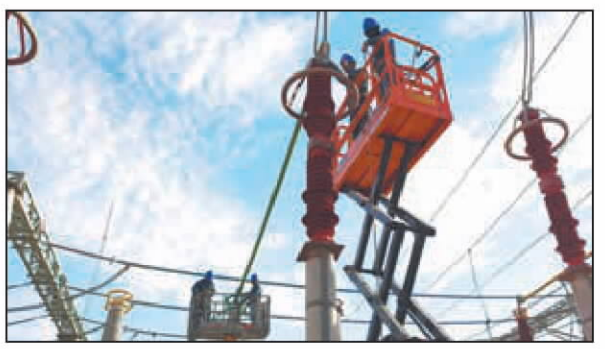
The China Nuclear Energy Development Report 2026 blue book, released by the China Nuclear Energy Association earlier, showed that by the end of 2025, China had 59 commercial units in operation with a total installed capacity of 62.52 gigawatts.

An additional 35 units totaling 41.90 GW were under construction, maintaining China's global top spot for under-construction capacity for 19 consecutive years. Completed investment in nuclear power engineering hit a record 161 billion yuan ($23.84 billion) in 2025, with five approved projects that year featuring private capital participation.

Looking ahead, China's nuclear footprint is set to expand significantly.

Yang Changli, rotating chairman of the CNEA, estimates that with socioeconomic demand for energy and electricity providing ample room for the development of nuclear power, China's installed nuclear power capacity is expected to reach 200 million kW by 2040.

Power play



Staffers from State Grid Changji conduct equipment renovation at the 220-kilovolt Shiqiantan substation in the Wucaiwan area in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. Adhering to the high-voltage electrical installation standards, the on-site workers rigorously manage key aspects to eliminate potential safety hazards in equipment connections, ensuring reliable power supply to the Wucaiwan industrial zone and surrounding areas in Changji Hui autonomous prefecture. AO LIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Domestic flight fuel surcharges cut further

Chinese airlines will further cut fuel surcharges on domestic routes for tickets sold from Wednesday, following a reduction in July, according to announcements released by carriers. Under the revised standard, passengers will pay a fuel surcharge of 40 yuan ($5.89) per flight segment on routes of up to 800 kilometers, and 70 yuan on longer routes.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the yuan weakened 4 pips to 6.7898 against the US dollar on Monday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY



A freight train loaded with containers on a sea-rail intermodal railway line departs Xiamen, Fujian province. LIN SHANCHUAN / XINHUA

Automated sea-rail line launched

By REN QI
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The launch of China's first automated dedicated sea-rail intermodal railway line will significantly reduce transit bottlenecks, slash logistics costs and link the country's landlocked hinterlands with global markets, officials and experts said.

The pioneering railway line, featuring a unique design that directly connects the coastline to the terminal, officially launched operations last Thursday in Xiamen, Fujian province.

"The sea-rail intermodal transport at Xiamen ocean gate terminal achieves a seamless connection between trains and ships, solving the persistent challenges of cargo collection and distribution," said Lin Zhicheng, vice-mayor of Xiamen.

"It will extend the port's inland transport capacity, enhance land-sea intermodal channels, and boost the construction of smart ports and the Belt and Road development," Lin said.

Stretching nearly 1.6 kilometers, the dedicated railway line boasts an annual designed throughput capacity of 250,000 twenty-foot equivalent units and 250,000 metric tons of bulk cargo.

Breaking from conventional designs where railways are built on the periphery of port areas, the new line is situated at a right angle to the coast, occupying the core operational zone of China's first fully automated terminal and terminating a mere 70 meters from the waterfront.

This engineering innovation allows containers and bulk cargo to be directly loaded from ships onto waiting trains. The setup transforms the traditional three-stage "train-yard-ship" transit into a streamlined two-stage direct connection system.

By bypassing intermediate yard transfers and secondary hoisting, the comprehensive logistics cost per container is 15 percent less expensive, while overall transit times are shortened by two to three days.

Additionally, the integration of an automated railway with an automated terminal enables a highly efficient "70-meter transfer and nine-minute interchange" operating system, significantly reducing cargo damage and boosting supply chain reliability.

Lin Ji, president of China COSCO Shipping Corp, highlighted the strategic importance of the project.

"Through a unified data interface and intelligent dispatch system, the railway line clears import and export channels for inland hinterlands such as Jiangxi, Hunan and Hubei provinces. It is a landmark project serving Fujian's opening-up and promoting domestic and international dual circulation, as well as a national paradigm for zero-kilometer seamless sea-rail connections," he said.

Designated as a Class D railway line, the newly opened project is open to the entire market with transparent pricing, thus breaking down barriers for various market entities to enjoy inclusive logistics services.

Technologically, the facility is equipped with four automated rail-mounted gantry cranes and three parallel loading lines. In the port area, driverless container trucks navigate autonomously among ships, terminals and railways, ensuring 24-hour uninterrupted operations.

The complex's efficiency is complemented by an innovative customs clearance model. Authorities have implemented a "one declaration, one inspection, one release" policy.

The enhanced connectivity is expected to inject new vitality into regional economies.

Wu Chengzhong, deputy general manager of China Railway Nanchang Group, pointing to the long-standing port-rail collaboration between Fujian and Jiangxi, said: "The opening of this dedicated line opens new opportunities for strategic cooperation. We will continue to link all parties, open land-sea logistics channels and rely on the Maritime Silk Road to assist in dual circulation construction, ultimately empowering the high-quality economic development of the Fujian-Jiangxi region."

Backed by the terminal's 21 ocean-going routes covering Europe, the Americas, Australia, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, the new railway line links global maritime networks with over 20 inland railway channels.

Interest rate, RRR cuts may be on table

By ZHOU LANXU
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China has both room and growing necessity to cut interest rates in the coming months, as top policymakers step up efforts to stabilize growth amid weakening economic momentum, analysts said.

Song Yu, chief China economist at UBS Securities, said that with top policymakers placing greater emphasis on stabilizing growth to ensure a solid start to the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, monetary conditions are likely to remain accommodative in the coming months, with ample market liquidity and low interbank funding rates.

Song said China still has room to cut interest rates and the RRR — the proportion of deposits banks must keep in their vaults as reserves — in the coming months to lower financing costs for businesses, and such tools may be deployed in a flexible, data-based manner.

"While uncertainty over the US Federal Reserve's policy path remains elevated, past experience suggests that China's cross-border capital flows and exchange rate are primarily determined by domestic economic and market conditions, rather than the interest rate differential with overseas markets," Song said, adding that the inflation outlook also strengthens the necessity for easing.

"As imported inflationary pressure from international oil prices recedes, China's consumer inflation is expected to soften in the coming months, leaving ample room for monetary easing and potentially reinforcing the need for additional policy support to stabilize prices and bolster domestic demand."

A top-level meeting on Thursday called for effectively implementing a more proactive fiscal policy and an appropriately accommodative monetary policy, saying that pragmatic and effective incremental policies will be introduced in a timely manner.

Analysts view this as policy fine-tuning that signals a greater intensity of macro policy stimulus in the second half, as GDP growth in the second quarter had fallen to 4.3 percent year-on-year, putting some pressure on achieving the full-year target of 4.5 to 5 percent growth.

The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, pledged at a meeting on Saturday to comprehensively utilize monetary policy tools and make timely adjustments to keep ample liquidity, while maintaining the low level of overall social financing costs.

While room for further monetary easing exists, the key question is how to calibrate the timing and magnitude of any policy moves to maximize their impact, analysts said, as the effectiveness of such measures may depend on stronger fiscal support and a recovery in private sector confidence.

Zhu Feng, China chief economist at JPMorgan, said that monetary policy should correspond with fiscal policy in the second half to maintain ample liquidity, focusing on structural monetary tools and re-lending facilities to lower financing costs for the real economy and stabilize the property sector.

"We expect a 10-basis-point interest rate cut. Yet with interest rates already at relatively low levels, the stimulative effect of further rate cuts could be limited," Zhu said.

He said such a move would mainly signal the authorities' commitment to maintaining an appropriately accommodative monetary stance, rather than be sufficient on its own to reverse weak domestic demand.

Zhu added that China's economy is likely to stabilize in the second half, with fiscal policy, external demand, high-tech manufacturing and services consumption to help cushion the pressures from the property market and external uncertainties.

MNCs plug into China's AI solutions

SHANGHAI — From factory floors to logistics hubs, global corporations are embedding China's artificial intelligence into their real-world operations — and bringing these innovations to the global stage.

PwC China launched its AI Innovation Center in Shanghai in July. The center helps clients chart practical roadmaps for AI adoption and navigate the many complexities associated with digital transformation.

A recent PwC study places China in the top tier globally for AI deployment effectiveness in the real economy. According to the new center, a growing number of overseas clients are now voluntarily adopting China's open-source AI ecosystem when upgrading their digital operations.

The PwC findings are borne out by cosmetics giant L'Oreal. In its Suzhou smart fulfillment center, the group's first such facility globally, smart sorting systems and AI-powered packaging optimizers help the hub process 7,000 consumer parcels per hour, and ensure that 99 percent of its orders are processed within 48 hours.

Vincent Boinay, president of L'Oreal North Asia and CEO of L'Oreal China, points to China's AI ecosystem — its rapid iteration cycles, vibrant homegrown innovation, strong policy backing and growing talent pool — as the driving force behind the company's AI push in the country.

Beyond back-end support, AI is now stepping into the driver's seat for global firms in China. Siemens offered a glimpse of that shift on July 18, when it debuted Eigen Engineer Agent, an AI agent for industrial automation engineering, at the 2026 World AI Conference in Shanghai.

Eigen was already at work before the official launch, deployed on an electric vehicle brake assembly line at CASMT (Changzhou) Automation Co Ltd. Engineers there can simply tell the agent what they need in plain language, and it takes care of the rest. On that line, programming time is cut by roughly 30 percent, with equipment debugging time decreased by a similar margin.

Vasi Philomin, executive vice-president and head of Data and AI at Siemens, said China's complete manufacturing system, its scale and speed of technology deployment and the openness of local manufacturers to innovation all provide fertile ground for AI to grow. He believes AI will become a core force driving industrial transformation in the country.

Behind this growing embrace of AI by global firms is a policy environment that has kept pace. From national strategies to local initiatives, recent policy measures have given foreign companies greater confidence to tap into China's AI opportunities.

In Shanghai, rules issued early this year encourage foreign-funded research and development centers to invest in high-growth areas like intelligent terminals and embodied intelligence. Shenzhen adopted similar measures late last year to attract foreign companies to set up innovation facilities in the city.

In July, the National Development and Reform Commission and other government departments released an action plan to strengthen international AI collaboration.

David Blair, vice-president of the Center for China and Globalization, said China's diverse manufacturing sectors — particularly the highly competitive industrial clusters along the southeastern coast — will generate even more AI applications in the years ahead, through open and mutually beneficial cooperation.

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BUSINESS

AI rewiring how China's energy is managed

Large models do not simply crunch numbers, they guzzle electrons

By ZHENG XIN
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To generate a mere five-second, high-definition video out of the digital space — perhaps a lifelike sunset or a virtual city street — an artificial intelligence model does not simply crunch numbers; it guzzles electrons.

Producing those few fleeting seconds of digital reverie requires roughly the same amount of electricity as fully charging 10 smartphones, said Wang Hongzhi, head of the National Energy Administration.

"The AI boom is triggering a ravenous new appetite for electricity," Wang said.

In China, the AI sector is expanding at a breakneck pace. Projected to surpass a valuation of 10 trillion yuan ($1.48 trillion) by the end of the decade, the industry's explosive boom in computing power is driving a precipitous spike in power consumption.

The government is confronting this colossal appetite head-on. Yet, rather than merely throwing more coal into the furnace, Chinese planners are orchestrating an intricate, nationwide symbiosis between the machines that think and the grid that feeds them.

To prevent the AI boom from short-circuiting the nation's climate goals, Beijing is effectively redrawing its infrastructural map, which Wang describes as "powering computing with electricity and promoting electricity with computing".

In the sun-drenched, wind-swept expanses of the western provinces, national computing hubs are being deliberately tethered to colossal new renewable energy bases, while in the densely populated east, planners are nesting distributed computing facilities alongside local microgrids and virtual power plants so that data centers can scavenge power close to the source.

The government is also actively encouraging data centers to plug directly into green power and participate in green electricity trading, said Wang.

Conversely, delay-tolerant tasks — the massive, slow-cooking data-training runs — are nudged to operate during off-peak hours. This essentially uses the data centers as massive, flexible shock absorbers to balance the grid, he said.

But this relationship, Wang said, is far from a one-way street. While the power grid fuels the rise of algorithms, the algorithms are, in turn, rewiring how the nation's energy is managed.

The two industries have entered a fast lane of mutual empowerment, said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

While AI operations do consume a substantial amount of power, the technology has been acting as the nervous system for an increasingly complex energy landscape — optimizing grid operations, smoothing out renewable energy volatility and ultimately driving broader energy efficiency, Lin said.

In the petroleum sector for example, a large model known as "Kunlun" has accelerated the computational efficiency of oil and gas exploration by more than tenfold, cutting through geological guesswork to optimize drilling strategies, said Wang.

Operated by China National Petroleum Corp, the upgraded platform marks a crucial leap from passive question-answering to "active intelligence", allowing the AI to autonomously plan, dispatch tools, analyze data and execute tasks across the production line.

As the first large model in the domestic energy and chemical industry to achieve large-scale, full-chain application, Kunlun — currently deployed across 152 scenarios — boasts a drilling risk warning system with an accuracy rate exceeding 85 percent, issuing over 300 early warnings in the past six months to prevent accidents, CNPC said.

Ye Xiaoning, a senior engineer at the State Grid Energy Research Institute, said AI is proving to be the perfect antidote to the inherent chaos of renewable energy.

As immense volumes of wind and solar power flood the national grid, the system becomes jittery, subject to the whims of passing clouds and dying breezes, he said.

Here, an AI model dubbed "Yudian" acts as a tireless dispatcher. It predicts weather-driven fluctuations in real time and dynamically adjusts the grid to ensure that no clean energy goes to waste.

This intelligence is also moving from the control room out into the field, graduating from merely offering diagnostic advice to executing autonomous operations.

When a fault occurs in the power distribution network, an AI model called "Guangming Power" steps in like an attending physician. It senses line anomalies, pinpoints the exact location of a failure and coordinates intelligent repairs without waiting for human intervention.

Ultimately, it is a bold blueprint for an engineered feedback loop. The algorithms will consume the sun and the wind to grow smarter, and, in their newfound brilliance, they will figure out how to harness the Earth's elements ever more perfectly.

AI systems need an ocean of electricity to keep expanding. Over the last 10 years, China has built a colossal power grid perfectly scaled to power these machines.

By the end of May, China's total installed power generation capacity reached 4.01 billion kilowatts. To put that figure in perspective, it exceeds the combined power capacities of the United States, the European Union, India, Japan and Russia.

The pace of this expansion is compounding at a dizzying rate. It took the country eight years to double its capacity from 1 billion kW in 2011 to 2 billion kW in 2019. Reaching the 3-billion-kW mark took five years, achieved in April 2024. Adding this latest billion took a mere two years.

Overall, between 2010 and 2025, China's power generation capacity maintained an average annual growth rate of 9.7 percent — eclipsing the equivalent rates of the US (1.7 percent) and the EU (3.2 percent).

Industry experts view this hypergrowth as a testament to the country's formidable manufacturing base. Jiang Debin, deputy director of the statistics and data center at the China Electricity Council, said the fundamental driver behind this acceleration is the explosive rise of renewable energy, primarily solar and wind.

"This not only illustrates the continuous improvement in the efficiency and scale of China's power grid expansion, but also reflects the comprehensive advantages of the country's manufacturing system, engineering prowess and institutional mechanisms," Jiang said.

In an era where geopolitical conflicts have triggered energy shortages and price spikes globally, China has managed to keep its lights brightly on.

As the electricity demand of emerging sectors — particularly AI and high-end manufacturing — continues to surge, this massive 4-billion-kW foundation provides ironclad energy security for the nation's broader economic ambitions, said Jiang.

Crucially, this is not just a story of scale, but of transformation. The rapid expansion has been overwhelmingly driven by a structural shift toward clean energy.

Consequently, the national energy mix has been radically reconfigured. In the first half, China's coal-fired power generation totaled 2.5 trillion kilowatt-hours, accounting for less than 50 percent of the nation's total electricity output for the first time, said the NEA.

The installed capacity of renewable energy has been steadily expanding. In the first half, the country added 117 million kW of renewable energy capacity, accounting for 73.9 percent of all newly installed capacity. As of the end of June, the nation's total installed renewable energy capacity reached 2.46 billion kW, accounting for approximately 60.7 percent of China's total installed capacity.

Renewable energy electricity generation has also risen steadily. In the first half, national renewable energy power generation reached nearly 2 trillion kWh, an increase of about 9 percent year-on-year, accounting for 41.2 percent of total electricity generation, an official of the NEA said on Thursday.

This green revolution is underpinned by brutal, brilliant economics. Over the past decade, solar module prices have plummeted by more than 90 percent, while onshore wind generation costs have fallen to match or undercut coal. Driven by technological advancements and economies of scale, renewable energy has evolved from a heavily subsidized experiment into a fiercely profitable sector.

China boasts the world's most comprehensive renewable equipment supply chain, manufacturing about 80 percent of global solar modules and 60 percent of wind power equipment.

The accelerated rollout of supporting infrastructure — including ultra-high-voltage transmission lines, pumped hydro and new energy storage systems — ensures that massive new capacity can be effectively built, transmitted and absorbed by the grid, said Jiang.

Now, this staggering capacity is beginning to spill over China's borders. Leveraging its robust grid infrastructure, the country has steadily expanded power interconnectivity with neighboring countries — particularly in Southeast Asia — helping to alleviate regional power shortages while sharing its green energy dividends.

The China-Laos 500-kilovolt power interconnection project, for example, which marks the first time that foreign new-energy electricity has participated in China's marketized power trading system, had delivered nearly 200 million kWh by the end of May, demonstrating the massive potential of cross-border solar infrastructure.

As the largest cross-border grid project and the highest-voltage power link between China and Laos, the project is expected to transmit roughly 1.1 billion kWh of solar-generated electricity to China this year alone, said its operator China General Nuclear Power Group.

As industry experts note, China's most significant export extends far beyond raw electricity.

"The same industrial ecosystem that built this 4-billion-kW leviathan is now exporting complete, turnkey green energy solutions — advanced solar, wind and smart-grid technologies," said Jiang from the CEC. "This is positioning the country as an indispensable engine of the global energy transition."



The transmission lines of the China-Laos 500-kilovolt power interconnection project are connected at the border between Mohan in Southwest China's Yunnan province and Luang Namtha province in Laos on Feb 5. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



China National Petroleum Corp showcases its Kunlun large model at the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai on July 18. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "The AI boom is triggering a ravenous new appetite for electricity."
>
> **Wang Hongzhi,** head of the National Energy Administration

Nation sets green power usage benchmarks

By ZHENG XIN

China has taken a landmark step in its green transition by establishing its first-ever mandatory minimum consumption target system for renewable energy, a move experts say represents a fundamental paradigm shift from supply-driven expansion to demand-led integration in the country's pursuit of its carbon peak and neutrality goals.

Jointly issued by four ministries — including the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology — the measures for implementing the minimum target of renewable energy consumption and the responsibility weight of renewable energy power absorption officially took effect on Saturday.

"The policy fundamentally transforms the responsibility structure of China's energy transition as it enters deep waters," said Wang Yongli, deputy director of the Energy Internet Research Center at North China Electric Power University.

"In the past, the main challenge was insufficient grid capacity to absorb rapid supply growth. Now, by shifting mandatory green consumption obligations from local governments and grid companies down to key energy-consuming enterprises, the policy uses demand to anchor renewable energy investments and market expectations."

According to the National Energy Administration, the new framework establishes a dual-driven mechanism combining "rigid obligations on the consumer side" with "territorial responsibilities on the absorption side".

While provincial administrative regions will continue to optimize the regional allocation of green power, key energy-intensive industries will face strict, quantifiable baselines for renewable energy use in their total energy mix, it said.

The initial wave of monitoring and assessment will target sectors with high emissions or rapid electricity demand growth, including electrolytic aluminum, steel and cement, polysilicon production, as well as newly built data centers at national computing hubs.

Analysts note that for these enterprises, green power procurement capabilities and energy structure optimization will rapidly evolve into core market competitiveness.

"High-energy-consuming, high-emission industries and those with rapidly growing power demand will be the first to face tougher green energy constraints," said Wang.

"The ability to procure green electricity and certificates, along with the capacity to adjust energy consumption structures, will become a defining core competitiveness for enterprises."

Crucially, the regulation integrates non-electric renewable consumption — such as green hydrogen, ammonia, methanol and biomass heating — into the national assessment for the first time.

According to the NEA, this expansion aims to ease grid bottlenecks and unlock new avenues for deep industrial decarbonization by promoting localized, multiscenario utilization of clean energy.

By diversifying how renewable energy can be legally consumed, the policy addresses the structural mismatch between large-scale clean energy bases in western China and the consumption limits of local power grids.

Another game-changing shift is the elevation of Green Electricity Certificates into legally binding compliance instruments. Companies failing to meet their quarterly or annual targets must purchase GECs to bridge the gap or face regulatory penalties, including public reprimands and credit downgrades.

"This thoroughly clarifies how companies calculate and execute their green targets, which will effectively boost market demand for green power and GEC trading," said Tao Ye, deputy director of the renewable energy development center at the NDRC's energy research institute.

Regarding market concerns over potential price surges, experts emphasize that the policy aims to form a credible, stable and predictable green premium rather than fuel speculation.

The GEC market will see internal differentiation based on certificate credibility, said Wang.

"The future value of a GEC will hinge on its availability, verifiability and its alignment with carbon markets, product carbon footprints and international supply chain standards, rather than just raw supply volume," he said.



Wind turbines generate green energy at a wind farm on Dongchu Island in Rongcheng, Shandong province, on July 20.
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CHINA

Staying cool in the pool



A dolphin enjoys a fish jelly treat from a handler at Hefei Andover Oceanarium in Hefei, Anhui province, on Monday. The aquarium has stepped up cooling measures, including temperature control, improved water circulation and frozen treats, to help marine animals cope with the ongoing heat wave.
HAN SUYUAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Guangxi seeks to better protect digital creative IPs

By CAO YIN in Nanning
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Judges in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region are preparing to issue a "risk notification" to local animation and short drama industrial parks, a preemptive judicial measure aimed at helping emerging creative industries stay within legal boundaries before copyright disputes spiral out of control.

The notification, expected in the coming weeks, will urge creators and online platforms to obtain proper authorization before adapting existing works and avoid producing content that violates public order or good morals, even in pursuit of online traffic, said Wei Meiyun, deputy chief judge of the Nanning Intellectual Property Tribunal.

The move comes as China elevates intellectual property protection to a strategic national priority. On July 20, the State Council, China's Cabinet, approved the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for IP protection and commercialization, calling for faster legal updates, stronger policy support and a more favorable environment for innovation-driven development.

The Supreme People's Court also released its implementation road map for the same five-year period, emphasizing stronger IP protection in emerging sectors and greater judicial support for developing new quality productive forces.

The work of the Nanning tribunal reflects these national priorities while addressing the practical challenges of a rapidly expanding creative economy.

Established in January 2026, the tribunal has seen a sharp increase in disputes involving the adaptation of literary works into videos, short dramas, animated series and AI-generated content.

Wei said judges are frequently handling cases involving novels adapted into short dramas as well as AI-assisted video production.

"We encourage creative reinterpretation, but not at the expense of public interest or the law," she said.

Since the start of 2025, courts in Nanning, including the tribunal, have handled 93 disputes involving short dramas.

One representative case involved the short drama *The Return of the Warrior Spirit*. The tribunal found that the producer had copied the original work's character settings, plot structure and visual scenes, and ordered the producer to pay 10,000 yuan ($1,400) in damages.

Tu Yuanyuan, the judge who handled the case, said AI has dramatically shortened production cycles while making infringement more difficult to detect.

During the trial, she spent considerable time comparing the disputed work with the original in terms of character design and narrative structure.

She said the ruling recognized both the original work's market value and the defendant's clear intent to imitate it, although the damages awarded were relatively modest.

"There is no uniform legal threshold for what constitutes substantial similarity," she said. "Every case turns on its own specific facts."

Tu added that many short drama lawsuits are filed not by original authors but by companies or individuals that have acquired adaptation rights to literary works.

In many cases, plaintiffs are only able to provide evidence of infringement on individual online platforms rather than across cyberspace, a limitation that often results in relatively low damage awards, she said.

To address such challenges, Wei said the tribunal has promoted both prelitigation and in-court mediation, encouraging parties to resolve disputes through licensing agreements or settlements facilitated by professional mediators.

The tribunal has also published typical copyright cases to provide guidance for creators, platform operators and online platforms. Public awareness initiatives, including lectures and open hearings, have also been launched to foster greater respect for intellectual property rights, she said.

Lan Dandan, chief judge of the third civil division of the Guangxi High People's Court, said courts across the region have strengthened IP adjudication in recent years to support innovation and improve the business environment through the rule of law.

From 2023 to 2025, courts in Guangxi handled more than 22,000 IP disputes involving copyrights, trademarks, patents and trade secrets, and concluded more than 19,000 of them, she said.

To improve the quality of case handling and better resolve disputes involving emerging industries and technologies, Guangxi established the specialized tribunal early this year.

It has so far accepted 626 cases and concluded 394.

Beyond the digital creative sector, the tribunal is also strengthening IP protection in the seed industry.

Wei Wubin, president of the Nanning Intermediate People's Court, said Guangxi is one of China's leading agricultural regions, ranking first nationwide in fruit production, with crops including rice, corn, lychees, passion fruit and jasmine.

He described the seed industry as the "chip" of agriculture, saying that innovation lies at its core and effective protection is essential to translating innovation into productivity.

He added that the tribunal is prepared to establish judicial protection bases and circuit trial teams tailored to Guangxi's distinctive agricultural brands, including its renowned sugar tangerines and other geographical indication products.

From the fast-paced world of short dramas to the long-term work of seed breeding, the tribunal is carving out a role as a pragmatic and forward-looking institution, reflecting China's broader ambition to build a world-class intellectual property protection system one case at a time.

Crew harvests rice samples on Tiangong

Shenzhou XXIII astronauts carry out a series of scientific and medical tasks

By ZHAO LEI
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More than two months after arriving at the Tiangong space station, the Shenzhou XXIII mission crew has harvested the first batch of experimental rice samples after meticulously cultivating the plants in orbit.

A video released by the China Manned Space Agency on Sunday shows the astronauts — mission commander and spaceflight engineer Colonel Zhu Yangzhu, spacecraft pilot Colonel Zhang Zhiyuan and science payload specialist Lai Ka-ying — collecting and storing the rice samples.

The experiment, titled "Molecular Mechanism Study on Multigenerational Genetic Stability and Environmental Adaptation Regulation of Space Rice", aims to achieve the world's first continuous cultivation of two generations of rice in orbit, completing two consecutive life cycles.

Its primary objective is to reveal the biological mechanisms through which long-term exposure to microgravity affects the genetic stability of rice.

The rice seeds carried aboard the Shenzhou XXIII mission are Chinese japonica varieties known for their strong environmental adaptability and growth cycle of three to four months. They were divided into two groups: ordinary seeds that have never been to space and direct descendants of seeds harvested aboard the Tiangong space station in 2022 that have since undergone three generations of propagation on Earth.

According to China Central Television, the experiment consists of four independent cultivation units, each containing six seeds. The units are divided into two parallel groups, each testing a different rice reproduction method.

In addition to harvesting panicles and seeds, the astronauts will preserve stem and leaf samples at low temperatures for their return to Earth. Scientists will conduct detailed analyses of the samples to provide scientific support for developing production models for future space agriculture.

The latest experiment builds on earlier breakthroughs. In 2022, the Shenzhou XIV mission crew carried out the world's first full life-cycle rice cultivation experiment aboard the Tiangong space station. Six rice seeds spent 120 days in orbit and produced 59 first-generation space rice seeds, which were returned to Earth with the Shenzhou XIV astronauts.

Besides tending the rice experiment, Zhu and his crewmates carried out a series of scientific and medical tasks last week.

Working together, they used an ultrasound diagnostic device to conduct bilateral examinations of the carotid, radial and dorsalis pedis arteries. The data collected will support research on pan-vascular blood flow spectroscopy and the development of a spatiotemporal atlas of blood flow evolution.

The astronauts also carried out a lighting environment experiment by adjusting the space station's interior lighting and recording their work performance before and after the changes. The research aims to examine how lighting conditions affect psychological perception and work efficiency in the space environment.

The crew completed an in-orbit emergency rescue drill under a simulated fire scenario to strengthen their emergency response and fault-handling capabilities.

As part of their routine health management, the astronauts underwent a series of medical examinations, including electrocardiograms, vision tests, intraocular pressure measurements and fundus examinations. They also measured their body mass using a specialized mass measurement device to monitor physiological changes caused by prolonged exposure to microgravity.

China testing AI-powered patrol vessel in Shenzhen

By LUO WANGSHU in Shenzhen
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On a busy stretch of water in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, a 12-meter-long maritime patrol vessel adjusted its course, followed its assigned route and scanned the surface for potential hazards — all without an officer having to steer it through every maneuver.

The vessel, *Haixun 14102*, is China's first maritime law enforcement boat to receive an integrated digital and intelligent upgrade. Equipped with an intelligent navigation module, multiple sensing devices and a platform linking the vessel with a shore-based control center, it entered trial operation in early July, according to the Maritime Safety Administration under the Ministry of Transport.

The pilot reflects China's broader push to integrate artificial intelligence, connected navigation systems and remote monitoring into one of the world's largest water transport networks.

China's ports handled 18.34 billion metric tons of cargo and 354 million 20-foot equivalent units of containers in 2025, while its navigable inland waterways extended for 128,700 kilometers, according to the Ministry of Transport.

As the network has expanded, the focus of water transport development has broadened beyond ports, berths and shipping channels to improving coordination among vessels, navigation facilities, shore-based platforms and maritime authorities.

The Smart Shipping 2030 Action Plan, jointly issued by the Ministry of Transport and three other central government departments earlier this year, calls for deeper integration of AI with vessels, ports, waterways, navigation support services and maritime supervision.

By 2027, China plans to establish at least three comprehensive smart shipping pilot regions, open more than five pilot routes, develop over 10 replicable application scenarios and put more than 100 intelligent vessels into operation. Priority applications include emergency rescue, navigation at night or in fog, operations in narrow and winding waterways, waterborne construction and short-distance transport.

In Shenzhen, those ambitions are being put into practice on a compact, highly maneuverable patrol vessel operating in some of the country's busiest waters.

Haixun 14102 is capable of automated patrols, obstacle avoidance, object recognition and remote operation under shore-based supervision. During one test, it traveled 14.2 nautical miles while keeping its deviation from the planned route within 1 meter. In a simulated rescue exercise, the system detected, identified and approached a person in the water within three minutes.

Rather than replacing officers, the technology is designed to improve situational awareness and support faster decision-making.

"A search-and-rescue operation can stretch to 36 or even 48 hours," said Hao Xianlin, head of an airport maritime patrol unit under the Bao'an maritime safety administration. "The integrated sensing system can greatly improve our ability to detect and identify the person we are looking for."

With a top speed of 36 knots, the vessel was selected for the pilot because it is used extensively for routine patrols, emergency response and rescue operations.

Shenzhen sits at the heart of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, where commercial ships, passenger ferries and smaller vessels share busy and often congested waterways. Long hours of visual observation can cause fatigue, while darkness, fog, rough seas and heavy traffic further increase the challenges facing maritime officers.

Video and sensing data collected by *Haixun 14102* are transmitted to the shore-based command center, allowing officers to monitor surrounding conditions in real time and provide operational support when needed.

The project also offers a more economical path toward intelligent shipping. Instead of replacing an existing patrol boat, engineers equipped the vessel with navigation, sensing, communication and ship-to-shore systems without altering its main structure or reducing its original performance. Shenzhen maritime authorities said upgrading existing vessels can lower costs and shorten deployment time compared with building purpose-designed intelligent ships.

Yin Yong, a professor at Dalian Maritime University's Navigation College, said intelligent shipping should not be viewed simply as adding sensors to vessels or removing crews.

"However advanced a laboratory simulation may be, it cannot reproduce every wave, current or unexpected situation at sea," he said.

At the university's shore-based digital operation and control center, researchers monitor real-time data from the intelligent research and training vessel *Xin Hong Zhuan*, including its position, engine performance, energy use and surrounding sea conditions.

The center serves as a shore-based cockpit, providing crews with navigation advice while allowing operators on land to offer support or take remote control when vessels encounter narrow channels, severe weather or emergencies.

"The most practical model at the present stage is cooperation between ships and shore-based operators," Yin said. "In open waters, the vessel can rely more on autonomous navigation. In narrow waterways or difficult weather, people on shore can step in. That allows us to use the advantages of AI while keeping human judgment available when it is needed most."

The ship-to-shore model is also being extended to navigation infrastructure.

At Jiangyin port in Fujian province, authorities have equipped navigation aids with weather-monitoring and Automatic Identification System devices. Drones conduct routine inspections, while connected buoys warn approaching vessels of reefs and other hazards.

"The navigation aids can now see, hear and give warnings," said Chen Jingui, a manager at Fuqing Strait Power Generation. "We have a much clearer picture of the conditions when our vessels enter or leave."

On the Minjiang River in Fujian, sightseeing vessels are monitored throughout their night cruises through a digital maritime platform, enabling shore-based authorities to track their movements and respond more quickly to abnormal situations.



The 12-meter-long *Haixun 14102* is the first maritime law enforcement vessel in China to receive an integrated digital and intelligent upgrade and is now in use in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Digitalization is only part of the transformation taking place on China's waterways. On the Minjiang River and the Lijiang River in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, electric and other new energy vessels are gradually replacing older diesel-powered boats to reduce engine noise, exhaust emissions and pollution risks in scenic waterways.

Wastewater, oily residues and garbage generated by sightseeing vessels are stored onboard and transported ashore for treatment rather than discharged directly into rivers. The Lijiang River has also introduced a pure-electric maritime law enforcement vessel designed for shallow waters, sharp bends and narrow channels.

Although many of these projects remain on a relatively small scale, they demonstrate how digital and green technologies can improve daily maritime operations through quieter sightseeing trips, more efficient patrols and faster emergency response.

Authorities acknowledge that intelligent shipping remains a work in progress. Wider deployment will require further testing, inspection and certification, as well as operational standards, cybersecurity safeguards and clearly defined responsibilities for vessel crews and shore-based operators. Electric vessels will also depend on reliable charging infrastructure, battery safety systems and maintenance and recycling arrangements.

As trials of *Haixun 14102* continue, Shenzhen maritime authorities are refining training, inspection and certification procedures, law enforcement protocols and maintenance standards. The experience gained from the pilot will help determine whether similar upgrades can be applied to more maritime patrol and rescue vessels.

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CHINA

Judicial system gives prosecutors power to ensure authorities act responsibly

By YANG ZEKUN
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Left: Prosecutors fly a drone to secure evidence for public interest litigation in Yuping, Guizhou province, in March. HU PANXUE / FOR CHINA DAILY
Right: Technicians run lab tests on water samples for a public interest lawsuit in Tongling, Anhui province, in June last year. HONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Public interest lawsuits clean up bad governance



Prosecutors collect water samples from a river and carry out quick tests on water quality in Zhengzhou, Henan province, in July last year. WANG FUXIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

For years, a 3,000-square-meter plot along the Mangdao River in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, sat choked beneath 3,000 metric tons of garbage and concrete rubble. As a key tributary of the Yangtze River and vital source area for the South-to-North Water Diversion Project, the site along the Mangdao River was more than a local eyesore. Despite the obvious threat to a crucial national water supply, local authorities allowed the dump to fester.

Today, the contaminated lot has been transformed into a lush ecological park, thanks to a growing mechanism in China's judicial system known as procuratorial public interest litigation. This institutional framework empowers prosecutors to haul negligent government agencies into court when shared public resources are left unprotected.

Unlike ordinary litigation, which usually resolves disputes between specific parties, procuratorial public interest litigation focuses on interests shared by society as a whole, including environmental protection, food and drug safety, cultural heritage, data security, workplace safety, accessibility, and the rights of minors, women and people with disabilities.

The system does not allow prosecutors to replace administrative agencies. Its core is legal supervision. Prosecutors identify harm to public interests, urge responsible authorities or infringers to act, and, when necessary, bring cases before courts to clarify responsibility and push rectification.

From waste to court

A turning point came in December 2024, when prosecutors in Yangzhou's Jiangdu district received a tip-off from local water conservancy officials. Because the original illegal dumpers could not be identified, prosecutors turned their attention to the administrative bodies duty-bound to keep the area safe: the Jiangdu district urban management bureau and the Xiannyu township government.

After informal consultation yielded no results, prosecutors issued formal legal notices to the two bodies demanding action. But when investigators returned to inspect the site after the deadline, they uncovered a classic superficial fix. Rather than removing the hazards, officials had simply buried the 3,000 tons of waste beneath a thin layer of topsoil.

The procuratorate then filed an administrative public interest lawsuit against the two bodies. During court proceedings, the urban management bureau commissioned a third party to dispose of the waste, while the township government helped coordinate the work. Environmental testing later showed that the soil met national standards.

Yet, even after the trash was gone, prosecutors refused to drop the case. Rather than accepting the belated cleanup as a resolution, they asked the judge to issue a formal ruling declaring that both government bodies had acted unlawfully by failing to perform their duties in time. The township argued it lacked administrative penalty powers over illegal dumpers, while both agencies insisted that the completed cleanup made the lawsuit moot.

The move by the prosecutors reflected a key point: restoring damage is necessary, but clarifying responsibility is also important. If delayed or superficial rectification can erase earlier inaction, similar problems may return.

In January, the court rejected the arguments and confirmed that both bodies had failed to perform their duties in accordance with the law.

The court held that the township government had direct environmental protection responsibilities in its jurisdiction, and that later rectification during litigation could not offset earlier inaction.

For Xu Xiangchun, head of the public interest litigation department of the Supreme People's Procuratorate at the time, such cases show why the system must be precise and restrained.

In administrative public interest litigation, the key is to clarify the boundary of administrative duties and responsibilities, Xu said. In civil public interest litigation, the focus is on identifying infringers and the form of liability they should bear. In environmental cases, this also reflects restorative justice. The goal is not simply to win a case, but to stop damage, repair the environment, prevent recurrence and improve governance at the source.

China's procuratorial public interest litigation system has developed rapidly since it was rolled out in 2017. Since July that year, procuratorial organs have handled more than 608,000 public interest litigation cases involving ecological environment and resource protection, accounting for about 47 percent of all such cases.

In 2025, procuratorial organs handled 133,194 public interest litigation cases across 14 statutory fields, with 47,228 involving ecological and resource protection. Administrative public interest litigation accounted for 91.5 percent of filed cases.

The predominance of administrative cases reflects a key feature of the system. In many public interest problems, harm continues not only because of an individual violation, but also because responsible departments fail to act in time, lack coordination or misunderstand the scope of their duties.

More than 90 percent of administrative public interest litigation cases are resolved before trial through procuratorial suggestions and other pre-litigation procedures. This allows many problems to be addressed at lower judicial cost, while litigation remains available when supervision does not lead to effective action.

The system has expanded beyond environmental protection to fields such as food and drug safety, personal data security, cultural relics protection, workplace safety, accessibility, anti-monopoly issues, telecom fraud, and the protection of specific groups.

A draft procuratorial public interest litigation law has been reviewed by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, marking a step toward dedicated legislation. Technology is also changing case handling. By the end of 2025, procuratorial organs had built 291 big data legal supervision models related to public interest litigation. In 2025, these models screened more than 51,800 clues and supported over 30,000 cases.

For Qin Qianhong, a professor at Wuhan University Law School, procuratorial public interest litigation has a distinctive Chinese character. He said the system goes beyond confrontation and pursues coordination.

Its institutional logic, Qin said, is not to replace administrative power, but to provide legal supervision that helps responsible bodies correct mistakes and improve governance.

Qin said a combination of force and restraint is central to the system. It helps prevent public interest protection from falling through the gaps, while respecting the lawful space of administrative agencies to perform their duties.

Global relevance

This model is also drawing international attention. The Supreme People's Procuratorate has shared its experience in Vietnam, Brazil and France. China's river basin cases have become part of these exchanges, with the Nansi Lake case included in the United Nations Environment Programme database.

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, assistant secretary-general of the United Nations, said that China has made inspiring progress in environmental legislation and enforcement. Environmental public interest litigation, she said, helps translate environmental laws into strong enforcement, promotes accountability and closes the implementation gap between law and practice.

She added that prosecutors are essential actors in the environmental rule of law because environmental challenges are complex, interdisciplinary and often cross borders, requiring cooperation among judges, lawyers, prosecutors, law enforcement agencies and the public.

China's Ecological Environment Code, adopted earlier this year, has further strengthened the legal foundation for environmental governance. The code requires people's procuratorates to strengthen ecological and environmental procuratorial work and legal supervision, giving prosecutors greater responsibility in ecological protection under the rule of law.

As environmental damage, data risks, food safety and rights protection issues become more complex, public interest litigation is expected to play a larger role. The next challenge is not simply to handle more cases, but to handle better ones — cases that are necessary, precise, legally sound and capable of guiding future governance, according to prosecutor Xu.

The Mangdao River case shows how the mechanism works at ground level. A polluted plot that had remained unresolved for years was cleaned, administrative duties were clarified, and a court confirmed that later rectification could not erase earlier failure to act.

"Public interest litigation must ensure that prosecutors neither fail to act nor overstep. That balance is what allows the system to protect public interests through the rule of law," Xu said.

Litigation brings down barriers to accessibility

By YANG ZEKUN



A legal worker sends a guidance booklet on pressing civil lawsuits in Braille to a partially sighted villager in Zibo, Shandong province, in April. ZHANG WEITANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

China is using procuratorial public interest litigation to strengthen barrier-free environment construction to protect the rights of people with disabilities, the elderly and those with accessibility needs, according to the country's latest human rights action plan.

The National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2026-30), released by the State Council Information Office in June, calls for stronger procuratorial public interest litigation in areas including barrier-free environment construction.

Qiu Jinghui, deputy director of the Supreme People's Procuratorate's Public Interest Litigation Procuratorial Department, said the requirement recognizes the progress made during the previous action plan period and sets higher expectations. He added it would enable China to contribute its experience to global human rights governance.

From 2021 to 2025, procuratorates nationwide filed more than 14,000 public interest litigation cases related to barrier-free environment construction. The SPP has included data and cases on such work in its annual work reports for six consecutive years, Qiu said.

The Law on Building Barrier-Free Environments, which took effect in 2023, provides a clear legal basis, with Article 63 stating that when acts violating the law harm public interests, procuratorates may issue procuratorial recommendations or file public interest lawsuits.

Qiu said procuratorial public interest litigation has evolved from correcting problems in public facilities, information access and social services to promoting more integrated accessibility development. Prosecutors are also paying greater attention to public participation, technology-based supervision, prevention and long-term governance.

Accessibility is no longer viewed only as a special service for people with disabilities and the elderly. Under the law, others with barrier-free needs may also enjoy related conveniences. In cases involving transport, medical services, culture, sports and tourism, prosecutors have found that young people carrying heavy loads or recovering from injuries, caregivers, domestic and nursing workers, and emergency responders may all have practical accessibility needs.

Information barriers caused by the "digital divide" also affect groups beyond people with disabilities and the elderly, Qiu said. Barrier-free environment construction is therefore a basic right linked to sharing the benefits of economic and social development across all groups and all stages of life.

In October 2024, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted by consensus a China-led resolution on promoting human rights for all through barrier-free construction, the first UN resolution on the topic. Qiu said China's procuratorial public interest litigation practice demonstrates institutional and rule-of-law strengths in implementing that concept.

Since the barrier-free environment law took effect, prosecutors have handled cases in healthcare, transport and tourism. Under the SPP's guidance, procuratorates in Shanghai and Jiangsu, Guangdong and Hunan provinces have pushed for larger-print and electronic drug instructions, as well as drug traceability codes, to address safety risks caused by tiny print on medicine instructions.

In Fujian province, prosecutors have promoted text, video and message-based emergency call functions across 71 emergency centers, opening barrier-free access to 120 emergency services for more than 160,000 people with hearing or speech disabilities. In the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, a medical accessibility project pushed 648 medical institutions to carry out barrier-free and elderly-friendly renovations. In Sichuan province, prosecutors promoted accessible sightseeing vehicles at Jiuzhaigou Scenic Area.

In 2025, procuratorates handled 4,723 public interest litigation cases involving barrier-free environment construction, according to the SPP. The top procuratorate also issued trial guidelines on handling such cases and carried out a public interest litigation supervision campaign on railway accessibility to better meet the travel needs of people with disabilities, the elderly and other groups.

The SPP, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the China Disabled Persons' Federation have released six typical cases on barrier-free and elderly-friendly public interest litigation. Chinese procuratorial practice in this field was also displayed at a thematic exhibition during the 59th session of the UN Human Rights Council.

However, challenges remain. Qiu said rectification after individual cases may rebound without follow-up supervision. More fundamentally, sustainable accessibility requires removing barriers in social attitudes.

During the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), Qiu said procuratorates should further improve the quality of public interest litigation for accessibility. Priorities include improving accessible medical and public services, promoting employment for people with disabilities, narrowing the digital divide, and implementing the Marrakesh Treaty to facilitate access to published works for people with vision disabilities.

Prosecutors will continue to deepen supervision over accessible transport and promote accessibility in electronic products, office software, apps and mini programs, Qiu said. The goal, he added, is to allow everyone to share a better life with dignity.

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CULTURAL 文明中国 HERITAGE







Heart of Hongshan still beats

Archaeologists say a 5,600-year-old ritual center reshapes our understanding of China's earliest state, report **Yang Feiyue** and **Wu Yong**.

On the green hills of western Liaoning province, a newly excavated platform has revealed that Hongshan people could determine true north and south with remarkable precision 5,600 years ago.

This Neolithic culture tracked the sun's shadow with a vertical pole — a technique known as *gui biao ce ying* that would become fundamental to Chinese astronomy, surveying and urban planning.

The conclusion comes from Platform No 2 at Locality 1, the northern section of the Niuheliang site in Chaoyang, Liaoning, that was discovered in the 1980s. It is the most important ceremonial center of Hongshan culture that flourished in northeastern China from around 6,500 to 4,800 years ago, spanning parts of what is now Liaoning and Hebei provinces, as well as the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

Renowned for its sophisticated jade craftsmanship and monumental ritual architecture, Hongshan is widely regarded as one of the earliest foundations of Chinese civilization beyond the Yellow River heartland.

The platform is a rectangular structure measuring 64.61 meters north to south and 41.39 meters east to west, one of nine such platforms that archaeologists identified in 2021 as a massive architectural complex at the site.

Its builders used a mix of earth and stone — compacted soil on flat ground, large stones topped with gravel in low-lying areas — a method that combined durability with drainage. The platform sits slightly north of the center of the complex.

The discovery is the latest in a series of findings that have transformed the site from a burial ground into what scholars now recognize as the ritual capital of an early Chinese state, complete with temples, altars, elites' tombs and a north-south axis that echoes that of Beijing.

Feng Shi, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, says the platform's precise north-south alignment reflects mastery of the *er sheng* system — two perpendicular reference lines running north to south and east to west.

According to Feng, shadow-measuring techniques date back at least 8,000 years.

Clear evidence of the system appears on pottery at sites dated 7,000 years ago, like Liulinxi in Hubei province. By 6,500 years ago, the Xishuipo site in Henan was already laid out along a meridian line. Niuheliang's Platform No 2, he says, is a direct application of this ancient astronomical tradition.

Yet, it lacks what many would consider an essential feature of a capital — city walls.

Guo Dashun, honorary director of the Liaoning Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, points out that walls are not, in fact, essential.

Yinxu, the last capital of the Shang Dynasty (c.16th century-11th century BC), had no known city walls. Neither did Erlitou, widely regarded as a capital of the Xia Dynasty (c.21st century-16th century BC).

"Yet both are widely recognized as capitals," Guo says.

Recent excavations have further strengthened Niuheliang's claim to that status.

At Locality 1, archaeologists have identified two temples — an upper temple to the north and the famed "goddess temple" to the south. Although the upper temple's above-ground structure has disappeared over five millennia, the finely crafted artifacts uncovered there rival those found in the goddess temple.

From the upper temple southward, past the goddess temple and sacrificial pits, the axis extends roughly one kilometer to Locality 2, where a three-tiered circular altar and burial mounds stand.

The layout is strikingly coherent: temples to the north, an altar to the south and elites' tombs aligned along the central axis.

Guo draws a parallel to Beijing, where the Forbidden City and Imperial Ancestral Temple stand in the north and the Temple of Heaven in the south.

Niuheliang, he says, contains the same core elements — an ancestral temple, sacrificial altar, tombs and a north-south axis — leading him to conclude that it was the capital of the Hongshan ancient state.

A bridge to the divine

In the highest-status tombs at Niuheliang, almost nothing accompanied the dead except jade. Scholars call this practice *wei yu wei zang* — "jade-only burial".

"Jade was the ultimate luxury, the high technology of its time," says Zhou Xiaojing, a research fellow at the Liaoning Provincial Museum, who has spent more than three decades studying Hongshan jade.

"Rarity made it precious — the difficulty of quarrying, transporting, and crafting it was precisely what made it a marker of status," she adds.

Most Hongshan jade artifacts can be traced to deposits in Xiuyan Manchu autonomous county, Anshan, Liaoning, which supplied the bulk of the culture's jade. A smaller number may have come from areas near Heilongjiang province and Russia's Lake Baikal.

Hongshan jade is renowned for its depictions of sacred animals — dragons, phoenixes, tortoises and silkworms. The *jue*-dragon and C-shaped dragon are among the most iconic, considered early prototypes of the Chinese dragon totem.

More intriguing, Zhou says, is what these objects reveal about Hongshan beliefs. A tubular jade object found near the head of a burial — the direction associated with heaven — is believed to have served as a medium for communicating with the divine. A large cloud-shaped jade piece placed on the chest likely signified the highest social rank.

Guo, the senior archaeologist, points to a recent discovery at the Yuanbaoshan site in Inner Mongolia, where archaeologists uncovered more than 100 jade objects embedded in a stone mound rather than inside tombs. The practice of "hiding jade in the mound", he says, appears to have been a ritual offering to heaven rather than part of a burial.

Guo believes this reverence for jade endured long after Hongshan culture, eventually finding expression in Confucian thought, where jade came to symbolize moral virtue.

Two peoples, one identity

Zhang Xingde, a professor of archaeology at Liaoning University who has spent more than four decades studying Hongshan culture, believes the reason that jade played a central role in Hongshan society lies in the very composition of the culture itself. It was a story of two distinct peoples who came together and forged a shared material and spiritual identity.

"Although the Hongshan people were relatively less developed in material terms, they also wanted to learn new things," Zhang says.

"And their absorption was not simple 'take-and-use' — it was innovation on the basis of what they took — in today's words, 'upholding tradition while breaking new ground'"

The breakthrough came from pottery. Between 2008 and 2010, the late archaeologist Zhang Zhongpei noticed something striking at the Weijiawopu site, a Hongshan culture settlement in Inner Mongolia. Pottery unearthed from different Hongshan sites had been made using two entirely different techniques.

One — the "clay-ring joining method" — was local to western Liaoning. The other — the "clay-strip coiling method" — was characteristic of regions south of the Yanshan Mountains.

"This Hongshan is not that Hongshan," Zhang Zhongpei told her, and urged her to investigate further.

Years of research led Zhang Xingde to conclude that Hongshan culture emerged from the convergence of two distinct populations.

One group was the indigenous people of western Liaoning, descended from the earlier Xinglongwa and Zhaobaogou cultures — the region's earliest farming communities dating back some 8,000 years.

The other consisted of Neolithic migrants from the eastern foothills of the Taihang Mountains. Driven northward by population pressure as agriculture expanded, they entered the Liaohe River basin around 6,500 years ago.

According to Zhang, the two groups initially clashed, even engaging in warfare. The newcomers pushed the indigenous population north toward the Xar Moron River basin in what is now Inner Mongolia, the northern edge of the Hongshan cultural sphere.

It explains why Hongshan culture's early phase had no jade in the southern part of the region, even though the earlier Xinglongwa culture to the north was rich in jade, Zhang says.

Over time, however, the two peoples learned to coexist. They adopted each other's vessel forms while preserving their own pottery-making techniques. At Niuheliang, Zhang says, they built a shared ceremonial center where different communities could worship together.

For her, this cultural fusion explains jade's elevated status. The southern migrants brought no jade tradition, but they encountered a northern people for whom jade was already sacred. In the process of forging a shared identity at Niuheliang, jade was elevated from a regional tradition to the unifying symbol of a new society, invested with new cultural meaning.

Guo, the archaeologist, sees evidence of this fusion in Hongshan painted pottery itself. Hongshan painted pottery bears three distinct patterns — the rose from China's Central Plains, the dragon native to Hongshan and geometric diamond-grid patterns from the vast Eurasian steppe. They testify to a "pottery road" that linked east and west, north and south some 5,000 to 6,000 years ago, with the western Liaohe River basin as a crucible of cultural fusion.

Many scholars in China and abroad have described Chinese civilization as a civilization of continuity, distinct from the cycles of rupture and replacement often associated with the ancient West.

Rooted in northeastern China's traditions while embracing influences from neighboring regions, Hongshan culture exemplifies that enduring pattern, they argue.

Guo believes this openness to outside influences helped shape Chinese civilization and ensured its continuity across millennia.

Niuheliang, he says, proves the continuity of Chinese civilization and is the root of ancient Chinese culture.

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Top: (From left) a dragon-phoenix pendant, a jade dragon and a jade phoenix. **Above:** An aerial view of the Niuheliang site in Liaoning province; Zhang Xingde (right) and her student examine a Neolithic pottery vessel. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Key Hongshan discoveries of recent years

1. Ma'anqiaoshan site in Chaoyang, Liaoning province

The Ma'anqiaoshan site is a Neolithic settlement dating from about 7,700 to 5,500 years ago. Archaeological findings show that an early settlement of Hongshan culture has been remarkably well preserved at the site. The residential area was carefully planned, with large house foundations serving as central hubs surrounded by smaller dwellings and



pits. Scientific analysis indicates that people had already begun cultivating crops on a large scale during the early Hongshan period. The growth of agriculture boosted productivity, allowing communities to settle permanently and sustain long-term production. These discoveries suggest Hongshan society was becoming increasingly complex, laying important foundations for the emergence of a diverse yet unified Chinese civilization.

2. Dongshantou site in Chengde, Hebei province

Between 2022 and 2025, archaeologists excavated the Dongshantou site, which dates from about 5,500 to 5,300 years ago. They uncovered 69 archaeological features and more than 100 pottery, stone and jade artifacts. Archaeologists find the building ways of the round rubble mound tombs, the tomb structure, burial customs and features of the unearthed artifacts basically follow those from the Niuheliang site in Liaoning, which is commonly believed to be the nucleus of Hongshan culture. However, Dongshantou also revealed unique stone-piled remains believed to represent an "earth mother deity". Archaeologists believe it reflects the Hongshan people's early worship of maternal fertility and the symbolic link between the earth and childbirth.

3. Naotegai site in Chifeng, Inner Mongolia autonomous region

The site, which covers three million square meters, is one of the largest settlements of Hongshan culture discovered to date. It has been found to have a long cultural development spanning nearly three millennia. It peaked in the late period of Hongshan culture from 5,500 to 5,000 years ago. The settlement features clearly defined residential and ritual zones arranged in a layout similar to Niuheliang. Well-developed farming tools point to a thriving agricultural economy, while finely crafted jade artifacts reflect a ritual system centered on jade, suggesting the emergence of social hierarchy and status.

4. Yuanbaoshan site in Chifeng, Inner Mongolia

Excavations in 2024 confirmed Yuanbaoshan as a Hongshan ceremonial complex of tombs and sacrificial remains dating from about 5,100 to 5,000 years ago. More than 100 jade artifacts have been unearthed, including one of the largest jade dragons ever found in northern China. Human remains, pits, and ceramic, stone, bone and clamshell artifacts were also found. Particularly notable is the discovery of jade objects embedded within and beneath the walls of a circular stone mound tomb, a burial practice that offers fresh clues to Hongshan ritual traditions and their role in the development of Chinese civilization.

5. Zhengjiagou site in Zhangjiakou, Hebei

Since 2022, archaeologists have excavated the Zhengjiagou site, uncovering nine characteristic Hongshan circular stone mound tombs and more than 600 pottery, jade, stone and bone artifacts. Dating from about 5,300 to 4,800 years ago, the site extends the known lifespan of Hongshan culture by about 200 years beyond the previously accepted end date of 5,000 years ago. The discovery also overturns the earlier view that northern Hebei lay on the culture's fringe, showing instead that it served as an important regional center during Hongshan's final phase. Its elaborate burial and sacrificial traditions, together with its rich jade assemblage, suggest that Zhangjiakou was already advancing toward an early civilization around 5,000 years ago.

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LIFE







Above: The 2026 Xinjiang Is a Nice Place intangible cultural heritage showcase staged in Shihezi, the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, attracts a big crowd. **Top right:** A chef pulls noodles at the gourmet food section of the event. **Right:** Cultural creative items featuring local elements show their appeal.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Mixing crafts on new ground

A cultural festival merges shadow puppets, traditional music, and rare paper into new art, **Yang Feiyue** reports in Shihezi, Xinjiang.

Under the stage lights in Shihezi, a leather shadow puppet slowly raises an arm, swaying gracefully to the rhythm of melodies unique to the city in northern Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

Its movements are inspired by a traditional dance of the Uygur ethnic group. The music comes from local performers playing classic Uygur instruments such as the *dutar* and *rawap*. Yet, the figure dancing behind the screen belonged to Beijing's centuries-old shadow puppet tradition.

For the performers, it was an opportunity to explore how intangible cultural heritage can travel across regions, connect with new traditions and continue to evolve.

The performance was created for the 2026 Xinjiang Is a Nice Place intangible cultural heritage showcase, which opened on Thursday.

Organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Xinjiang government, and the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the five-day event brought together more than 650 representative intangible cultural heritage practices and over 540 inheritors from 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, as well as the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps.

Rather than simply showcasing traditions from different regions, the event highlighted exchanges and cooperation, encouraging artists and craftspeople to learn from one another and create new forms of expression.

For Lu Baogang, an actor with the Beijing shadow puppet troupe, adapting the performance for Xinjiang audiences became the troupe's first challenge.

"When we received the invitation, we were honestly a little nervous," Lu says. "We kept asking ourselves what kind of program Xinjiang audiences would connect with."

Instead of bringing an existing production, the troupe chose to weave local cultural elements into a brand-new performance.

The result was a short piece inspired by the story of Wan Tongshu, a cultural worker who contributed to the preservation of Twelve Muqam — a traditional Uygur musical suite inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008.

The Beijing artists created two shadow puppet figures based on Wan and his wife, paying tribute to generations of cultural workers who dedicated themselves to safeguarding Xinjiang's rich musical heritage.

For Lu, the most rewarding part of the project came when the Beijing performers began working closely with musicians from Xinjiang.

"At first, communication was not easy because we speak differently," Lu says. "But we share something in common — we are all committed to protecting traditional arts."

After several rehearsals, the two sides gradually found ways to blend the movements of the shadow puppets with the rhythms of Xinjiang's traditional music.

Lu says he learned a great deal from the local artists, particularly how to capture the distinctive movements of Xinjiang dance.

"One example is the posture of a Xinjiang woman dancing," he says. "Previously, our puppet simply placed one hand on its waist. The local artists suggested raising the other hand and adding movements that flowed with the rhythm. It instantly made the character feel more natural."

For Lu, the collaboration was about "absorbing elements from each other".

The troupe hopes the cooperation can continue beyond the short performance.

"We believe that one day we can create a full-length production together, combining the two sides' music and storytelling techniques," Lu says.

The troupe has also launched a workshop during its Xinjiang visit, introducing local children to the craft of making shadow puppets.

"We hope this traditional craft can take root among young people here and help promote their culture," he adds.

Fresh expressions

Across the exhibition hall, the Xinjiang mulberry-bark paper, known as *sangpi* paper, was embarking on a different path toward renewal.

Sheets of paper were placed beneath the carved woodblocks used in art studio Rongbaozhai's centuries-old woodblock watermark printing technique, producing a series of collectible artworks.

The experiment was not easy.

According to Li Yang, deputy director of Rongbaozhai's woodblock watermark center, the team has worked with different types of mulberry paper from various regions, including paper used in restoration projects at the Palace Museum.

Each region produces mulberry paper with its own texture and characteristics, he explains.

For the Xinjiang collaboration, Rongbaozhai used local mulberry paper to print images including the "Five Stars Rising in the East" brocade, discovered at the Niya archaeological site in Hotan prefecture, Xinjiang, as well as a panda-themed design.

The results showed both challenges and possibilities.

Compared with papers traditionally used in Chinese painting, Xinjiang's mulberry paper has a coarser texture and more prominent fibers, making precise printing more difficult.





Top and above: Ethnic singing and dancing performances are among the highlights of the intangible cultural heritage showcase in Shihezi, Xinjiang.

During the printing process, the team had to repeatedly apply additional layers to achieve the desired effect.

But Li believes the paper's distinctive texture could eventually become an artistic advantage.

"Its weakness could also become its strength," he says.

If artists create works specifically suited to the texture of mulberry paper, its rough surface and natural fibers often seen as limitations could become unique visual features, he adds.

"In the future, if artists create directly for this material, we may discover a new artistic language," Li says.

The current works represent only an initial exploration. The team hopes to collaborate with Xinjiang artists to develop designs and techniques that make the best use of local materials.

"When two elements come together, neither should lose its own character," he says. "The value lies in finding the point where they can meet."

Silk Road connections

Cross-regional cooperation from the partnership between Quanzhou in Fujian province and Changji Hui autonomous prefecture in Xinjiang has delivered a special rendition of the popular Fujian song *Ai Pin Cai Hui Ying* (Only By Striving Can One Win) which drew large crowds at the showcase in Shihezi.

The familiar melody was reimagined by blending Fujian folk instruments with Xinjiang traditions, including the *dombra*, the traditional two-stringed Kazak instrument, and Xinjiang folk singing.

The performance is part of an ongoing partnership linking Quanzhou, one of the key ports along the ancient Maritime Silk Road, with Changji, a region historically connected to the overland Silk Road. Over the years, the collaboration has created platforms for performances, training and exchanges among craftspeople from both regions.

Beyond performances, the Changji delegation brought a variety of local crafts and foods, including dough figurines, embroidery, traditional dairy products and folk handicrafts.

Among the exhibits was a collection of dough figurines representing different regions. Each figure combined symbols from Xinjiang and Fujian, illustrating how two distinct local cultures could come together through a single art form.

The delegation also showcased different embroidery traditions, including ethnic Kazak and ethnic Hui embroideries.

"Kazak embroidery is known for bright colors, bold patterns and motifs such as horn designs, while Hui embroidery often features finer stitching and delicate color combinations," explains Meng Yushan, an intangible cultural heritage specialist at the Changji prefecture cultural center.

Rather than merging them into a single style, the exhibition highlights their unique characteristics side by side.

For Meng, the partnership with Fujian has also opened new opportunities for local artisans to broaden their skills.

"Many of our inheritors have traveled to Fujian for training," she says.

They have studied areas such as lacquer painting and craft development, learning not only the techniques but also ways to transform traditional skills into sustainable creative industries, she adds.

When Lu Baogang first walked into the exhibition hall, he says he was struck by the diversity of traditions gathered under one roof.

"After walking around the venue, I realized that every province and region had brought its finest works, and every exhibition area had something unique to offer," Lu notes.

For Lu, the gathering was a reminder that intangible cultural heritage is not confined by geography.

Preserving tradition today is not only about safeguarding old techniques, but also about creating opportunities for different forms of heritage to interact, inspire and evolve, he says.

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Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

A Brazilian artist's dream forged in porcelain

NANCHANG — Against the red-brick backdrop of the Taoxichuan cultural and creative district in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, Brazilian artist Viviane Diehl stands out with her striking red hair.

For the 62-year-old visual artist, her presence in this ancient porcelain capital is the realization of a long-time dream. "The moment I began learning about porcelain, I knew I had to come to China," Diehl says.

Her journey to the heart of Chinese ceramics began with fellow artists who had worked in Jingdezhen's Sanbao village. After returning to Brazil, they shared stories about the city at exhibitions and art events, sparking Diehl's fascination.

"I've loved art since childhood," she says, recalling how she began studying ceramic painting at 15, learning every step from glazing to firing.

That passion has blossomed into tangible creations. Her artwork titled *Afforest*, which is on display at the Taoxichuan Art Museum until the end of August, was created during an artist residency in Jingdezhen in 2024.

"Ceramic art and nature guide human beings toward inner reflection, giving meaning to cycles and coexistence, providing a pause and reconnecting freedom to well-being and unity," Diehl wrote in the introduction.

Mastering this medium in a foreign land has been an expressive journey. Before arriving in Jingdezhen, Diehl completed a residency in Longquan, where she began experimenting with local clay and celadon glazes.

Longquan, a city in Zhejiang province, is known for its centuries-old celadon tradition, and the firing techniques of Longquan celadon were added in 2009 to UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

"Working with China's local clay is an expressive challenge. Experimentation in construction, surface design with celadon glazes, and gas firing techniques is a continuous process," she says. "I am learning something new all the time."

An art teacher since 1989, Diehl describes herself as an "educator-artist". While modern technology has made ceramic knowledge more accessible worldwide, she believes Jingdezhen remains unmatched.

"We don't have another place with such quality and special techniques to make porcelain," says Diehl. This unique appeal is rooted in the city's geography and heritage.

"There's nowhere else with this level of craftsmanship and these unique porcelain-making techniques," she says. That uniqueness is rooted in the city's natural resources and centuries-old heritage.

Nestled among the hills of northeastern Jiangxi, Jingdezhen is rich in kaolin, or China clay, along with other essential materials for porcelain production. Over generations, local artisans have refined every stage of the process, from preparing clay to firing kilns.

The world has taken note. The Jingdezhen Handicraft Porcelain Industry Sites were added to UNESCO's World Heritage List last month, filling a long-standing gap in the list for porcelain heritage. It is China's 61st World Heritage site.

Today, Jingdezhen's complete ceramics industry continues to attract artists from around the world. At peak times, more than 5,000 ceramic enthusiasts gather in the city.



Brazilian artist Viviane Diehl (center) visits China Ceramics Museum in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, on June 28. XINHUA

Beyond its thriving industry, Jingdezhen has introduced initiatives to encourage artists to stay. In 2015, the Taoxichuan cultural and creative district launched the Migratory Bird Program, partnering with art institutions in more than 50 countries and regions and attracting some 3,600 artists from across the globe.

As Jingdezhen continues to evolve, it remains a magnet for global creators. "Jingdezhen is opening doors to the world," Diehl says.

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LIFE

'Living like a local' reshapes tourism



Hotels, retailers, and urban developers are shifting from traditional sightseeing models toward a more experience-driven form of vacation, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

A young woman checks into a hotel in Shenzhen's Nantou ancient town on a Friday evening. At the front desk, she is handed a room key and a small blue mesh bag.

Inside is cat food.

"There are stray cats all over the old town. Take a walk. Feed them," the receptionist says.

The bag, printed with hand-drawn illustrations of local cats and a small map of surrounding streets, serves as an informal guide to the neighborhood. It is part of the guest experience at Tiaohai Living Youth Hostel, located in one of Shenzhen's remaining urban villages in South China's Guangdong province.

In the narrow lanes around the property, open-front kitchens, small shops and long-time residents form a dense urban fabric. The hostel's slogan, written on a chalkboard near the entrance, reads, "Check in. Step out."

The concept encourages guests not to remain indoors, but to explore the surrounding community.

Inside one of the rooms, curtains are made from two patchworks of faded denim, floral cotton and striped fabric stitched together from secondhand clothes donated by nearby residents.

"These are the colors that once flowed through the streets of Nantou," says Sui Yi, cofounder of Tiaohai Living.

In the hallway, a "Give and Take" table allows departing guests to leave behind everyday items such as toiletries, snacks or travel essentials for others to use. In dormitory rooms, magnetic boards let guests indicate preferences such as "early sleeper", "late return", or "open to chatting".

Sui says the idea for the hostel came during frequent business travels.

He recalls staying in a mid-tier hotel in a Chinese city where, upon waking, he could not immediately identify where he was. The rooms, he says, felt identical across locations.

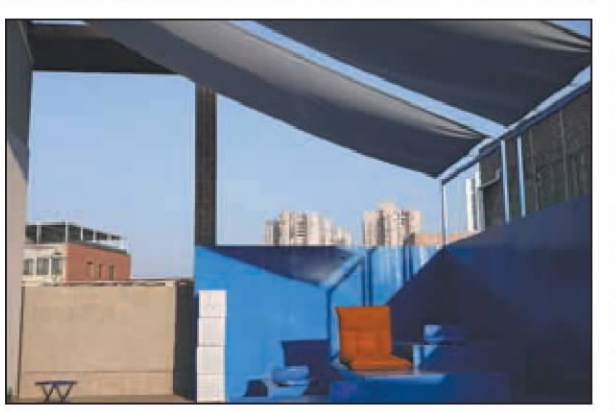
"The hotel gave me a place to sleep, but it couldn't tell me anything about the city I was actually in," he says.

That experience, he adds, became the starting point for Tiaohai Living, which opened in 2025. The concept aims to turn accommodation into a gateway for understanding the surrounding city.

He notes that some guests have stayed for extended periods, including job seekers who remained for several weeks or longer, and that others have returned after leaving, seeking to reconnect with people they met during their stay.







Top: A scale model of Sanqing Hall, Yongle Palace, on display at an ancient architecture digital art exhibition in Shanxi province, organized by the Meet You Museum. **Middle:** A view of Miniso Land in Shanghai. **Above:** The balcony (right) and bar (left) are a big draw for guests at the Tiaohai Living Youth Hostel. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The development of such hospitality models reflects broader changes in China's tourism sector, where traditional sightseeing patterns centered on ticketed attractions are gradually giving way to more experience-oriented travel.

Industry participants say the focus of travel demand is increasingly shifting toward local immersion, with younger tourists showing greater interest in everyday urban life and neighborhood culture.

At a recent tourism industry gathering in Xiamen, Fujian province, practitioners from across hospitality, retail and cultural sectors discussed the evolving structure of domestic tourism.

Xiong Xiaojie, a long-time tourism marketing executive and former chief brand and marketing officer at Chimelong Group, says that cities are increasingly becoming tourism destinations in their own right rather than just gateways to scenic spots.

He notes that demand is shifting toward "living like a local", while urban renewal has expanded the range of spaces available for tourism, including former industrial sites, alleys and community markets. Social media platforms tend to amplify overall urban "vibes" rather than individual attractions.

He also points out that different cities are increasingly developing distinct cultural identities, citing examples such as Chengdu's leisure culture, Harbin's hospitality style and Jingdezhen's artistic atmosphere.

"One strong, shareable moment matters more than 10 perfect attractions," he says.

In the retail sector, companies are also adjusting to changing consumption patterns.

Kou Weixuan, global vice-president of lifestyle brand Miniso, says that consumer demand is increasingly driven by personal interest and emotional value, particularly among younger groups.

Miniso has shifted its focus toward intellectual property (IP) development and themed retail environments, combining product sales with experiential store design, he says.

At the company's flagship store on Shanghai's Nanjing Road, which covers about 1,500 square meters, daily visitor numbers exceed 10,000. According to company figures, cumulative revenue reached more than 250 million yuan ($37 million) within around one and a half years after opening.

Kou says that such spaces are designed not only for retail but also for traffic generation and cultural engagement.

Urban redevelopment projects are following a similar trajectory.

In Chongqing, finance and real estate professional Zhou Yaxin transformed a former printing factory into a cultural and creative complex in 2014, incorporating galleries, studios and public spaces while retaining much of the original industrial structure.

The site gained wider attention after being used as a filming location for the 2016 film *I Belonged to You*, attracting an increasing number of visitors.

In 2018, Zhou's team developed an open-air venue in Shancheng Lane by repurposing a sunken plaza behind a former church. The space, named the "Wilderness Theater", now hosts performances, community gatherings and cultural events.

Zhou says that many cities have underused industrial and historical spaces that can be reactivated through adaptive reuse rather than large-scale reconstruction.

"Every city has old factories, old neighborhoods, old buildings sitting empty. We need to see what's already there and see it differently," he says.

The cultural sector is also adapting to changing visitor expectations.

Qiu Tong, founder of Meet You Museum, observes that younger audiences increasingly prefer interactive and visually engaging exhibitions over traditional static displays.

The museum group has opened seven physical locations across China and staged exhibitions in more than 20 cities, attracting around 3 million visitors.

One exhibition features a projection-based interpretation of Yongle Palace, a Taoist temple from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), where visitors use flashlights to activate animated visual elements on wall drawings.

Another exhibition includes a dinosaur installation featuring a 10-meter-long rib cage that visitors can walk through.

Qiu says that the audience composition has shifted in recent years, with family and parent-child visitors now forming a larger share of total attendance compared with earlier years when young urban women made up the majority.

She also notes that placing exhibitions in shopping malls and city centers, rather than peripheral museum sites, has helped integrate cultural experiences into daily urban life.

In Tianjin, one of the group's projects was the first tenant in a converted parking garage, later followed by other cultural businesses, she says.

According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, China recorded 6.5 billion domestic tourist trips in 2025, an increase of 16.2 percent year-on-year.

Back at Tiaohai Living Youth Hostel, small gestures continue to define the guest experience. A visitor leaves a bottle of makeup remover on the "Give and Take" table for another guest. Another adjusts a dormitory sign to indicate a late return, and is thanked the next morning by a roommate.

"In the end, we're not selling a room. We're selling a reason to stay," Sui Yi says.

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Heritage comes alive as visitors flock to immersive cultural attractions

Clad in traditional Chinese robes, a group of young overseas visitors of Chinese descent stepped into a lantern-lit cultural district in the ancient city of Xi'an, Northwest China's Shaanxi province, immersing themselves in a world they had seen only on screen.

"The moment I walked through the gate, the whole setting made me feel like I was traveling back more than a thousand years," said a group member from Singapore.

During their visit last week, these visitors snapped photos, watched live performances, and played street games in the re-created streetscape modeled on Chang'an, capital of the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

As the country's first immersive block featuring Tang-style street life, the project, which opened in 2022, was upgraded earlier this year to create a more engaging atmosphere. To date, it has recorded over 7.5 million visits.

"We aim to attract more people through the modern expression of traditional aesthetics," says Zou Linfeng, head of the tourism project.

The attraction offers a glimpse into a broader trend. This summer, traditional Chinese culture has been gaining new appeal as global tourists embrace offerings rooted in China's heritage.

Today, visitors are not satisfied with just sightseeing at cultural landmarks. Instead, they are seeking immersive experiences that forge a deeper connection with traditional Chinese culture. *Guofeng* (Chinese-style) immersive tours have thus become a draw for visitors this summer. Data from Tongcheng Travel, a leading Chinese online travel agency, show that as of July 23, searches for keywords such as "*guofeng*" and "immersive" on the platform had more than doubled month on month.

Langfang, a city adjacent to Beijing in North China's Hebei province, has recently ranked among the top 10 destinations for such tours, according to the platform. Many visitors flock to this place for a theater complex drawing inspiration from a Chinese literary classic.

Named *Unique Dream of Red Mansion*, the attraction features 55 innovative plays, including those inspired by the seminal 18th-century novel *A Dream of Red Mansions* and independent ones, turning traditional Chinese literature into accessible, tangible, and interactive cultural spaces.



Dancers perform at "Twelve Hours of Chang'an", a re-created streetscape for tourism in Xi'an, Shaanxi province. SHAO RUI / XINHUA

A recent highlight is a debut production consisting of 35 micro-theaters, where visitors draw and swap cards to chart their own viewing journey. Within each theater, viewers sit just steps from the actors, becoming part of the narrative itself.

Wang Chaoge, general director of the theater complex, explains that such productions are designed to allow each viewer to participate in the play as it unfolds, while delivering even greater emotional intensity within a short span of time.

Since its opening in 2023, the theater complex has staged approximately 24,000 performances and received over 14 million visits.

Zhao Yu, a second-time visitor from North China's Tianjin, says that the venue provides a different experience from traditional theaters. "Instead of watching a single play for several hours, we can enjoy performances here throughout the day, stay for a night, and continue our experience the next day."

Students are a major group of travelers during the summer travel rush. The summer vacation provides them with an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the traditional Chinese culture that they learn at school.

Li Jinhan, 15, tried her hand at restoring a replica mural panel at an intangible cultural heritage experience base in Dunhuang, a vital ancient Silk Road hub in Northwest China's Gansu province. From injecting consolidants to filling cracks, the girl realized how challenging yet significant it is to keep the historical treasure alive.

"Reading about it is one thing, but doing it is another," says Jinhan. "The restoration allows me to slow down and appreciate the timeless beauty of Dunhuang murals."

Her experience was part of a study tour that emerged from growing demand among students and parents for a deeper understanding of the country's cultural heritage.

"The study tours can sow the seeds of culture in young minds," says Du Yongwei, the base's founder. "With new scenarios and fresh expressions, we build a bridge for that passion to grow."

Similar on-site classes are thriving nationwide.

Meanwhile, international tourists are getting on board. More overseas visitors are taking dedicated trips to China to participate in culturally themed study tours, amid the country's expanding visa-free entry policies.

Earlier this month, a 30-member Italian group finished a study tour in Hainan, China's southernmost island province. During the two-week program, teenagers engaged in courses and activities involving language learning and handicraft making, among others.

With more firsthand experience of the country and a better understanding of its culture, views of China have turned more positive. According to a Pew Research Center study published this month, a median of 46 percent of respondents across the 20 countries surveyed annually since 2023 holds a favorable view of China, up from 32 percent in 2023. The figure now surpasses the median favorability rating for the United States.

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SPORTS

BASKETBALL

Han's building a dynasty Down Under

NY Liberty center leads the charge for Chinese players in Australia's WNBL, as she signs up for a second season



Chinese New York Liberty center, Han Xu, goes up for the basket during a WNBA game against Toronto Tempo in Montreal on July 13. XINHUA

By **LI YINGXUE**
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When Han Xu reflected on her first season in Australia's Women's National Basketball League in March, the Chinese center was already looking beyond her own achievements.

"I hope my experience can serve as a signpost for those who come after me," she wrote on social media. "One day, someone will follow in my footsteps and arrive here."

Just months later, that pathway is becoming crowded.

The Geelong Venom announced last week that Han and her compatriot, forward-guard Zhang Wanglai, had signed one-year contracts for the 2026-27 WNBL season, pending league approval.

Together with Wang Siyu, who has joined the Southside Melbourne Flyers, and Yang Shuyu, who has signed for the Sydney Flames, four Chinese players are now set to compete in the WNBL next season.

For Han, the move to Geelong represents another chapter in a career spanning China, the United States and Australia.

Standing 2.11 meters tall, Han has established herself as one of the country's most successful basketball players on the international club stage.

The 26-year-old was selected by the New York Liberty with the 14th overall pick in the 2019 WNBA Draft.

She has since won three Women's Chinese Basketball Association Most Valuable Player awards and two WCBA championships. She was also part of the Liberty squad that won the 2023 WNBA Commissioner's Cup.

Currently in her fourth WNBA season, she is averaging 5.8 points and 2.2 rebounds per game.

On Saturday Han reached a milestone 500 league points during the Liberty's 94-92 road win over the Phoenix Mercury.

Playing as a reserve, Han scored a season-high 17 points on 6-for-9 shooting from the field, including 3-for-6 shooting from 3-point range, to go with six rebounds and one assist.

Han has been equally influential for the Chinese national team. She helped China claim silver at the 2022 FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup and was selected in the tournament's All-Star Five.

A year later, she was named MVP as China won the FIBA Women's Asia Cup.

Her first season in Australia provided further evidence of her ability to adapt to and succeed in different basketball environments.

Playing for the Perth Lynx in 2025-26, Han averaged 16.2 points, 7.3 rebounds and 2.2 blocks in 18 games. She anchored Perth's defense and helped the team reach the Grand Final Series, where it finished runner-up to the Townsville Fire.





Above: Han Xu of the New York Liberty (21) reacts after sinking a three-pointer against the Phoenix Mercury during a WNBA game at Mortgage Matchup Center on Saturday in Phoenix, Arizona.
Right: Han makes another three-point basket in the Liberty's 94-92 win over Phoenix on Saturday. GETTY IMAGES

Her strong performances around the basket earned her the league's Defensive Player of the Year award and a place on the All-WNBL Second Team.

Han's combination of size, rim protection and offensive versatility made her one of the most sought-after players on the WNBL market. Australian media reported that several clubs had pursued her, before Geelong eventually secured her signature.

Venom head coach Cheryl Chambers described Han as one of the world's most dominant post players.

"Her shot-blocking and rebounding are genuinely elite," Chambers said.

"Adding that size and experience to our roster gives this team a real edge, and we can't wait to see what she brings to the club this year."

Han's arrival has raised expectations at Geelong as the relatively new club seeks to turn itself from a finals contender into a championship winner.

Veteran guard Rebecca Cole said having an elite shot-blocker behind the team's perimeter defenders would give them the confidence to apply greater pressure to opposing ball handlers.

"Her presence on the floor at both ends of the court is going to change the entire game for us," Cole told Australian basketball media.

Han offers much more than interior defense.

She can run the floor, finish efficiently around the basket and stretch defenses with her outside shooting. Her mobility and touch are rare for a player of her height, giving Chambers a wide range of tactical options.

Already familiar with the WNBL's physical style and competitive intensity, Han said she was excited about returning to Australia.

"I know how passionate this league's fans are and how much the competition has grown," Han said.

"I'm looking forward to bringing everything I've built over my career — from China to the WNBA — into this team, and pushing for something special with my new teammates."

Geelong has further strengthened its roster with Zhang, an experienced competitor in both five-on-five and 3x3 basketball.

The 32-year-old won consecutive WCBA championships in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 seasons. She also won the Chinese 3x3 league title in 2023 and was named MVP.

Most recently, she helped China win bronze at this year's FIBA 3x3 Asia Cup.

Zhang said moving to Australia would give her an opportunity to step outside her comfort zone and experience a different style of basketball.

"I'm really looking forward to soaking up the basketball vibe in Geelong," she said.

"I've no idea what's ahead, but I'm going to keep loving the game and take it one step at a time. I can't wait to get settled in, learn the system and go to battle with my new teammates."

The growing presence of Chinese players in overseas leagues reflects a broader trend in the development of women's basketball in China.

Overseas leagues such as the WNBA and WNBL expose Chinese players to faster-paced games, stronger physical contests and different tactical systems. Such experience helps improve their decision-making, defensive awareness and their ability to handle pressure against the world's top teams.

Han remains one of the clearest examples of that process. Following the conclusion of the WNBA regular season, she is expected to represent China at the FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup in Berlin in September.

After completing her national-team commitments, she will join Geelong ahead of the WNBL season, which tips off on Oct 15.

Her journey represents a growing connection between Chinese basketball and the international game, with more players willing to step out of their comfort zone and test themselves in more demanding overseas competitions.

In her March message, Han hoped her journey would become a signpost for those coming after her. With four Chinese players now committed to WNBL clubs for the new season, others are already beginning to walk alongside her on the path she helped forge.

TENNIS

Shang returns to winning ways in Montreal to set up Rublev rematch

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**
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He's not quite there yet, but Shang Juncheng is starting to look like a history-making prodigy again.

Having his trademark agility and precision back at his disposal certainly made the difference on Sunday at the ATP1000 Masters tournament in Montreal, where Shang claimed his first ATP Tour-level win in over six months after being sidelined by a long injury layoff.

Shang's straight-sets upset of 66th-ranked Adolfo Daniel Vallejo of Paraguay at the National Bank Open secured his first main-draw win on the men's pro circuit since his opening-round victory at the Australian Open in January, serving up a much-needed confidence boost for his comeback from a nagging foot injury.

It's been the second year in a row that the 21-year-old Shang has been sidelined for the first half of the season due to a number of fitness issues that have slowed down his meteoric career rise.

The resilient young talent — creator of many "youngest-ever" records for Chinese men's tennis — has taken pride in overcoming the grueling rehab again, although admitting he's far from showing his top form yet.

"Honestly, I felt a lot of things were not going so well, even yesterday. I had issues with my baseline strokes, volleys and returns in training," Shang said after ousting Vallejo 6-3, 6-3 in 82 minutes, before a heavy downpour put Sunday's other matches at the IGA Stadium on hold.

"My dad and my coach told me to just focus on every single shot and to not overthink things. They told me 'it's totally normal if your opponent plays better than you, because they've been playing all year long, while you've just come back'.



Shang Juncheng hits a return to Adolfo Daniel Vallejo in Montreal on Sunday. REUTERS

"Rehab is an incredibly tedious process. I hope no young player ever has to go through this ordeal, but if they do, (they should) just treat it with patience and persistence, and stick to what's needed (to recover).

"I couldn't figure this out at first, but I've gradually come to terms with the setbacks, which are part of the job," said Shang, who reached his career-high ranking of No 47 in October 2024 after winning his first ATP Tour title in Chengdu.

Shang will need to step up his game quickly, as the challenge gets tougher with a round-of-64 match against Russian former World No 5 Andrey Rublev on Tuesday.

Rublev beat Shang in their only previous meeting, the semifinals of an ATP250 tournament in Hong Kong in 2024.

Having maintained a friendly relationship with the Russian power-hitter, Shang said he will cherish the opportunity to test himself physically and mentally against the 10th seed in Montreal.

"It will be a tough match, for sure, because his ability is now is well above mine," said a candid Shang, who, at world No 281 this week, entered the Montreal main draw via protected ranking.

"This will be another chance to learn from a top-15-caliber opponent. I've played many of them, and I just want to do my best this time and, win or lose, just enjoy the match."

With power never being his strength, Shang leans on his quick legs, resilient defense and tactical variety to outwit size and force.

His best form in 2024 saw him become the youngest Chinese man ever to register a main-draw win at the ATP1000 level with victory over Jordan Thompson at Indian Wells, California, in March, before becoming the youngest Chinese man to break into the top 100 in May that year.

On Sunday, relying on his fast movement, combined with pinpoint accuracy and long rallies, Shang dispatched Vallejo using his familiar winning formula, evoking fond memories of the teen star in his prime.

More drills are needed, though, as Shang, who's racked up six career wins at the Masters level, is aiming for a strong resurgence, as the season heads into its final stretch with a number of Chinese players struggling with poor form of late.

"I came here with confidence built through training, but match intensity is definitely a different story," Shang said.

"I've made some progress today, but I can't guarantee I'll be in perfect form for the next match.

"No matter the result of my next game, I want to maintain a positive attitude."

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