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Cover Design: Wang Yajuan

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北京周报

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Health Is Wealth

In May, Hunan Province adopted a three-year action plan for cutting back on salt and oil in people's diets and formulating a new standard system for cooking Hunan cuisine, famous for its spicy taste. Previously, in March, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the National Health Commission and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology jointly released guidelines on food and nutrition development (2025-30). The guidelines propose capping the intake of salt, oil and sugar and popularizing portion control tools.

The transformation of food consumption to be more nutrition-oriented is one of the major features of the Healthy China Initiative launched by the Chinese Government with a focus on disease prevention and health promotion. In the past, people tended to focus more on whether food was delicious and filling but now many are realizing the importance of a science-based diet. As people are becoming better educated about health, they have come to recognize that unhealthy eating habits, such as long-term high intake of salt, fat and sugar, may lead to chronic diseases like obesity, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. They are therefore beginning to actively seek healthier eating habits to prevent these diseases.

In addition, changes in the social environment and people's lifestyles have led to an increasing awareness of healthy eating. With faster pace of life and higher work pressure, many people sit for long periods at work, lack physical exercise and tend to have irregular diets. Not cooking at home has become a pitfall to good health because the food in a polystyrene box is likely to deliver a large dose of oil, salt and sugar. Urbanization may have brought people more diverse food choices, but at the same time, foods that are more processed or otherwise unhealthy are becoming more readily available.

Increasing access to information is also improving people's understanding of health. With the development of nutrition-related websites, online services and apps, and increasing number of nutritionists sharing information on social media, it has become easier for people to have a better understanding of healthy eating.

Caring about how to eat more healthily reflects changes in social trends and the values of health. With today's relatively abundant material wealth, sights are now firmly set on health, and people are willing to spend more time and energy learning healthy eating habits as part of pursuing a better life. **BR**



WRITE TO US

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HAPPY CHILDREN'S DAY!

Children show their artworks at a training school in Xiayi County of Shangqiu, Henan Province, on June 1, International Children's Day.



Almost Ready!

A visitor enjoys herself at the LEGOLAND Shanghai Resort in Shanghai on May 31. The resort began internal proof and trial operations the same day, and is set to officially open to the public on July 5.

HPV Vaccine

China's drug regulator has approved the country's first domestically developed 9-valent human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, ending over a decade of foreign dominance in the market.

The vaccine, Cecolin 9, has been included on a list of approved medical products that was made public by the National Medical Products Administration on June 4.

HPV vaccines are commonly used to prevent cervical cancer in women, as well as genital cancers and warts in both men and women.

Cecolin 9, which targets nine HPV strains, was developed by Xiamen University, the Xiang An Biomedicine Laboratory and Xiamen Inovax Biotech Co. Ltd., marking a breakthrough in China's ability to produce high-valency HPV vaccines independently.

China is now the second

country—after the United States—capable of supplying 9-valent HPV vaccines.

Statistics show that globally, approximately 700,000 cancer cases each year are associated with HPV, including an estimated 530,000 cases of cervical cancer. Vaccination is up to 94 percent effective in preventing HPV infection.

In 2020, the World Health Organization launched a global strategy to accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer, aiming for 90 percent of girls to be fully vaccinated against HPV by the age of 15 by 2030.

Tour of Sayram Lake

The 17th edition of the Tour of Sayram Lake cycling race concluded on June 4 in Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, with riders from Team BATTLE sweeping the podium.

The five-day race began on May 31 in Jinghe County and featured five stages that passed through Alashankou City, Bole City and Wenquan County before culminating in a scenic loop around Sayram Lake.

Covering a distance of 435 km, the tour drew more than 70 teams and over 380 cyclists from across China and abroad. The final stage took riders around Sayram Lake, one of China's most popular alpine scenic spots, spanning 86.77 km.

Russian cyclist Vladislav Gutovskii of Team BATTLE secured overall victory with a total time of nine hours, 56 minutes and 36 seconds. His teammates, Uladzislau Yarash of Belarus and Kirill Kapustin of Russia, finished second and third, respectively.

Travel Services

Beijing unveiled a comprehensive action plan to upgrade its inbound tourism services on June

3 at the Beijing Inbound Tourism Development Conference, as the city reported a 57.1-percent year-on-year surge in overseas visitors to 1.46 million from January to April.

The plan outlines 22 measures across four areas—products, promotion, services and support—aiming to enhance the city's appeal. Key product initiatives include boosting the "Beijing Central Axis" brand and diversifying offerings such as world heritage tours, *hutong* (alleyways) explorations and cycling experiences along the axis.

Service improvements focus on expanding and optimizing international flight networks, streamlining entry processes with dedicated zones for "temporary entry permits" for one-stop issuance, and enabling more foreign bank cards for tap-and-go subway access to elevate convenience.

Super-Earth

For centuries, the question of whether life exists beyond Earth has intrigued humanity, and now a joint discovery by Chinese and German scientists may offer a significant clue.

Based on the Transit Timing Variation technique for the first time, the super-Earth, Kepler-725c, with 10 times the mass of the Earth, has been detected within the habitable zone of the Sun-like star Kepler-725, which is a promising candidate for potential habitability, Xinhua News Agency reported on June 3.

"This newly discovered non-transiting planet and its host star are located at a place about 2,472 light-years from our solar system," said Gu Shenghong, team leader from the Yunnan Observatories of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

“More crucially, this planet resides within the habitable zone of its host star, the region around a star where the temperature is suitable for liquid water to exist. It orbits around its host star with a period of 207.5 days, comparable to Earth’s one-year period,” Gu added.

Pediatric Care

At a press conference held by the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) on June 3, officials revealed that by the end of 2023, over 95 percent of tertiary-level and 72 percent of secondary-level public TCM hospitals nationwide had set up pediatric units.

China has a three-tier system to grade hospitals, with tertiary hospitals at the top of the system.

They also noted that TCM holds unique advantages in treating common childhood illnesses and delivering preventive health-care services.

The administration is carrying out pilot programs that apply TCM approaches to tackle pressing childhood health issues such as obesity, scoliosis and myopia.

By this November, authorities aim to achieve full pediatric department coverage in all tertiary public TCM hospitals and establish pediatric units in over 80

percent of secondary public TCM hospitals.

Destroying Drugs

Police in the southernmost Chinese province of Hainan on June 3 publicly destroyed about 1,590 kg of drugs, in a deterrent effect on drug crimes and in commemoration of the country’s fight against opium smuggling in the 19th century.

The drugs, including heroin, methamphetamine, ketamine and new types of drugs represented by etomidate, as well as unregulated addictive substances seized in drug cases concluded by courts in Hainan in recent years, were burned in an incinerator at a new-energy power generating plant.

The environmentally-friendly drug-burning move took place on the 186th anniversary of the famous Humen Opium Destruction, which took place on June 3, 1839, when Lin Zexu, a senior official of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), ordered the destruction of about 1,000 tons of smuggled opium confiscated from foreign dealers at Humen in Guangdong Province. His move was regarded as China’s first battle against opium.

According to the Hainan Provincial Public Security Department, the centralized drug destruction move showcased the province’s determination in step-



Tech Charm

A makeup robot in action during the World Robotics Carnival in Wuhan, Hubei Province, on June 2. The event, held from May 31 to June 2, featured nearly 100 robots.

ping up drug controls as well as crackdowns on drug crimes.

Air Force Training

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force recently conducted specialized air-to-air refueling training at the Shijiazhuang Flight Academy in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, advancing the combat-oriented education of pilot cadets, Xinhua reported on May 30.

This is the first time such training has been carried out at a PLA Air Force academy. Previously, it was not possible for aviation

academies to provide such training due to aircraft limitations.

The training simulates real combat scenarios by coordinating with tanker units, according to Yu Hongliang, a pilot overseeing the program.

Air-to-air refueling extends aircraft endurance and operational range, and enhances long-range strike and control capacities.

The Shijiazhuang Flight Academy aims to align training with combat requirements and ensure targeted talent development for operational needs.



Mine to Paradise

The Qinglongshan Tourist Resort in Hetaoyuan Town, Heze City, Shandong Province, on June 4. The resort was created through the ecological restoration of closed mines and abandoned mine pits in the area.

Power Connectivity

A guideline recently issued by the National Development and Reform Commission and the National Energy Administration calls on energy authorities and grid operators nationwide to take concrete steps to further enhance electricity connectivity services, with the goal of establishing a modern, efficient business environment for the country by 2029.

According to the guideline, the goal includes providing easy and convenient electricity connection services, ensuring a high-quality power supply, promoting green energy, offering inclusive services and conducting coordinated inspections to enhance overall service quality.

The document outlines measures across 14 key areas to improve electricity services, including the expansion of “zero-investment” low-voltage electricity connection services for private enterprises and

the introduction of strict time frames for completing connection procedures.

It also encourages innovative electricity services, such as establishing new access points to meet temporary power demand during spring irrigation and autumn harvest seasons, as well as supporting the needs of night market vendors. These efforts aim to boost rural revitalization and stimulate consumption.

China’s rural revitalization, a strategy introduced in 2017, aims to promote the economic prosperity and overall development of rural areas.

Consumer Goods Trade-In

China’s consumer goods trade-in program generated 1.1 trillion yuan (\$153 billion) in sales in the first five months of this year, the Ministry of Commerce said on June 1.

As of May 31, nationwide trade-ins had fueled a surge

in transactions, including 4.12 million vehicles, 77.62 million units of household appliances and 56.63 million units of digital products—such as mobile phones, among others, data from the ministry showed.

The program, part of China’s broader efforts to spur domestic demand, has boosted a sustained recovery in the country’s consumer spending, according to the ministry.

In the government work report released in March, boosting consumption was listed as a top priority among this year’s tasks.

Retail sales of consumer goods, a major indicator of the country’s consumption strength, rose 4.7 percent year on year in the first four months, accelerating from the 4.6-percent growth recorded in the first quarter of the year, official data revealed.

Cargo Throughput

Cargo throughput at ports in

China rose steadily during the first four months of 2025, signaling continued resilience in the world’s second largest economy despite external uncertainties.

The country’s cargo throughput at ports totaled 5.75 billion tons during the January-April period, up 3.7 percent year on year, data from the Ministry of Transport showed.

Container throughput, a leading gauge of trade health, increased 7.9 percent year on year during this period to reach 110 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), according to the ministry. A TEU is a unit of measurement used to quantify the capacity of container ships and ports.

In April alone, the country’s cargo throughput at ports climbed 4.8 percent from a year earlier to 1.53 billion tons—with the pace of growth slightly down from an increase of 4.9 percent registered in March.

NUMBERS



Investment Assets

China's external portfolio investment assets, excluding reserve assets, had climbed to \$1.42 trillion as of late 2024, official data showed on May 30.

Of the total, \$859.8 billion was in equity investment and \$557.5 billion was in bond investment, according to the State Administration of Foreign Exchange.

Non-bank financial institutions held \$795.5 billion of external portfolio investment assets, accounting for 56 percent of the total. Banks held \$422.1 billion, or 30 percent of the total.

The non-financial sector held \$199.8 billion of such assets, accounting for 14 percent of the total.

Data-Powered Development

China's data-driven development has gained steam since the implementation of a three-year action

plan aimed at promoting the use of data as a factor of production and enhancing its role in driving economic and social development.

The 2024-26 action plan has played an important role in promoting the integration of data into large-scale socialized production since it was released more than a year ago, with positive progress made in the market-oriented development of data, the National Data Administration said on May 29.

An increasing number of enterprises are engaging in the data market, Luan Jie, an official with the administration, told a news briefing. Nearly 500 digital technology companies have been established by state-owned enterprises directly under the Central Government, and about 66 percent of the leading enterprises across industries in China have purchased data, Luan added.

The application of data has delivered positive outcomes across industries, yielding substantial benefits for enterprises.

In agriculture, for instance, some planting companies have boosted crop yields by 5.5 percent by using data to optimize the fertilization process, according to the administration.

In the industrial sector, some leading enterprises have shortened their research and development (R&D), procurement and high-end product delivery cycles by over 30 percent through the integration of industrial chain data, including R&D, logistics, inventory and pricing information.

The administration said it will beef up efforts to pilot the program, address bottlenecks and challenges in applying data to key scenarios, and push for the implementation of the action plan.

Listed Companies

A total of 5,420 companies had been listed on the domestic stock market as of late April, according to the China Association for Public

Companies.

The Shanghai Stock Exchange had 2,284 listed companies by the end of April, the Shenzhen Stock Exchange had 2,871 and the Beijing Stock Exchange had 265.

State-owned holding companies accounted for 27 percent of all listed firms and non-state-owned holding companies for 73 percent.

Three provinces—Guangdong, Zhejiang and Jiangsu—contributed 42.58 percent of the total number of companies listed on the Chinese stock market.

In terms of market capitalization, there were 119 companies each with a market value exceeding 100 billion yuan (\$14 billion), and 1,398 companies each with a market value ranging from 10 billion (\$1.4 billion) to 100 billion yuan.

Ten companies made initial public offerings on the domestic stock market in April, raising a combined total of 8.27 billion yuan (\$1.2 billion), while four companies were delisted.



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)



GERMANY

Players and head coach Luis Enrique (first right) of Paris Saint-Germain celebrate during the awards ceremony after the UEFA Champions League final match between the club and Inter Milan in Munich on May 31



UNITED STATES

A signing ceremony at the 2025 China-California Business Forum in Los Angeles, California, on June 2.

The forum drew nearly 500 entrepreneurs and officials from both sides to promote deeper economic, trade and cultural exchange



TAJIKISTAN

Vocational education students at the Luban Workshop in Dushanbe on May 31. The workshop was put into operation in November 2022, and has provided learning and training opportunities for more than 1,500 local undergraduate and graduate students





CANADA

A wildfire near Sherridon, Manitoba, on May 27. Approximately 931,000 hectares of forest had been consumed by the fire across both Saskatchewan and Manitoba as of June 5



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REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Lee Jae-myung takes the oath of office in the National Assembly building in Seoul on June 4. Lee was sworn in as the country's new president after formally beginning his single five-year term earlier in the day



ITALY

A military band performs during the 79th Republic Day celebrations, marking the country's founding as a republic, in Rome on June 2



YTHINK

THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

↓ WINNER OF SCIENCE AWARD FOR WOMEN SCIENTISTS

Wang Xiaoyun has been named one of the five laureates of the 2025 L'Oréal-UNESCO for Women in Science International Awards, UNESCO and the L'Oréal Foundation announced on May 26.

Wang is recognized for her groundbreaking contributions to the field of cryptography and related mathematical problems. Her pioneering research led to the establishment of next-generation data integrity and security. These new standards are now widely implemented in bank cards, computer passwords and e-commerce systems.

Along with Wang, Priscilla Baker from South Africa, Claudia Felser from Germany, Maria Teresa Dova from Argentina and Barbara Finlayson-Pitts from the United States have been awarded for their contributions in their respective fields and the inspiration they have given girls and women.

The awards were established in 1998 to honor outstanding women in science around the world.



Back to the High Street

Beijing Evening News
May 30

After years of digital expansion, many small and mid-sized Chinese e-commerce businesses are closing their online storefronts and turning to brick-and-mortar retail. Even major brands are recalibrating their business strategies with the goal of scaling up their offline presence.

These moves reflect a broader shift in the marketplace, where online retail's early allure—low rent, minimal labor cost and massive customer flows—are gradually eclipsed by mounting platform fees and fierce competition.

Meanwhile, physical stores offer advantages that online platforms increasingly struggle to match. Unlike algorithm-driven e-commerce portals, brick-and-mortar shops allow shoppers to see, touch and try products, thereby offering a sense of authenticity and connectivity with customers and local neighborhoods that online stores cannot replicate.

This shift back to the street isn't just about the physical presence of a store; it should bring a renewed focus on attentive service, higher product quality and a more refined retail experience. Supportive policies, friendlier regulations and a more welcoming business environment will also be essential to helping these new stores take root and thrive.



Steel City Goes Furry

China Newsweek
May 12

Just a 10-minute drive from the high-speed rail station in Anshan, a city in northeast China's Liaoning Province, is one of China's largest pet trading hubs. On market days, thousands of pets flow from this market to homes across the country.

“Trade agreements to resolve existing tensions and lower or eliminate barriers should be accompanied by more efforts to enhance multilateral cooperation.”

Alvaro Pereira, chief economist of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, on its latest Economic Outlook report released on June 3, which projected that global GDP growth will slow down from 3.3 percent in 2024 to 2.9 percent this and next year

“The goal is to bring together Myanmar-born Chinese and Myanmar artists to deepen cultural exchange and mutual learning.”

U Maw Li Shwe, Chairman of the Myanmar-China Calligraphy and Painting Association, on an art exhibition blending Chinese and Myanmar cultures in Yangon from May 31 to June 4, which was held to celebrate the 75th anniversary of China-Myanmar diplomatic relations

For a city renowned for its steel production, Anshan's rise as a center for pet breeding may seem like a surprising twist. Yet its origin stretches back to the 1980s, when well-paid steelworkers, with stable incomes and plenty of free time, began breeding dogs on the city's outskirts. This gave rise to a loose yet sizeable pet trading network.

Today, as old rustbelt cities seek industrial upgrades, Anshan is leaning into its age-old tradition of pet breeding. Unlike Harbin's recent fame for winter tourism, which many cities have tried—and failed—to copy, Anshan has chosen a different path by turning its pet breeding trade into a strategic growth engine. Currently, nearly 30,000 people work in the sector, and over a million dogs and cats are shipped nationwide each year.

However, challenges remain. Anshan's pet trade is still dominated by small, loosely organized operations, which has made it difficult to build a strong brand presence in the national pet market. For the sector to continue to thrive, expansion must be matched by higher standards, stronger oversight and greater investment in supporting infrastructure.

Less Is More

Gmw.cn
June 4

This year's Dragon Boat Festival holiday (May 31–June 2) put Longtan Grand Canyon, a tourist attraction in Luoyang, Henan Province, back in the spotlight—not for flashy attractions, but for its simple offering of popsicles at 1 yuan (roughly 14 cents). In 2017, it became the country's first 5A-rated scenic site to go bankrupt. Eight years later, it now serves as a telling example of how tourist attractions can survive the constantly shifting tides of domestic tourism.

Over the past few years, many scenic spots across China have been trapped in a vicious cycle of overdevelopment and

mounting debt. Instead of leveraging their natural appeal, some invested billions in shopping centers, senior housing and artificial attractions. At the same time, rising labor and maintenance costs have made the traditional model, which relies heavily on ticket sales, increasingly difficult to sustain.

The recent popularity of Longtan Grand Canyon presents a different business model, one that focuses on preserving a site's raw beauty and providing a simpler and more down-to-earth travel experience. In today's tourism scene, instead of copy-pasting swings, glass bridges and food markets, tourist sites should focus on finding their own core strengths and building a model that can endure beyond the next trend cycle.

↓ TABLE TENNIS PLAYER REFRESHES RECORD

Sun Yingsha continues to showcase her dominance with a record-high 11,900 points as the International Table Tennis Federation updated its world rankings on May 27.

Sun earned 2,000 points from her victory at the recently concluded World Table Tennis Championships in Doha, beating the previous mark of 11,300 points she set in February. In October 2024, she became the first paddler to exceed the 10,000-point mark.



Born in November 2000, Sun joined the national team in 2015 and has achieved remarkable success at a young age. The 2023 World Table Tennis (WTT) Singapore Smash was one of her career-defining moments. She made history at the tournament by becoming the first-ever player to win the Women's Singles, Women's Doubles and Mixed Doubles titles at the same WTT Grand Smash event. At the Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Olympics, she won three gold medals.

“We believe traditional Chinese philosophies, including Confucianism, have played a vital role in shaping and sustaining Chinese civilization over millennia.”

Han Fengju, an official of the cultural heritage bureau of Qufu in Shandong Province, where Confucius was born in 551 B.C., as the city recently staged a performance to commemorate the ancient Chinese philosopher and educator

“China has an incredible history of innovation, evolving across different periods and in diverse ways... Europe wants a vibrant China. We all want China to be growing, because that benefits everyone.”

Francisco Veloso, Dean of INSEAD, one of the world's top business schools, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency



COVER STORY

FIT, FED & FASHIONABLE

From dumplings to dumbbells, young Chinese are pumping up their pursuit of physical health
By Elsbeth van Paridon



SHUTTERSTOCK

People play volleyball in a lakeside park in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, on March 2

torch calories without a touch of retro flair?

But this isn't just about aesthetics. With updated dietary guidelines coming in straight from the top, the establishment of weight loss clinics nationwide and an overall appetite for improving quality of life, China's youth are investing in long-term health—one mindful bite and explosive burpee at a time.

Time to stretch those hamstrings—we've got a lot of ground to cover.

The BIG picture

China's relationship with weight is shifting fast. The BMI scale (that's body mass index, a simple calculation using a person's height and weight to estimate body fat and categorize weight status) in China classifies anything over 24 (25 in the U.S.) as overweight and beyond 28 (30 in the U.S.) as obese. Though for children and adolescents there may be other factors that come into play, the BMI remains a good indicator.

And here's the wake-up call: According to the National Health Commission (NHC), 51.2 percent of Chinese adults (some 400 million people) now fall into these categories, with projections suggesting that number could skyrocket to a whopping 70 percent (circa 630 million people) by 2030 if nothing changes. The proportion of overweight men alone almost doubled in a single generation and the proportion of obese people is rising even faster than the overweight population. The health toll is clear: Obese individuals face two to three times greater risks of weight-related complications, including diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular issues—and that's just three items on a long list.

Even more alarming: Childhood obesity has exploded. According to a report published by the NHC in 2020, one in five Chinese youth aged 6-17 was overweight or obese, up from just one in 20 in 1995. China's kids are caught in a perfect storm: endless homework, ubiquitous smartphones and a cultural legacy that often still equates "more food" with "better health."

Society has taken notice—and is trying to take action. On China's super popular lifestyle and e-commerce app RedNote, the hashtag "the quickest and most effective way for children to lose weight" had raked in 1.3 million notes as of June 4. Hashtag, "the quickest and most effective way to lose weight" had raked in 5.8 million, with many netizens posting their food diaries and diet plans—sometimes leaning toward the dangerous (think: "how to lose 11 kg in seven days" or "buy this appetite-suppressing drug"), as well as more wholesome ways that involve

infusing your water or tea with some traditional Chinese medicine (TCM)—we'll circle back to that.

While millions scroll for weight-loss hacks on RedNote, China's policymakers are taking the fight against obesity, a budding public health emergency, from feeds to facts on the ground.

This isn't just trending—it's transforming.

Science, structure and serious resources

"If you don't lose weight, even the government is side-eyeing you," joked one netizen three months ago. "The country says it's time to slim down—guess I don't have a choice," quipped another. "Do I get a bonus for every dumpling I skip?" a third asked.

The memes practically wrote themselves when the NHC dropped its latest policy at a press conference on March 9, where NHC chief Lei Haichao announced plans to establish more weight loss clinics at medical and health facilities nationwide, aiming to help people shed pounds safely and transition to healthier lifestyles.

The announcement sparked animated debate across social media like microblogging platform Weibo and RedNote. At its core, it is an intensification of the three-year Weight Management campaign (2024-26), launched by the commission last August, which pushes for a fitter, more nutritious approach to daily life to prevent weight-related illnesses.

The message is clear: The state is bringing in the big guns, i.e., science, structure and serious resources.

Within weeks of Lei's March "middrop," hospitals across the country began rolling out what netizens have dubbed "obesity ERs"—multidisciplinary clinics where dietitians, fitness experts and AI coaches collaborate on ▶▶

A Beijing park at sunrise. Twentysomethings in neon leggings let the pickleballs fly, while others sip matcha protein shakes and compare sleep-tracking stats.

Welcome to China's new health renaissance.

Driven by social media savvy and a hunger for balance, young Chinese are ditching old stereotypes. They're steaming their buns and sculpting their glutes, swapping late-night hotpot for *qingshi* (literally "light food"), and turning sweat sessions into shareable content. Even the humble sweatband is staging a comeback—because why

personalized slim-down strategies.

On Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, weight-loss journeys have since become the new unboxing videos, with users documenting everything from meal prep hacks to clinic consultations—their content proving both entertaining and educational.

But the ripple effects of China's national wellness push are already extending far beyond clinical settings, as sectors ranging from the corporate boardroom to tourism seek to support healthier lifestyles.

Some companies are incentivizing employees to shed those excess pounds. Sichuan Province, in southwest China, aims to bring workplace exercise programs to 50 percent of its government agencies and enterprises within three years. Meanwhile, newspaper *China Business Herald* in late March ran an article about a Shenzhen-based tech firm and its Lose Weight, Make Money challenge, offering employees cash rewards for sustainable weight loss—100 yuan (\$14) per 0.5 kg lost (up to 5 kg), and a boosted 300 yuan (\$42) per 0.5 kg beyond that.

And from the corner offices, the get-fit revolution is taking to new heights. *People's Daily Online* reported in late March that provincial culture and tourism authorities across China are reimagining sight-seeing, swapping passive photo ops for active adventures. Scenic destinations now offer hiking-focused itineraries that pair breathtaking views with calorie-burning climbs. Take Shanxi Province: Its culture and tourism department has been actively promoting walking-friendly routes through historic sites and natural wonders, turning cultural exploration into an energizing workout.

Of course, as any fitness expert will tell you, exercise is only part of the equation.

The real secret? Diet.

You are what you eat

The age-old adage holds true: Getting fit is 20 percent about breaking a sweat and 80 percent about what's on your plate. Or in your cup. Because those liquid calories can definitely sneak up on you. Take China's beloved milk tea, packing up to 300 calories per sugary, creamy serving.

But change is brewing in this area. As health consciousness predates recent government initiatives, tea chains are already adapting. Popular milk tea brand CHAGEE relaunched its Spring Mountain Awakens Longjing tea in March with a “less burdensome for the body to absorb” message, according to Dao Insights, a website publishing high-value case studies from China. Bubble tea chain Naixue, with a penchant for premium quality, went one step further, opening the Green by Naixue café in Shenzhen—swapping boba for super-food bowls, as per the Dao Insights article, published on March 14.

And then there are those milk tea lovers who swear by infusing their favorite brew with some TCM ingredients—a little tapioca here, some dried tangerine peel there—to achieve digestive harmony. Just FYI: TCM recommends consuming bitter, sour and pungent foods for weight loss, while avoiding sweet, salty and fatty foods



Feast your eyes on these June RedNote posts: (clockwise) some of the lightest and brightest *qingshi* to order in Beijing, how the Chinese Government lends people a helping hand in fighting the flab with policy and flavor, salads so crisp they'll convert even staunch carb-lovers, and tea infused with traditional Chinese medicine ingredients that slim and soothe. Because modern wellness just tastes better with 5,000 years of backup

that can lead to weight gain.

China's national nutrition and health steering committee must have taken a leaf out of the TCM manuscript when it updated its dietary guidelines in late May, amid the growing concern about the rising obesity rates. The bottom line: Eat your fresh veggies, get those fruit slices in, whole grains are a go and aquatic products are your regimen's BFFs.

Over the past two years, young consumers have already quietly championed a nutrition-first mindset, opting for fresh meals over fast food.

One of the standout trends in this health-conscious movement is *qingshi*, which first appeared in China in the early 2010s, when people were set on honing and toning their appearance following the country's economic takeoff. This concept emphasizes consuming unprocessed, minimally refined foods, focusing on fresh fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains.

Leading food delivery platforms like Meituan and Ele.me now burst with *qingshi* options, though this Western European diner has noted the occasional creative interpretation—Thousand Island dressing, really? Dear restaurants: We'll get there.

The trend gained Olympic-sized momentum last summer during the Paris Games, with social media buzzing over athletes' “light food diets.” While looking like a swimmer requires more than menu changes, China's wellness wave shows no signs of cresting—proving that lasting health starts at the table, not just the treadmill.

While guidelines and healthy eating trends clean up diets, China's fitness craze is hitting its stride—literally.

Class is in session

“Are you feeling the *suan*?!” This author was. *Suan* means “sour,” but is basically the Chinese version of “feel the burn.” Fitting, given that the “burn” is produced by lactic acid (*ru suan*).

Midway through a packed Body Combat class at a Lefit outlet in central Beijing's Dongzhimen area in Chaoyang District—where combat-inspired cardio meets a nightclub vibe (lights and music included)—our instructor Linkii screams over the pulsing beats.

For the uninitiated: Body Combat blends martial arts moves (kicks, punches and knees) with high-energy choreography, all set to heart-pumping remixes. Think Zumba meets self-defense class.

Lefit and gyms like it have been game changers in China's fitness scene over the past five to 10 years, some boasting up to 1,000 locations to get your workout in, be it using equipment or taking one of their extremely popular fitness classes, nationwide—at very affordable prices. Han Wei, the company's founder and a former tech whiz at e-commerce giant Alibaba, once stated in an interview he “saw fitness not just as a business but as a right for every Chinese citizen.”

So here we are, over 20 drenched devotees punching the air in unison, sneakers squeaking against the floor. This isn't just exercise; it's collective catharsis with a side of Capoeira-style lunges.

“We turn office stress into endorphins,” Linkii told *Beijing Review* when asked why these classes are so popular. “The explosive nature of these actions, like punching and kicking, can really release negative emotions accumulated in daily life, as many young people are currently under a lot of pressure most of the day, boosting confidence and motivation.”

Mental balance: check. But what about that balance on the scales?

“For those looking to lose weight, this also brings greater calorie expenditure. Additionally, the program is highly inclusive; even if you are a beginner in fitness, you can participate, as instructors provide options for both



Post-class glow? Drenched, gymgoers, including this author boasting a red top and matching face, pose for a group pic after a Body Combat fitness class in Beijing on June 1

beginner and advanced levels,” she added.

The obsession with fitness classes isn't limited to combat cardio. Other cardio- and strength-oriented classes also sell out faster than hotpot reservations nowadays. And with memberships at 700 yuan (just under \$100) for three months of unlimited classes, equipment usage, 24/7 access—to all locations nationwide, that is—young urbanites are trading milk tea runs for endorphin highs.

The Dongzhimen branch manager also put in his two cents: “First and foremost, the group classes, especially, promote a healthier lifestyle, encouraging everyone to fall in love with exercise and maintain good habits. Also, many of our personal trainers are certified nutritionists, which comes in handy as many of our clientele have questions about what exactly a healthy, balanced diet contains.” (Perhaps they could start sharing their wisdom with the *qingshi* sector.)

He further added that the trend of becoming more active is especially prevalent among young women. Another wildly popular fitness chain is Super Monkey, which operates in similar fashion to Lefit and also sees classes, specifically, fully booked well in advance.

With young Chinese increasingly joining gyms, this has inspired many chains to release their own athletic wear collections. These mostly sport Lululemon vibes, but one item does stand out—in the womenswear section: workout skorts. Some fans this author talked with said it's about reclaiming femininity in the fitness space for them, whereas others simply like to pair them with crop tops or sneakers. “It's like athleisure 2.0,” one gymgoer told

Beijing Review. “I go to the hashtag ‘fitness skirt’ on RedNote for mix ‘n match inspo!”

From the indoors, we now head outside, to the section of the Liangma River that runs through Sanlitun, the capital city's trendy commercial area. Whereas people here used to run for buses, now they run for bragging rights in groups on Weixin, the ubiquitous superapp known as WeChat internationally. At the Liangma waterfront, the pavement pulses with everyone from 5K newbies to marathon pros. And now that summer has hit? The river is becoming a liquid playground for kayakers and paddleboarders. And that's just in the urban jungle. Beyond the city limits, hiking trails and rock faces that were once quiet now buzz with adventure-seekers, as urbanites trade skyscrapers for summit views and subway crowds for climbing routes.

But while adults flex now, China's real workout warriors are still in grade school.

In February, Beijing announced its schools were getting a fitness overhaul: daily physical education for primary students, three to five weekly sessions for older grades—no exceptions. These classes feature AI tracking, mandatory ball sports (basketball, soccer or volleyball), and sports-scientist-designed HIIT bursts. Go get that perfect math score—and a killer jump shot.

And from the gym to the outdoors to the school grounds... The sweatband strikes back. This humble accessory is no longer just a practical accessory, but a badge of honor in China's fitness revolution.

Whether soaked through after a marathon or styled for a post-gym selfie, it's proof that sweat is the new status symbol. **BR**

A NEW RECIPE FOR HEALTH

Prioritizing protein, fiber and balanced meals for health By Ji Jing

Cuisine from Hunan Province is commonly characterized by its liberal use of oil and salt, which can be detrimental to health if consumed in excess. Addressing this concern has become a priority for the local government.

On May 28, Shen Xiaoming, Secretary of the Hunan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), chaired a meeting at which the Overall Plan on Deepening the Reform of the Medical System and Improving People's Health (hereinafter referred to as the Overall Plan) was reviewed and approved.

This Overall Plan, passed at the meeting, includes a three-year action strategy focused on reducing salt and oil consumption. It will pilot salt and oil reduction programs in the canteens of government agencies, schools, hospitals and enterprises.

Official statistics indicate that the average daily salt intake of Chinese residents is nearly double the recommended five grams, and cooking oil consumption is also excessive. Diets high in salt and oil can lead people to develop chronic diseases, including hypertension, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, obesity and diabetes. Reducing salt and oil intake is a cost-effective preventative measure

that can directly lower the risk of these conditions.

Hunan's initiatives are part of a broader national effort to promote healthier dietary habits amid rising obesity rates and a growing prevalence of nutrition-related metabolic diseases.

Nutrition guidelines

According to statistics from the National Health Commission (NHC), today, 51.2 percent of Chinese adults are either overweight or obese, with projections indicating that, without intervention, China's obese population could reach approximately 70 percent by 2030.

Unhealthy lifestyles and poor dietary habits are increasingly impacting national health. To address this, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the NHC and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology jointly issued the Food and Nutrition Development Guideline (2025–30) in March. This guideline establishes key objectives for enhancing dietary habits and improving the quality of the food supply.

The guideline calls for a shift toward nutrient-rich food consumption, increasing the annual per-capita intake of foods rich in protein and fiber. By 2030, it targets a per-capita annual consumption of 14 kg of legumes, 69 kg of meat, 23 kg of eggs, 47 kg of dairy products, 29 kg of seafood, 270 kg of vegetables and 130 kg of fruit.

Food and nutrition are fundamental to human life and health. Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the country's overall agricultural production capacity has steadily improved, the food consumption structure has been optimized, and the nutritional and health status of the population has pointedly improved. However, challenges remain, including an insufficient supply and consumption of high-quality food, a lack of reasonable dietary

habits among residents, and the coexistence of overnutrition and undernutrition. These issues demand public attention, and the guideline was created in response.

"China has previously issued corresponding food and nutrition development guidelines—respectively in 1993, 2001 and 2014. Each reflected the characteristics of its time and played a big role in guiding healthy diets for Chinese residents," stated Chen Mengshan, Director of the State Food and Nutrition Consult Committee, at a March seminar organized by the Institute of Food and Nutrition Development of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. "The key feature of this latest guideline is its nutrition-oriented approach. It emphasizes integrating nutrition and health needs throughout the entire food process—from production, processing and circulation to consumption and research and development—with a greater focus on producing foods rich in high-quality protein and dietary fiber."

The guideline specifically highlights the importance of protein consumption, setting a target for high-quality protein to comprise over half of the total daily protein intake.

Chen explained that, from a nutritional standpoint, high-quality protein sources include animal-



Low-fat canteen food at China Agricultural University in Beijing on March 21

based foods such as meat, eggs, dairy and aquatic products, as well as soybeans. The recommended daily protein intake for adults in China is approximately 1 gram per kg of body weight, and roughly 1.2 grams per kg for individuals aged 65 and above. China's daily supply of protein per capita overtook the U.S. in 2021, reaching 124.61 grams, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The document outlines key initiatives to increase the supply and consumption of foods rich in high-quality protein. It calls for optimizing the production and sales structure of livestock and poultry meats, and expanding poultry consumption. It proposes the development of aquaculture programs for safe, high-quality fish, shrimp, crabs, shellfish and algae. Furthermore, it advocates the promotion of processing and refrigerated preservation of aquatic products, as well as the inclusion of aquatic foods in nutritious meals for primary and secondary school students. Regarding soybeans, the guideline aims to develop high-yielding, high-quality new varieties and strengthen the supply of high-quality soybeans.

The guideline also promotes the supply and consumption of fiber-rich foods. Dietary fiber, a type of carbohydrate that the body cannot digest, provides no energy. Primarily sourced from vegetables, fruits, beans and grains, it increases satiety, promotes gastrointestinal motility, and prevents

and controls obesity and diabetes, thereby greatly contributing to human health. In line with this, the Dietary Guidelines for Chinese Residents (2022), released by the Chinese Nutrition Society in April 2022, recommends that residents consume 300-500 grams of vegetables and 200-350 grams of fruits per day.

The guideline suggests enhancing the flavor and taste of diverse grains like oats, buckwheat and highland barley, and increasing the availability of dietary fiber-rich foods such as bamboo shoots, seaweed, dates and konjac.

A balanced diet

The timing of meals is just as important as the food itself. While three meals a day is the standard dietary pattern for most Chinese people, breakfast consumption is a growing concern.

According to statistics from the Chinese Nutrition Society, 18.4 percent of individuals now skip breakfast on workdays, and this

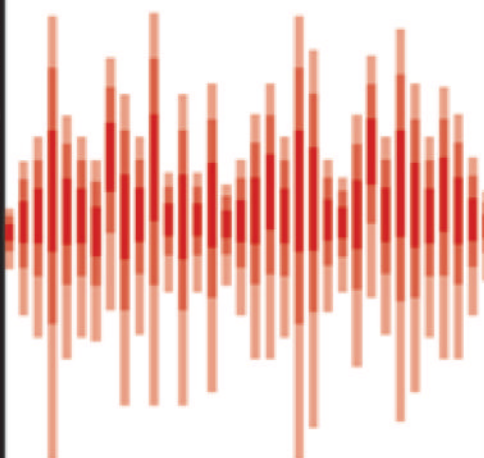
number increases to 29.7 percent on weekends. Furthermore, cereals and potatoes constitute 89.4 percent of breakfast consumption, while milk, soy products, fruit and vegetables account for less than 50 percent, indicating an unbalanced dietary structure.

Experts emphasize that regular meals are essential for achieving a balanced diet and optimal nutrition. Breakfast is particularly important, providing 25 to 30 percent of the total daily energy intake. A well-balanced breakfast can enhance cognitive performance and work efficiency, especially for students and office workers. Skipping breakfast can lead to overeating at lunchtime, negatively impacting blood sugar control.

So, what constitutes a balanced diet? The Eastern Healthy Dietary Pattern, outlined in the Dietary Guidelines for Chinese Residents (2022), offers a healthy eating model for the Chinese population.

This dietary pattern is typical of China's coastal Jiangnan (south of the lower Yangtze River) area, as well as Guangdong and Fujian provinces. Characterized by light seasoning, minimal salt and diverse ingredients—especially grains, vegetables, fruits, fish, shrimp, soy and dairy—it's linked to remarkable health outcomes: lower rates of hypertension, higher life expectancy (particularly healthy years) and reduced obesity compared with other regions of the country. **BR**

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Policy-Sensitive and Market-Driven

China's private sector began to take off following the launch of its reform and opening-up policy in 1978. In the two decades before this pivotal policy was adopted, the private sector was almost non-existent due to the government's emphasis on public ownership. Since 1978, the government has been committed to both consolidating and developing the public sector of the economy, and encouraging, supporting and guiding the development of the private sector.

In a recent interview with *Beijing Review*, [Cui Lili](#), a research fellow with the Institute of Chinese Modernization Studies at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, shared her insights into the Chinese Government's vision for the private sector.

***Beijing Review:* What is President Xi Jinping's vision for China's private sector? What are his main goals for its development?**

Cui Lili: On February 17, President Xi delivered a speech at a symposium on private enterprises, expressing his hope that private enterprises will become a major force in advancing Chinese modernization and achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

The private sector plays an irreplaceable role in promoting high-quality development, driving technological innovation, expanding employment and improving people's wellbeing. The future development of the private sector should focus on deepening industrial collaboration and adhere to a pattern that complements and reinforces the public sector of the economy.

At the same time, it is essential to respond proactively to macro policy orientations and align deeply with regional development strategies. A mechanism for coordination should be put into practice in areas such as policy alignment and project cooperation, with the government providing the strategic guidance and enterprises implementing it. This will ultimately lead to improvement in both economic and social benefits, injecting the strong momentum of coordinated innovation into high-quality economic development.

At the symposium you mentioned, Xi reaffirmed the commitment to “encouraging, supporting and guiding the development of the private sector.” What does “encouraging, supporting and guiding” mean exactly?

The term “encouraging” refers to boosting the confidence of private entrepreneurs. Amid multiple internal and external challenges, Xi emphasized the need to recognize the development prospects of enterprises and to strengthen strategic resolve—this serves as a powerful affirmation and motivation for businesses. We can clearly sense that the private sector is not being sidelined; rather, it remains an indispensable part of the country's high-quality development.

“Supporting” is more reflected in policies on optimizing the development environment and strengthening the provision of essential resources for private enterprises. In recent years, from tax and fee reductions to financing support and the ongoing improvement of the business environment,

the central and local governments have introduced a series of substantive measures aimed at private enterprises. These efforts ensure a level market playing field, enabling companies to focus more on their core businesses and pursue growth with greater autonomy and confidence.

“Guiding” focuses on steering private enterprises toward higher-quality development on the basis of legal compliance and improved corporate governance. This is not merely an economic issue—it also involves social responsibility and alignment with national strategies. Private enterprises are being guided to engage in technological innovation, participate in regional coordinated development and integrate into the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). (The China-proposed BRI aims to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes—*Ed.*) This not only expands development opportunities but also enhances enterprises' sense of alignment with national strategies and their sense of social responsibility.

The three principles—“encouraging, supporting and guiding”—embody Xi's commitment to enabling the private sector to continue exploring the Chinese market and participating in global competition.

What are the main policies China has in



A staff member of Hangzhou Yushu Technology Co. Ltd., also known as Unitree Robotics, a private robotics company based in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, demonstrates a robotic dog at the Hannover Messe 2025 trade show in Hannover, Germany, on April 1

place to support the development of its private sector?

China's current policies supporting the development of the private economy primarily focus on four key areas: legal safeguards, optimization of the business environment, incentives for technological innovation and improvement of the policy framework.

On the legal front, the landmark Law on the Promotion of the Private Economy was adopted earlier this year. This is China's first fundamental legislation dedicated to the private sector. It clearly affirms the important role of the private economy within the national economic system and incorporates the principles of "encouraging, supporting and guiding" the development of the private sector into law, providing a solid legal foundation for the growth of private enterprises.

Optimizing the business environment remains a key priority. In recent years, the government has worked hard to remove market entry barriers, eliminate unreasonable restrictions and preconditions and ensure that private enterprises can access all types of markets on an equal footing. At the same time, comprehensive implementation of fair

competition policies has been strengthened, with more robust anti-monopoly enforcement and efforts to curb local protectionism and practices that distort market order such as transactions with designated targets.

In terms of technological innovation, the government encourages private enterprises to increase research and development (R&D) investment and participate proactively in overcoming critical technology bottlenecks and making breakthroughs in frontier technologies. Measures such as tax incentives and innovation fund support are being used to enhance the capacity of private firms in key areas like advanced manufacturing, new energy and AI. Additionally, policies encourage companies to accelerate digital transformation and technological upgrading. This includes support for the R&D of generic digital technologies, as well as participation in the construction

and innovative application of new infrastructure such as data centers and the industrial Internet. The focus is on the promotion of cost-effective, modular smart manufacturing equipment among small and medium-sized enterprises to enhance standardization and product quality.

What we are witnessing today is that China's support for the private economy has moved far beyond slogans—manifesting instead in concrete, multidimensional actions that foster a fairer and more sustainable institutional environment for the long-term development of private enterprises.

What is your view of the relationship between the private sector and the public sector?

The relationship between China's private and state-owned sectors has always been one of mutual reinforcement and common development. Together, they have formed a complementary division of labor within the national economy, jointly serving economic growth, social stability and national strategic objectives.

State-owned enterprises (SOEs) are primarily concentrated in strategic industries and are engaged in infrastructure development. They are essential to safeguarding national security and ensuring economic stability. Private enterprises contribute substantially to innovation, employment and market vitality. They are efficiency-driven, highly responsive to market demands and instrumental in driving industrial and consumer upgrades. Today, Chinese private enterprises are increasingly representing the country in global competition, particularly in high-end manufacturing and the Internet economy, playing an important role in enhancing China's international industrial influence and discourse power.

As China's economy continues to evolve, the roles of both SOEs and private enterprises are also shifting. The government emphasizes the principle of unswervingly consolidating and developing the public sector and encouraging, supporting and guiding the development of the non-public sector. This approach aims to foster coordinated development and complementary advantages between ►►



Staff provide services related to private enterprises at the government service center of Dongsheng District in Ordos, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, on April 16

the two. For example, an increasing number of private enterprises are participating in major national initiatives such as the BRI and carbon neutrality efforts, gradually transitioning from being purely “market players” to “executors of national strategies.”

China’s unique economic strength lies in the sound interplay between an “efficient market” and a “well-functioning government.” State-owned and private sectors are not engaged in a zero-sum game; rather, they form a collaborative “stabilizer and source of vitality” model through division of labor and cooperation. Looking ahead, both sectors are expected to deepen their collaboration across multiple fields, jointly shaping a more resilient and competitive modern industrial system.

What are the distinctive features of China’s private sector?

Compared to Western private enterprises, which have grown over a long period through stages such as free competition and industry consolidation, Chinese private enterprises developed and expanded within an economic structure dominated by the public ownership, with many early forms taking shape

as individual businesses or small workshops. The government plays a crucial role in promoting the rapid growth of the private economy by easing market access and providing supportive policies.

This distinct developmental trajectory has shaped the unique characteristics of China’s private sector. Private enterprises in the country are diverse and highly adaptive, comprising not only large conglomerates but also a vast number of small and micro-sized firms that are highly efficient and specialized. These businesses exhibit strong resilience and adaptability amid market fluctuations. Moreover, they are widely distributed—not only active in traditional labor-intensive industries such as manufacturing but also rapidly expanding in emerging sectors such as technology, finance and the Internet.

Compared to private enterprises in other countries, Chinese

private firms demonstrate a higher degree of “efficiency” in several respects. They are highly attuned to the domestic market, capable of quickly detecting changes in consumer demand and adjusting their strategies accordingly. They are also marked by a strong sense of innovation and flexibility, often pioneering bold explorations in business models and digital technology applications.

Most notably, China’s private sector has shown an exceptional ability to align itself with policy directions and respond swiftly to national strategies. From the initiatives to increase China’s manufacturing prowess and accelerate low-carbon transition to the implementation of national policies of rural revitalization and common prosperity, private enterprises have actively participated across the board. Their characteristics of being both “policy-sensitive” and “market-driven” are a key reason why Chinese private enterprises remain dynamic and resilient in today’s complex and evolving environment. **BR**

Another Blow to American Leadership?

By Djoomart Otorbaev

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced on May 28 that the Donald Trump administration will “aggressively” revoke visas for Chinese students as part of its ongoing efforts to limit the number of international students allowed to study in the United States. This decision followed Rubio’s directive to U.S. embassies worldwide to halt the issuance of new student visas.

Additionally, the White House has accused some of America’s top universities of endorsing pro-Palestinian movements and harboring anti-Semitic sentiments, leading to the freezing of hundreds of millions of dollars in funding and the deportation of students, alongside the revocation of thousands of visas.

An Institute of International Education report indicates that over 1.1 million international students were enrolled in U.S. higher education for the 2023-24 academic year. Many U.S. universities depend on tuition fees from these students, as they generally pay higher fees, to secure a substantial part of their funding.

Among these international students, 280,000 are from China. At a regular press conference on May 29, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the U.S. decision to revoke Chinese student visas is unjustified and has harmed their legitimate rights and interests. China firmly opposes this move and has already lodged representations with the American side, she added.

Shortly after the U.S. Government’s announcement of the restrictive measures, the top education official of China’s Hong Kong Special Administrative Region called on local universities to “take positive measures” to attract “outstanding students from all over the world.”

The U.S. remains the leading nation in basic research, underscored by impressive statistics on scientific achievements. Since 2000, American researchers have been awarded 112 Nobel Prizes in chemistry, medicine and physics, with 45 of



Students cheer during commencement ceremony at Harvard University on May 29. A U.S. federal judge on May 29 extended a temporary restraining order on the Trump administration’s policy that aimed to prevent Harvard University from enrolling international students

these laureates, or 40 percent, being immigrants. From 1901 to 2023, immigrants received 36 percent of the U.S. Nobel Prizes in chemistry, medicine and physics, totaling 115 out of 319 awards.

Finding and developing local and international talent in scientific work is crucial to making discoveries and inventions. The American educational and scientific community has had the unique ability to attract talented people from all over the world, not only because of generous research funds but mainly because of its sound academic environment.

Until recently, the remarkable achievements of scientists at leading U.S. universities confirmed this. With its efforts, the current U.S. administration is “killing the last goose that lays golden eggs.”

After the recent restriction of

funding for scientific and technological research, the current limitation on attracting foreign talent to America may “drive the last nail into the coffin” of U.S. leadership.

By prohibiting Chinese students from studying in the U.S., the Trump administration is in fact fostering the advancement of education quality in China and fueling China’s transformation to a prominent scientific and educational powerhouse.

In light of the considerable concern among top professors and researchers in the U.S. regarding education funding cuts and decreased scientific research, China ought to proactively draw these academic leaders to teach and work at prestigious Chinese universities and research organizations. **BR**

The author is former prime minister of Kyrgyzstan, a distinguished professor of the Belt and Road School at Beijing Normal University and author of the book *Central Asia’s Economic Rebirth in the Shadow of the New Great Game*. Copyedited by G.P. Wilson. Comments to dingying@cicgamericas.com

Messages at Shangri-La

By Brian Berletic

During this year's Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth laid out an alarming vision for the future of the Asia-Pacific region, a vision that includes the same type of U.S. military encroachment and confrontation that has turned Europe, North Africa and the Middle East into devastated battlegrounds over the past two decades.

Predicated on "detering aggression by Communist China," Hegseth laid out plans to further expand the presence of U.S. troops and military equipment in places closer to China's borders than to America's own shores.

And while he spoke about Chinese "coercion," it was Hegseth who would insist during his speech that nations across the Asia-Pacific region "do their part on defense," including by diverting public funds to buy U.S. arms, repair U.S. military equipment and naval vessels in the region, and choose "defense cooperation with the U.S." over "economic cooperation with China."

U.S. to Asia: you're next

Hegseth would at one point admit: "...for a generation, the U.S. ignored this region (Indo-Pacific). We became distracted by open-ended wars, regime change and nation building. I had a front row seat as a soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan. These costly diversions lacked clearly defined goals and were not tied to vital and core American interests."

It is no coincidence during this same period, Asia has risen economically, enjoying relative peace and stability while the U.S. was "distracted" by malign conflict it itself sowed elsewhere.

The Shangri-La Dialogue is organized by the London-based International Institute

for Strategic Studies (IISS), a Western corporate-funded institution advancing Western foreign policy objectives. The defense summit itself focuses on advancing Western interests in Asia rather than any serious discussion about Asia's own best interests or genuine East-West cooperation.

While Western leaders make poorly-couched declarations of their own continued primacy over Asia, Asian leaders have made polite but increasingly firm declarations regarding Asia determining its own path forward into the future.

The confidence with which Asia as a whole is able to slowly push back against the remnants of Western colonialism and primacy has been enabled by the rise of China and the vast array of increasingly attractive alternatives to Western markets, investment, "security" and tourism it offers.

China also offers opportunities the West does not, and cannot, offer such as partnership in building modern region-spanning infrastructure like high-speed rail, sea ports and airports, and power plants, as well as the sale of cheaper, more effective military equipment without entangling military alliances attached.

While China is leading the rise of Asia, Asia as a whole is surpassing the U.S. in wealth, economic progress, regional development and technological advancement. Considering this emerging reality, Hegseth's address at this year's summit served as a deliberate bid to reverse the growing trend of Asia pursuing Asia's interests, not submitting to Washington's or Wall Street's interests.

Despite claims of seeking "peace and stability" for the region, Hegseth's message to Asia was in reality, after destabilizing and destroying the rest of Eurasia, "you're next."

Peace destroyer of Asia-Pacific

Hegseth began his talk describing how the U.S. is securing its "backyard," by "taking back the Panama Canal from malign Chinese influence," in reference to two ports previously owned by a China-based company located near the canal, which itself was transferred from U.S. control to the nation of Panama in 1999.

He then referred China's "massive military build-up," never once considering the possibility that Beijing is reacting to the large and still growing military footprint the U.S. has established not only in China's "backyard," but even within its own house.

Despite spending the rest of his talk describing the many ways the U.S. is expanding its military presence all throughout the Asia-Pacific—in the Republic of Korea, Japan and the Philippines—many times closer

**Hegseth's message
to Asia was in
reality, after
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Eurasia,
"you're next"**



Philippine Department of National Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro listens to questions from members of the Chinese delegation at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on June 1

to China's shores than the Panama Canal is to American shores, Hegseth would nonetheless claim, "We do not seek to dominate or strangle China. To encircle or provoke. We do not seek regime change, nor will we instigate or disrespect a proud and historic culture."

However it was Hegseth's claims that China is "harassing" its own province of Taiwan that were the most paradoxical.

According to the 1972 Joint Statement Following Discussions With Leaders of the People's Republic of China, commonly known as the Shanghai Communiqué, the U.S. Government declared: The U.S. acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Straits maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The U.S. Government does not challenge that position.

Not only does the U.S. recognize China's position regarding Taiwan as being part of

China, it explicitly stated that it "does not challenge that position."

UN Resolution 2758 recognizes the government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of all of China and explicitly expelled representatives of the "Republic of China" from the United Nations. Even the U.S. State Department's official website has, as recently as last year, explicitly stated, "we do not support Taiwan independence."

Despite the U.S. officially recognizing a "one China" policy, it has for years undermined both its agreement with Beijing and international law, with the U.S. first arming the administration in Taipei, then stationing U.S. troops in Taiwan itself in growing numbers.

If a Chinese company owning ports near the Panama Canal, legally transferred from U.S. control to the nation of Panama in 1999, over 1,700 km from the U.S., is intolerable to Washington, then clearly Washington should not expect Beijing to accept U.S. troops occupying what is recognized as Chinese territory under both U.S.-Chinese agreements and international law.

Similarly, if a civilian port owned by a Chinese company 1,700 km away from the U.S. is unacceptable to Washington, then entire networks of U.S. military bases housing tens of thousands of U.S. troops, missiles, warplanes and other military equipment even closer to China should be easily acknowledged as the motive behind China's "massive military build-up."

While Hegseth claims China is undermining peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, it is the U.S. moving its military to the other side of the planet, closer to Chinese shores than America's own borders, backsliding on its commitments to both the Chinese Government and under international law, that threatens peace and stability in the region and around the world.

Hegseth's speech was not an offering of peace and stability to Asia, it is the holding of it hostage in exchange for subordination to Washington and Wall Street and the continued primacy of Western interests over Asia decades into the future.

Only time will tell if Asia is prepared to work with China to protect the hard-fought peace, stability and prosperity built up together in the decades the U.S. was "distracted" consuming much of the rest of Eurasia in conflict, or whether short-sighted, self-serving leaders maneuvered into power through U.S. political interference in the region will succeed in spreading Washington's destructive conflicts consuming Europe, North Africa and the Middle East to Asia as well. **BR**

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New Horizons for Cooperation

By Marcos Cordeiro Pires

As an old Brazilian saying goes, we know our true friends when we face difficulties. Currently, Latin American countries are suffering a form of bullying from the U.S. Government, which is showing many sticks and no carrots. The relationship between the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and China is subject to pressure and threats. In the face of blackmail from U.S. authorities, even Brazil, a country with relative weight in international relations, is finding it challenging to adopt a more assertive stance regarding its legitimate interests in its relations with China, such as joining the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (The China-proposed BRI aims to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes—*Ed.*).

Other countries in the Americas are being similarly bullied by Washington. For example, U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to “take back” the Panama Canal (The Panama Canal was under U.S. control from its opening in 1914 until December 31, 1999—*Ed.*). Cuba and Venezuela are facing many economic difficulties due to sanctions and a harsh economic blockade. Furthermore, hundreds of immigrants in the United States are being deported to third countries without due process and treated in a degrading manner. Mexico and Canada are suffering from the imposition of additional tariffs under the pretext of combating fentanyl trafficking.

Closer ties

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva paid a state visit to China from May 10 to 14. During his visit, on May 12, Mauricio Claver-Carone, U.S. advisor for Latin America and former President of the Inter-American Development Bank, spoke at a business forum in New York City, saying the Brazilian president should not be in China, but rather at the event in New York City. In the same speech, he said China was shiny and attractive but unreliable in the long term

compared to the U.S.

However, despite the threats from the U.S., countries in the region continue to appreciate China’s presence. Even Argentina has had to recognize the importance and seriousness of China in economic matters. The currency swap agreement between the Central Bank of Argentina and the People’s Bank of China remains in force and bilateral trade continues to grow (A currency swap deal allows two institutions to exchange payments in one currency for equivalent amounts in the other to facilitate bilateral trade settlements and provide liquidity support to financial markets—*Ed.*). It is worth remembering that governments come and go, but bilateral relations with China are increasingly solid.

In this international context, marked by various uncertainties, especially after the U.S. Government

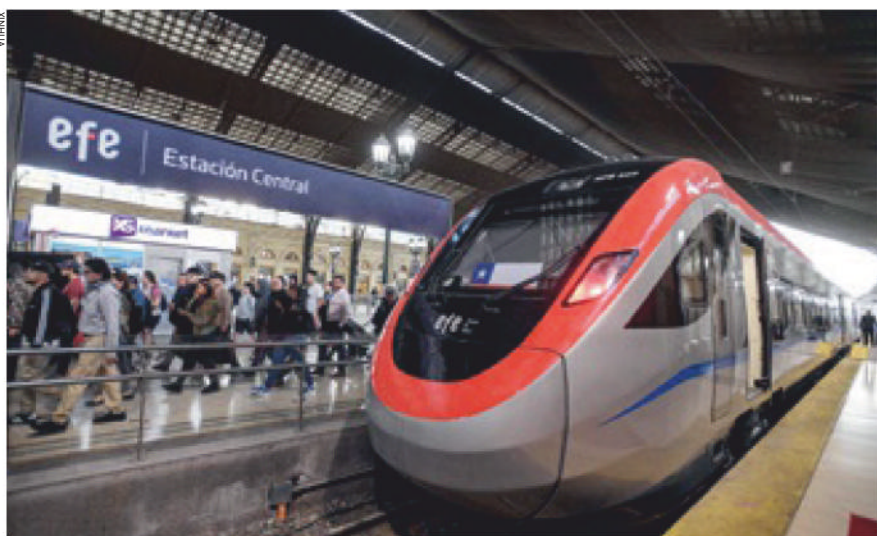
has adopted such erratic measures, the defense of multilateralism is more essential than ever. In this regard, holding the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the China-CELAC Forum in Beijing was an excellent counterpoint to unilateralism and the destruction of the international rules of coexistence. The successful ministerial gathering, held on May 13, showed the solidarity and good momentum of bilateral relations for now and the future.

Chinese President Xi Jinping offered practical measures for incorporating Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries into China-proposed global initiatives for development, security and inter-civilizational exchange and dialogue.

Xi proposed five cooperation programs. On the program for solidarity, Xi said China will work with LAC countries to support each other on issues bearing on their respective core interests and major concerns, firmly safeguard the international system with the UN at its core and the international order underpinned by international law, and speak with one voice in international and regional affairs. The second program is for



Participants at the 17th China-Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Business Summit in Managua, Nicaragua, on November 18, 2024. The event drew over 500 participants from China and LAC countries



An electric and combustion dual-power train manufactured by China Railway Rolling Stock Corp. Qingdao Sifang Co. Ltd. awaits departure at the central station in Santiago, Chile, on January 19, 2024



Intelligent container handling equipment at work in Chancay Port in Peru on November 14, 2024. Chancay Port is not only an important project under Belt and Road cooperation, but also the first smart and green port in South America

development, under which China will join hands with LAC countries to uphold the multilateral trading system, foster greater synergy between their development strategies and expand high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. The third program is themed civilization, which is in defense of the shared values of humanity, such as peace, development, justice, democracy and freedom. The peace program supports the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace and the Declaration of

Member States of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. Finally, the fifth program is for people-to-people connectivity, in which the Chinese Government is committed to offering courses and training for students and professionals from countries in the region, in addition to promoting cultural and tourism exchanges between peoples.

Promising future

When analyzing the recent relationship between China and LAC countries, it is worth mentioning that in 2008 and 2016, the Chinese Government released two white papers on its policy for Latin America. Looking back, we can see that many proposals have since been implemented and several infrastructure projects have been built. Trade volume has multiplied over the past 20 years, and Chinese investments are present in several countries—in bridges, railways, power transmission lines, hydroelectric plants, ports and highways. The expectation is that the Joint Action Plan for Cooperation in Key Areas (2025-27) adopted during the recent China-CELAC Forum ministerial meeting will further encourage LAC countries in their own productive, commercial and environmental integration.

It is essential to highlight that China and LAC countries can take advantage of many synergies. In addition to natural resources, such as strategic minerals, oil and food, there is an excellent opportunity for Chinese companies to internationalize their activities at a time when the country has abundant capital, technologies and resources. For example, the development of local production of cheap, renewable energy could create competitive advantages in the LAC region for the creation of new skills in advanced industrial technology and data centers to support AI projects.

Lula's speech at the China-CELAC Forum ministerial meeting is worth mentioning: "It is no exaggeration to say that, despite the almost 15,000 km that separate us, we have never been so close." His remarks summarize the perception of other LAC leaders and shows the success of the meeting between Lula and Xi.

Finally, the ministerial meeting also showed the world that China is a large, stable, predictable and responsible country in the face of challenges to the international community. The Chinese Government is a crucial factor in the cooperation between countries worldwide and in the creation of an effective global order based on multilateral rules and mutual respect. **BR**

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Creating Digital Connections

By Zhang Yu & Ning Yuqi

At a time when China-U.S. relations are facing challenges at the trade level, a quiet yet important development is unfolding among the general public, one that speaks to the enduring desire for mutual understanding and people-to-people exchange.

In January, following discussions within the U.S. Government about a potential ban on Chinese-owned popular short video app TikTok, millions of American users made a noteworthy decision. Instead of disengaging from Chinese digital culture, many turned to Xiaohongshu (RedNote), a popular Chinese lifestyle and e-commerce platform. Within days, the app experienced an unprecedented surge in American downloads, with over 700,000 new users joining and RedNote briefly becoming the most downloaded app in the U.S. App Store. Many of these users began learning basic Chinese expressions to better interact with netizens across the Pacific, demonstrating a sincere interest in cross-cultural dialogue.

This spontaneous digital movement highlighted the strong foundation of friendship that can exist between the peoples of China and the U.S., independent of official discourse. It reflects the growing role of youth and digital platforms in building bridges, deepening mutual understanding and contributing positively to the broader China-U.S. relationship.

Digital bridge-building

The demographic driving this digital bridge-building is particularly noteworthy: predominantly young Americans and Chinese users who grew up in the Internet age. These digital natives approach cross-cultural interaction with curiosity rather than suspicion, viewing cultural differences as opportunities for learning rather than sources of conflict.

American users arriving on RedNote demonstrated remarkable adaptability and enthusiasm for Chinese digital culture. They quickly adopted platform-specific vocabulary, participated in

trending topics and created original content using Chinese online slang. The phenomenon of “paying the cat tax,” where users share pet photos as a form of introduction, became a universal language of sorts, with American users eagerly participating in this uniquely Chinese social media behavior pattern.

Similarly, the trend of *duizhang*, which means comparing daily expenses and lifestyle choices, sparked meaningful conversations about economic realities, social values and life priorities in both countries. These exchanges revealed the genuine curiosity, humor and warmth that characterize human connection. Chinese users welcomed their American counterparts with sincerity and generosity, helping them navigate language barriers and cultural nuances. American users, in turn, showed genuine interest in understanding Chinese perspectives on everything from food culture to social media etiquette.

Notably, language-learning platforms like Duolingo reported on January 16 a 216-percent increase in U.S. users learning Chinese during this period, indicating a proactive effort on their part to bridge communication gaps.

Authentic stories

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this cross-platform migration is how it has shifted focus from macro-political narratives to micro-personal stories. Traditional international communication often emphasizes policy positions, economic statistics and diplomatic achievements. While

these elements remain important, the RedNote phenomenon reveals the power of everyday narratives in building genuine understanding.

American users on RedNote gravitated toward content about daily life in China: food preparation tutorials, travel vlogs showcasing Chinese landscapes, technology reviews and lifestyle content. These seemingly mundane topics proved far more engaging than abstract policy discussions or economic analyses. A Chinese user’s video tour of a traditional market or explanation of regional cuisine variations often generated more meaningful cross-cultural dialogue than formal presentations about China’s economic development to the general American youth.

This preference for personal narratives aligns with broader trends in global communication, where audiences increasingly seek authentic, relatable content over institutional messaging.

Chinese users reciprocated this interest, asking American users about their daily routines, educational experiences and cultural practices. These exchanges created a rich tapestry of mutual discovery, with users from both countries expressing surprise at similarities in their concerns, aspirations and daily challenges. Young professionals in Beijing and New York City, for instance, found common ground in discussions about work-life balance, housing costs and career development, universal concerns that transcend national boundaries.

The platform’s algorithm facilitated these connections by promoting content that generated positive engagement across cultural lines. Cooking videos, travel content and educational materials consistently performed well, suggesting that algorithmic amplification and human interest align when it comes to cross-cultural content.

Discovering the real China

Young Americans are showing a growing interest in China, reflected in both their online engagement and real-world experiences. As

Participants in a China-U.S. youth exchange program visit a conservation center for rare fish species in the Yangtze River in Yichang, Hubei Province, on June 11, 2024



digital interactions across platforms have intensified, a broader trend has emerged: More Americans are traveling to China in search of authentic insights into contemporary Chinese life—and sharing those experiences online. These firsthand encounters,

both physical and virtual, bypass traditional media filters, offering unvarnished perspectives that challenge prevailing geopolitical narratives.

A defining moment in this shift came when popular American YouTuber IShowSpeed livestreamed his journey through China. Over six hours, his global audience witnessed a country marked by hospitable citizens, clean urban environments and seamless digital connectivity. His trip sparked viral acclaim, with viewers remarking that “1.6 billion U.S. dollars in anti-China propaganda was defeated by a single livestream.”

This online enthusiasm has begun to snowball into real-world exchanges. Young Americans, motivated by curiosity and positive digital impressions, are increasingly participating in cultural immersion programs in China. For instance, the 2025 American Youth Pickleball Cultural Exchange China Tour program, running from April 10 to 20, brought middle school students, teachers and parents to Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, where they played sports, visited schools, museums and tech companies, and held roundtable discussions with their Chinese peers. These encounters extended the digital dialogue into tangible, shared experiences.

Chinese Ambassador to the U.S. Xie Feng underscored this cultural momentum on social media platform X by reposting a message from

Jeffrey Keith Sullivan, Director of the Department of Athletics for Montgomery County Public Schools in the state of Maryland. In his post, Xie emphasized how “sports connect the youth of China and the U.S., building bridges for the future.” These initiatives exemplify a new kind of diplomacy, informal, people-driven and rooted in shared interests like sports, education and lifestyle.

The evolution from platform migration to physical exchange suggests a profound shift in how cross-cultural understanding is forged. A 2023 Pew Research Center poll found that negative perceptions of China among Americans aged 18-29 were 11 percent lower than the national average. Similarly, a 2023 report by *The Economist* revealed that Americans under 45 were half as likely as those aged 45 and older to view China as a rival. These generational patterns signal a possible reimagining of China-U.S. relations, one grounded in mutual experience rather than inherited ideology.

The willingness of American

youth to visit China, communicate in Chinese language and share their journeys on platforms like RedNote reflects a rejection of entrenched biases and a move toward relational diplomacy. (Relational diplomacy is a foreign policy approach that prioritizes building trust-based relationship between nations rather than relying solely on formal treaties—*Ed.*)

As these exchanges multiply, their cumulative effect could prove more influential than formal initiatives. When young Americans and Chinese meet, not as representatives of competing nations but as fellow humans sharing meals, games and memes, they create the kind of trust that no policy paper can replicate.

In an interconnected world, the digital bridges built today—through social platforms, livestreams, language learning and cultural exchanges—may form the bedrock of tomorrow’s bilateral relations. These everyday interactions are not only redefining public perception; they are laying the groundwork for a more stable, respectful and empathetic future between the world’s two largest economies. **BR**

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China Creates New IP Records

By Lan Xinzheng

On the 45th anniversary of China's accession to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the China National Intellectual Property Administration (CNIPA) has announced China continues to lead the world in key metrics for intellectual property (IP) creation and protection. According to official figures for 2024, China remained the largest submitter of international patent applications under the Patent Cooperation Treaty and industrial design applications under the Hague System, and public satisfaction with IP rights protection rose to 82.36 points, setting a new record.

On June 3, 1980, China joined the Convention Establishing the WIPO, officially becoming a member of the organization. Over the past 45 years, China has not only built itself into an IP powerhouse, but also embarked on a path of IP development with Chinese characteristics.

China regards innovation as the main driver for economic and social development, with IP being a major indicator of advancing innovation. This makes IP creation and protection vitally important for the achievement of the country's major development goals. China has therefore placed heavy emphasis on effective planning and on making rapid progress in improving the institutional guarantee for IP development, the quality of IP creation, the benefits of IP application, the protection of IP rights, the IP service system and international IP cooperation. This has not only advanced domestic innovation and economic growth, but also made important contributions to global IP governance.

As part of its institution-building efforts, China has introduced laws and regulations such as the Trademark Law, the Anti-Unfair Competition Law and the Copyright Law,



and made revisions in line with economic and social developments.

Through these measures, the quality of China's IP creation has improved over the past 45 years. In 2024, 1.05 million invention patents were authorized, 4.78 million trademarks and 10.63 million copyrights were registered, and 36 geographical indication products were recognized. Over the same period, the authorities granted 5,797 new plant variety rights in agriculture and 878 in the forestry

and grassland sectors. In the 2024 Global Innovation Index report released by the WIPO, China's ranking rose to 11th, with 26 of the world's top 100 technology clusters coming from China, remaining at the top for two consecutive years. Last year, Chinese enterprises achieved an industrialization rate of 53.3 percent for effective invention patents, with the added value contributing 13.04 percent to the country's GDP.

Continuously improving IP rights protection in new fields and new business forms is a key task for China. In recent years, the CNIPA has promoted the institutional innovation in IP rights protection in the field of AI, providing powerful institutional guarantee for its technological and industrial development. The country has issued guidelines for patent applications for AI-related inventions, focusing on key AI fields to provide rapid examination services for related patent applications. A report from the WIPO shows that China has become the largest holder of AI patents globally, possessing approximately 60 percent of the total.

With profound changes in China's consumption patterns, online shopping has become part of people's daily life, making the online sale of counterfeited goods a focus of public attention. In recent years, the authorities have launched online and offline campaigns, cracking down on infringement and counterfeiting to maintain the order of the online market. In particular, the country has been exploring the innovation of law enforcement methods to crack down on infringement and counterfeiting in online sales and livestream sales. **BR**

China has become
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Breaking the Hold

By Liang Xiao

The U.S.-initiated trade war against China, now in its eighth year, has taken a new turn. On May 29, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced the suspension of exports to China of critical U.S. technologies including those related to jet engines used in the latter's domestically produced C919 passenger jet—the only in-service engine currently powering the aircraft. Many American elites see the move as an attempt to curb China's progress in aviation and preserve the U.S. edge in technological competition.

The C919 passenger jet, developed by the Commercial Aircraft Corp. of China (COMAC), is positioned as a competitor to the U.S.' Boeing 737 and Europe's Airbus A320. It completed its maiden commercial flight in 2023. Priced at 653 million yuan (approximately \$90 million) per unit, the C919 offers a remarkable price advantage—with the Boeing 737 MAX, for example, coming in at a cost of \$110–135 million. As of April 30, COMAC had delivered 18 C919 aircraft to Chinese airlines, with total orders surpassing 1,400.

Currently, the C919 has a domestic content ratio of around 60 percent. Its engine was supplied by CFM International, a joint venture between General Electric of the U.S. and SNECMA, a French company under the Safran Group, the world's second largest aircraft equipment manufacturer.

Now that the U.S. has announced a suspension of engine exports, CFM International stands to suffer the most immediate loss. Amid ongoing safety concerns at Boeing and a sharp decline in orders for the 737, engine orders from China's C919 had emerged as a vital driver of growth for the joint venture.

China's response to the U.S. export suspension has been anything but hasty. Instead, it had long been preparing a contingency plan. As early as 2023, COMAC already began purchasing and stockpiling LEAP-1C engines—enough to sus-



China Eastern Airlines Flight MU721, operated by a C919 aircraft, departs from Shanghai Hongqiao Airport on January 1

tain C919 deliveries for several years. In parallel, China launched the development of its own large commercial aircraft engine, the CJ-1000A, in 2011. The first prototype was assembled in 2017 and in 2023, the engine completed a flight test aboard the Y-20, a military transport aircraft operated by the People's Liberation Army Air Force. The CJ-1000A is expected to fully replace the LEAP-1C by 2027.

China's vast domestic market and strong growth potential are more than sufficient to support the aircraft's development. The aircraft now boasts over 28,000 hours of safe commercial flight, 11,400 completed flights, and more than 1.57 million passengers transported.

American elites fear that China's breakthroughs in high-end manufacturing—particularly the rise of the C919—could erode

Boeing's market share and undermine the U.S.' dominance in the global aviation industry. Yet they seem unwilling to draw lessons from either history or present realities. From Huawei smartphones and the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System to high-speed rail and the C919, China has repeatedly advanced through the cycle of foreign cutoff, independent development and full substitution across multiple strategic sectors. Each act of hostile technological containment has ultimately served as a catalyst for the transformation of Chinese manufacturing.

“Blockades never prevent breakthroughs; churning waves won't hold back determined ships.” These were the words of Chinese Ambassador to the U.S. Xie Feng, spoken at an embassy event on May 28. This is not rhetoric, but a vivid testament to the progress of Chinese manufacturing amid challenges and adversity. **BR**

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The background of the advertisement is a vibrant, blue-toned digital cityscape. Several skyscrapers are visible, each with the word "Internet" written vertically on its side. The scene is overlaid with a complex network of binary code (0s and 1s) and various data-related terms such as "STATUS", "CHECKING", "DATA DOCUMENT", "ORIGINAL", "DATA UNITS", "TURN", "PROGRAM", and "COMPILE". The overall aesthetic is high-tech and futuristic, representing the digital world of data and news.

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THROUGH THEIR EYES

People from around
the world take you
on a journey to
rediscover China



Teaming Up Works Best

China, ASEAN, GCC forge innovative trilateral cooperation amid global uncertainties

By Ma Miaomiao

In a move reshaping the contours of global cooperation, the inaugural summit of China, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, has emerged as an important moment for the Global South.

Against a volatile international landscape and sluggish global growth, the establishment of the trilateral summit creates a platform for exchange and a mechanism for cooperation, Chinese Premier Li Qiang said on May 27 while addressing the event.

The summit was not only a milestone in Asian regional cooperation but also a declaration of the Global South's joint response to instability, Du Lan, Deputy Director of the Department for Asia-Pacific Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, told *Beijing Review*. By unleashing economic complementarity, deepening strategic synergy and safeguarding shared interests, trilateral cooperation will provide the Global South with more certainties and developmental momentum, she added.

The Global South refers to the nations of the world that are considered to have a relatively low level of economic and industrial development and are typically located to the south of more industrialized nations.

Dynamic regions

The 10-member ASEAN, including Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam, the GCC, consisting of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and China collectively boast a combined GDP of nearly \$25 trillion and a market of over 2 billion people, offering vast opportunities to synergize their markets and promote cross-regional investment, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said in his opening remarks at the summit.

The summit has brought together three of the “most dynamic regions in the Global South at a time of heightened global trade tensions,” Joanne Lin Weiling, a senior fellow and co-coordinator of

the ASEAN Studies Centre at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore, told newspaper *China Daily*.

China, the world's second largest economy, boasts a comprehensive industrial system and strong technological innovation capabilities. The ASEAN nations have risen to become the world's fifth largest economy, with a youthful demographic structure and digital transformation potential making them a key growth engine. GCC countries, holding the world's largest crude oil and natural gas reserves, a per-capita GDP that is three times the global average, and capital strength representing one third of global sovereign wealth funds, serve as pivotal forces in energy and investment. They exhibit great economic complementarity—combining China's technology and production capacity, ASEAN's resources and markets, and the GCC's capital and energy—unlocking tremendous growth opportunities, according to Du.

Both ASEAN and GCC countries are key partners in the Belt and Road Initiative (a China-proposed initiative to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes—*Ed.*). China and ASEAN have been each other's largest trading partners for five consecutive years, achieving remarkable cooperation in trade, investment and infrastructure development, with industrial chains evolving from complementarity to deep integration, she explained.

China-GCC cooperation in energy, trade, and other areas has also deepened, with free trade agreement negotiations nearing completion after multiple rounds. In December 2022, the first China-GCC Summit was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, followed by the inaugural ASEAN-GCC Summit the next year. This strong history of collaboration laid a solid foundation for the current summit and trilateral cooperation, Du added.

“I am confident that ASEAN, the GCC and China can draw upon our unique attributes and shape a future that is more connected, more resilient and more prosperous,” Anwar said.

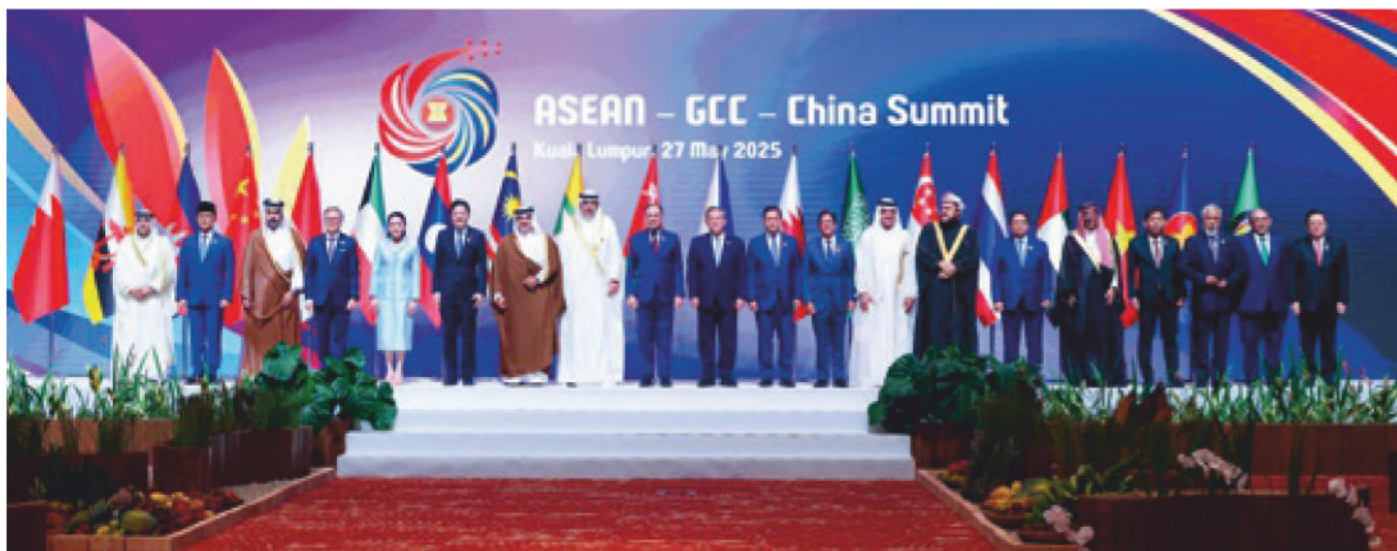
At the tripartite gathering, Li urged all sides to work together to build a model of global cooperation and development in three aspects: creating a model of cross-regional openness, forging a model of cooperation across different development stages, and fostering a model of cross-civilization integration.

Crown Prince Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah of Kuwait, which holds the rotating presidency of the GCC, and other ASEAN and GCC leaders attended the summit.

The leaders committed to further strengthening Belt and Road cooperation, with a focus on deepening ties in connectivity, trade, industrial and supply chains, agriculture, energy, finance and the digital economy. They pledged to accelerate trilateral integration, fostering robust, inclusive and sustainable development for all.

The summit adopted a joint statement, which was hailed as “detailed, elaborate” and a strong message of trilateral solidarity and cooperation by Anwar.

Related countries acknowledged their joint efforts to promote closer cooperation between ASEAN, GCC and China, and China's vision to build a closer



Leaders attending the inaugural ASEAN-China-GCC Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, pose for a group photo on May 27

ASEAN-China community with a shared future and a China-Arab community with a shared future in the new era, according to the statement.

An alternative

Amid global economic headwinds and mounting uncertainties, Li said by strengthening connectivity and collaboration, the three sides can forge a vibrant economic circle and a powerful engine for growth, which holds profound significance not only for their respective prosperity but also for advancing peace and development across Asia and the world at large.

The summit “took on added urgency” as the three sides “face the ripple effects of an increasingly fragmented global economy,” Lin stressed, adding that it “sent a clear message that ASEAN, the GCC and China are looking to build new economic partnerships that are not beholden to traditional power centers.”

It signaled “a proactive shift toward shaping an alternative, multipolar economic architecture grounded in Global South solidarity,” Nawazish Mirza, a professor of finance at the Excecia Business School in France, told *China Daily*. He pointed out that it also strategically re-positioned the three parties to diversify their markets and mitigate supply chain vulnerabilities.

“As some countries are becoming more protectionist and isolationist, the summit was a good initiative and effort to counter these emerging trends,” Lee Pei May, a political expert at the International Islamic University Malaysia, said in an interview with Xinhua News Agency. “It proves that economies can complement rather than compete with one another, easing the worries that countries can only develop if they turn inward.”

The event provides the Global South with a complementary, non-exclusive and development-focused multilateral template, serving as a robust defense of multilateralism and a collective solution for these countries to resist external risks, Du said.

This cooperation model, based on comparative advantages and centered on economic growth, livelihood improvement and sustainable development—rather than ideological confrontation—embodies the wisdom of non-zero-sum games, she continued.

While the trilateral format is still new, it also shows a growing appetite for the Global South-led cooperation that can buffer against external shocks and promote more equitable economic integration, Lin said.

This “encourages other regions to pursue similar models of collaboration,” Andrew Kam Jia Yi, a senior researcher with the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies at the National University of Malaysia, told Xinhua, adding that it is a sign of growing solidarity, where countries of the Global South are working together to shape their own futures, assert their priorities on the global stage, and build a more equitable and stable world order from the ground up.

Before attending the ASEAN-China-GCC Summit in Malaysia, Li paid an official visit to Indonesia from May 24 to 26.

During talks with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto on May 25, Li urged China and Indonesia to make the pie of cooperation bigger, strengthen industrial integration and safeguard free trade.

China is willing to work with Indonesia to enhance the alignment of development strategies and deepen high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, especially by optimizing and strengthening landmark projects, he said, urging the two sides to further enhance the “golden brand” of the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway. **BR**

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Travel Booming

China's rising role in the global tourism market By Tao Xing

For Nezha Berrahou, a backpacker from Morocco, her 25th birthday wasn't just a personal milestone—it was a passport to discovery. Choosing a trip to China as the ultimate gift to herself, she journeyed through Beijing's imperial majesty, Xi'an's historical landmarks and Shanghai's futuristic skyline. But what she found was more than just ancient wonders and modern marvels.

“What I liked most is that each city has its own unique character, which makes it very different and very interesting,” she told *Beijing Review* in Shanghai on May 27. “From the moment I landed in China, I felt welcome.”

“I especially recommend China for female travelers. When a woman travels alone, safety is often a big concern—how to navigate, how to get around. It can be difficult. But in China, that's not the case,” she added.

Her experience reflects a growing shift in global travel narratives: one where perceptions of China are being rewritten not by headlines, but by footsteps on its streets. For solo female travelers like Berrahou, China's blend of hospitality and safety is not just reassuring—it's empowering.

While travelers like Berrahou are discovering a China unknown to them before, the rest of the world is also looking East—with anticipation. Many countries are eagerly awaiting the return of Chinese tourists amid the post-pandemic resurgence of the global tourism market.

“We believe that what Chinese travelers are looking for, Brazil can offer: breathtaking natural beauty, a rich and vibrant culture and a unique cuisine. Chinese tourists especially prefer visiting Rio de Janeiro and Foz do Iguaçu,” Alisson Andrade, head of the International Markets Division at Embratur, the Brazilian agency for the promotion of international tourism, told *Beijing Review* on May 29 at the 2025 ITB China.

ITB China is a leading business-to-business-exclusive trade show focused on the Chinese travel market. The 2025 edition ran in Shanghai from May 27 to 29.

“We have brought a delegation of entrepreneurs

and representatives from various Brazilian states and municipalities to participate in the event for six years,” Andrade said.

A booming market

The 2025 ITB China's exhibition space increased by 30 percent compared to last year's edition, according to its organizers. Over 700 enterprises and organizations from 85 countries participated in the event as exhibitors. The number of attendees exceeded 20,500—a year-on-year growth of more than 35 percent—including 1,400 buyers from China and abroad, as well as nearly 280 media representatives and influencers. More than 38,800 business meetings were held during the event, substantially advancing cooperation and exchange between the global tourism enterprises and their Chinese counterparts.

Whether it's Chinese travelers going abroad or foreign travelers visiting China, all parties have made thorough preparations.

“The number of Chinese tourists visiting Brazil has grown exponentially, reaching over 70,000 last year,” Andrade said, adding that Brazilian tourism operators will offer new travel packages to attract more Chinese visitors—either for leisure or for business purposes—and boost their overall spending in Brazil.

“Brazil and China are long-standing friends and partners. In fact, China is



Brazil's number one trading partner in both imports and exports. So the connection between our countries is already strong," he added.

At the event, representatives from Hubei Province in central China had in-depth discussions with exhibitors from countries including Spain, Malaysia, Japan and the Republic of Korea. "There's a growing interest in China among international audiences, and we're actively working to ensure that Hubei becomes part of their travel radar—helping more global travelers discover and learn about our province," Xu Hui, an official from the Hubei Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, told *Beijing Review*.

Travel companies are proactively mapping out strategies to seize emerging market opportunities. According to Anson Liu, Executive Deputy General Manager of Business Development and Cooperation at Trip.com, one of China's leading online travel agencies with a collection of premier travel brands, the company's international platform offers comprehensive services for international travelers. For example, leveraging its AI-powered travel assistant TripGenie, the platform can accurately identify user needs, recommend destinations and provide detailed travel information.

"Our group also helps improve inbound travelers' experience by offering diverse payment solutions. For example, we provide an integrated service for buying entry tickets for scenic spots and we've also set up self-service machines for offline purchase of entry tickets in scenic spots," Liu told *Beijing Review*.

China's inbound tourism has maintained strong momentum, with a sharp rise in both international arrivals and visitor spending, buoyed by streamlined visa policies and an improved travel environment. As of June 1, China had granted unilateral visa-free entry for up to 30 days to travelers from 43 countries and had extended its visa-free transit period to 240 hours for travelers from 54 countries. About 380,000 foreign visitors entered China under these arrangements during the May Day holiday (May 1-5), a year-on-year increase of 72.7 percent.

Marco Favretto, a tourist from Italy, shared his excitement about China's visa-free policy. "It's very tourist-friendly, and I think tourism here is only going to improve," he told *Beijing Review*, adding that there is a special energy in China and it feels wholesome and inviting.

He described China as a vibrant and welcoming destination. "I'm really sad I have to leave soon, but I'm sure I'll be back. I want to see the entire country one day," he added.

Reading China

"China Travel" has become a buzzword on international social media. With an increasing number of foreign travelers

The Brazil booth at the 2025 ITB China, a leading business-to-business-exclusive trade show focused on the Chinese travel market, held in Shanghai from May 27 to 29



visiting China, their stories will transcend borders and foster mutual understanding.

"China is a wonderful country. We're used to seeing it through other people's eyes. But we need to see China through our own eyes," Brazilian travel blogger Lipe Camanzano told *Beijing Review* at the 2025 ITB China. He came to China with the Brazilian delegation.

"The people are amazing, the country is amazing. There are so many incredible things here that we should use as examples. Coming to China helps us grow in every way," he added.

Marco Aurélio, a tourist from Brazil, echoed Camanzano's views and described his time in China as "a very different experience." "I see this stunning China, which feels different from what we have in Brazil. And when you come face to face with this place, you see the culture, education, cleanliness, technology, and that everyone here is very technologically savvy," he said.

Laura, a traveler from Viet Nam, was struck by China's urban development. "It's very modern and very clean—everything is so advanced. What really impressed me is how many cars are on the streets, and most of them are electric. In my country, we mostly use gasoline vehicles, so this was a surprise," she told *Beijing Review*.

"The air is also very clean, and the streets are spotless—no trash anywhere. It all feels very fresh and well-maintained," Laura said.

Alex Semshyn, from San Francisco, the U.S., also visited China for the first time. "I find this country truly fascinating and beautiful—very historic, yet incredibly modern," he told *Beijing Review*. During his two-week trip, he visited Beijing, Xi'an (where he saw the Terracotta Warriors), Chengdu (home to more than 200 giant pandas), Chongqing (where he took a river cruise to the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydropower project on the upper stream of the Yangtze River), and Shanghai.

"What surprised me most is how modern China really is. Coming from the U.S., I always thought we were the most modern country, but China might be even more advanced. The people are extremely kind and helpful. I'm also amazed by how clean everything is and how safe I feel here." **BR**

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Boats and Business

How an ancient festival fuels the modern economy By Zhang Yage

Ancient traditions continue to shape modern consumer behavior and mindsets in China. The Dragon Boat Festival holiday, which fell on May 31 to June 2 this year, provides a great example.

Over two millennia ago, ancient Chinese people cast glutinous rice dumplings (*zongzi*) into rivers to prevent aquatic creatures from eating the body of Qu Yuan, the revered poet-patriot of the Warring States Period (475–221 B.C.) who drowned himself in the Miluo River in despair after learning that the capital of his motherland had been captured by enemy troops. Since then, elaborate dragon boat races have been held on rivers to commemorate him, while households hang bundled mugwort on their doorways—a practice believed to ward off epidemics, and repel insects as well as malevolent forces.

Today, to celebrate the festival, consumers flock to e-commerce platforms and supermarkets to snap up trendy *zongzi* in all kinds of flavors and packaging. Once a humble herb, mugwort now graces the shelves of trendy gift and flower shops. Dragon boat races, steeped in tradition, have evolved into tourist attractions. These age-old traditions, reshaped by modern commercialization and people's evolving needs for entertainment, have now become engines fueling a vibrant festival economy.

“The Dragon Boat Festival is the last public holiday in the first half of the year,” Dai Bin, head of the China Tourism Academy, told China Media Group. “During recent traditional holidays, folk customs, intangible cultural heritage and family-friendly trips emerged as new highlights that drew visitors. In particular, dragon boat races in south China and activities related to the festival's folk customs across the country were very popular with tourists,” he added.

Traditional engines

The Dragon Boat Festival holds unique cultural significance for the Chinese people. In 2009, it became China's first traditional festival inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list. During the holiday period this year, the market demonstrated remarkable enthusiasm for related folk activities and festival-themed products.

Booking platform Tongcheng Travel reported page views for guides to domestic intangible cultural heritage markets increased over 300 percent year on year during the holiday period.

“We brought our child to watch the Dragon Boat Festival races and experience the tradition firsthand,” Beijing resident Liu Mengying told *Beijing Review* on the bank of the Grand Canal section in Beijing's Tongzhou District.

The high-profile event, held along the Grand Canal section in Tongzhou during the three days of the festival, featured Lingnan-style dragon boat performances, boat tug-of-war competitions, as well as cultural tourism activities celebrating the canal's heritage. Lingnan is the region south of the Wuling Mountains in south China, encompassing the areas of modern-day Guangdong and Hainan provinces, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, and Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions. Historically, due to the natural barrier formed by these mountains, Lingnan developed a unique Dragon Boat Festival culture, particularly in its dragon boat racing. This includes distinctive boat craftsmanship and elaborate ceremonial rituals.

“We believe it's crucial for children to engage with China's cultural tradition,

so that they will remember the impressive scenes along with the patriotic spirit behind this festival,” Liu explained. “We've booked a DIY *zongzi* workshop where we'll learn to make the festival food together after watching the races.”

On May 31, Zhenyuan County in Qiandongnan Prefecture of Guizhou Province not only hosted dragon boat races but also pioneered interactive programs allowing tourists to paddle the boats with professional athletes to compete for festival-themed prizes.

“The hands-on dragon boat experience



Tourists enjoy themselves in Hetou Old Street in Fengnan District, Tangshan City, Hebei Province, on June 2



Athletes compete in a dragon boat race in Macao Special Administrative Region, on May 31

exceeded our expectations in popularity,” Jia Meiqian, Director of Zhenyuan’s Tourism Service Center, told newspaper *Guizhou Daily*. “Many visitors, despite having no prior paddling skills, were drawn to this immersive cultural activity.”

Jia added that the initiative’s appeal extended beyond Guizhou, attracting participants from other regions like Chongqing Municipality and Jiangsu Province to admire Guizhou’s distinct culture.

At the Nanyuan Wetland Forest Park in Beijing’s Fengtai District, crowds gathered at the DIY workshops to craft mugwort ornaments, hand-painted fans and aromatic sachets.

At the event, a park staff member introduced the functions and scents of traditional herbs used in Dragon Boat Festival sachets, including mint, Chinese angelica, perilla leaves, mugwort and patchouli. They then demonstrated how to make these aromatic sachets step by step.

After receiving the tools, embroidered sachet pouches, and pre-measured dried herb blends, visitors scattered to different stalls to create their own.

“Our family package includes materials for all these festival crafts, costing just 49 yuan (\$6.8),” one of the staff at the workshop told *Beijing Review*. “These activities are incredibly popular. People believe handmade gifts carry special meaning, and are perfect for sharing with loved ones during the holidays.”

These vibrant activities have significantly boosted holiday travel. According to the statistics released by the Ministry of Transport on June 2, total cross-regional trips during the Dragon Boat Festival holiday reached 657 million, averaging 219 million daily and demonstrating a 3-percent increase from the same holiday period last year.

“The preference for short-haul trips and local leisure activities made high-speed rail and self-driving the dominant modes of travel. Many families are postponing major trips to summer as the travel peak approaches,” Dai explained. “Meanwhile, some travelers are opting for niche attractions, fueling tourism growth in smaller cities and county hubs.”

Innovative forces

Alongside classic festival staples, a wave of innovative products featuring contemporary flavors, functional upgrades and increased aesthetic appeal, has ignited consumer demand, giving retail economies a significant lift. E-commerce platform Tmall

reported that holiday sales of products related to the festival or the season surged over 130 percent month on month.

While traditional *zongzi* fillings like sweet red bean paste, and pork and salted egg yolk remain staples, bold new varieties are captivating younger shoppers: sugar-free purple yam and oat *zongzi*, spicy crayfish *zongzi*, and flower-infused options like jasmine-taro *zongzi*.

“I remember when I was a child, holiday treats such as *zongzi* and moon cakes came with traditional flavors, and in heavy gift boxes that were unnecessary and not environmentally friendly,” Beijing resident Chen Xuening told *Beijing Review*. “I love the *zongzi* products now—in simple packaging and in all kinds of surprising flavors. If we want to wrap up a box for relatives, there are tailored packaging services.”

Mugwort and other medicinal herbs, once simply hung by doorways, now fuel an extended value chain as they come in boutique bouquets and artisanal sachets.

In Wuchuan Gelao and Miao Autonomous County in Guizhou, farmers harvest emerald-green mugwort for processing, with one factory manager revealing ambitious 2025 targets to China Media Group, “We plan to source 2,000 metric tons of mugwort to produce 2 tons of essential oil.”

The county’s more than 7,000 hectares of mugwort fields now yield over 40 kinds of derivative products, from moxa sticks to herbal teas and therapeutic bath bundles.

At the Timeless Flowers florist in Langfang, Hebei Province, festival-themed arrangements have become the runaway bestsellers. “Decorative bouquets have gained popularity over the past two years,” the shop manager told *Beijing Review*.

The store crafts arrangements using mugwort, butcher’s broom, wheat stalks, hosta leaves, and eucalyptus—accented with bells, gourds, ribbons, sequins and sachets. These elements are tailored into bouquets, gift boxes or miniature baskets based on customer preferences.

“Young consumers are redefining holiday rituals,” the manager noted. “They’re blending tradition with contemporary aesthetics to create new ceremonial experiences—and it is their way of promoting traditional culture. As business managers, we must catch onto the trends of the times.” **BR**

Assembling Sanctuaries

The growing trend of DIY furniture among youth in China By Yuan Yuan

Through two relocations since moving to Guangzhou—capital of Guangdong Province in south China—Zhang Baibai has curated an entire home’s worth of furniture, each piece handcrafted by her.

She and her husband arrived in the city in 2022 as renters, later purchasing their own apartment. Initially driven by necessity, Zhang turned to furniture-making as a thrift measure. “We were saving for our home and refused to sink money into temporary furnishings,” she told Guangzhou’s *Yangcheng Evening News*.

But how to economize while cultivating a truly livable space? The solution came when she stumbled upon online DIY furniture tutorials. Inspired, she bought some Paulownia wood boards, which, prized for being lightweight and affordable, are perfect for solo projects. She also learned wood painting to finish the pieces.

“Most of the furniture I made has a simple structure,” Zhang said. “It mainly involves buying boards, painting them, and assembling. But despite the simplicity, the quality makes them surprisingly durable.” One of her earliest creations was a coat rack. The materials were basic: a wood board, some small wooden rods, and pebbles she brought from her hometown. “I painted the board, drilled holes, screwed in the rods, and glued the pebbles to their ends with no-nail adhesive,” she said.

Her most ambitious project was a sofa, inspired by finding a beautiful wooden frame online. “I bought it immediately and started customizing it,” she said. After purchasing fabric and padding, she hand-stitched the sofa cover and cushions at home.

Remarkably, most of Zhang’s DIY furniture remains in excellent condition today. “Even if any part eventually breaks, I’ll instantly know what’s gone wrong and how to fix it—because I built it myself,” she said.

Design and assembly

Searches for terms like “marine plywood,”

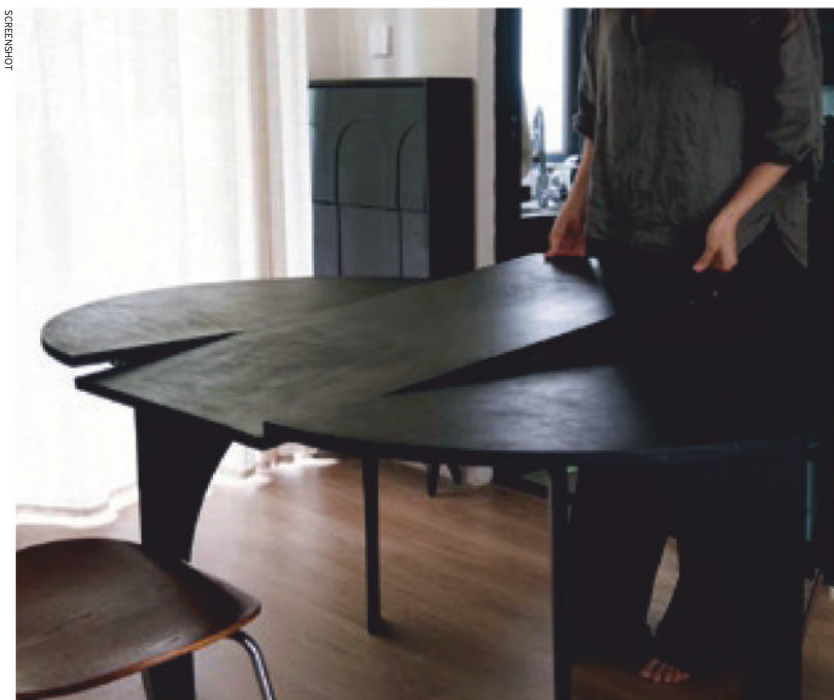
“linear shaft,” and “aluminum profiles” on Xiaohongshu (RedNote), China’s leading lifestyle and e-commerce platform, reveal a thriving world of DIY furniture innovation. Unlike traditional woodworking—which demands expertise in sawing, polishing and other complex joinery—creating furniture with linear shafts and aluminum profiles requires minimal specialized skills.

Users can craft bookshelves from marine plywood, build walk-in closets with aluminum profiles, and even transform linear shafts into lamp stands. The possibility of creative applications with these materials inspires many people, who are eager to try their own projects.

A Shanghai-based architect surnamed Guo, who labels himself a DIY enthusiast, frequently shares his furniture-making experiences on RedNote. His latest project: a mid-century modern cabinet crafted from two sheets of marine plywood using traditional Chinese mortise-and-tenon joinery—no



A creator on RedNote shows off a DIY storage shelf made from marine plywood on November 14, 2024



Zhang Baibai showcases her DIY extendable dining table in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, on August 12, 2024

nails or glue. He documents the process in videos, including his mistakes, and discusses with followers the lessons learned. He also offers paid design blueprints for DIY beginners.

“DIY home renovation and furniture-making, even creating design drawings or renderings, aren’t difficult. It’s less complicated than it seems, just apply some effort,” he said in his videos.

Yet some users find the process challenging. A Hangzhou-based netizen surnamed Lin, after attempting a shoe rack with marine plywood and aluminum profiles, described it as extremely time-consuming and laborious.

“Many mainly showcase finished pieces, making DIY seem effortless,” Lin said in one of the videos he uploaded on RedNote. “But the reality hits hard. Marine plywood’s back-straining heft, endless screws to wrestle, and steps that stubbornly tangle transform the seemingly simple work into raw labor.”

Lin found a supportive community of creators on the platform, who used self-deprecating humor when sharing their DIY fails, building each other’s confidence in the process. Some call imperfections as signatures of the craft, as these pieces proudly bear their “experimental” spirit.

They think that an open display of structural elements, such as unsealed plywood seams, visible aluminum brackets, protruding linear shaft nuts and naked sliding rails, transform industrial practicality into art.

For Bella (pseudonym), DIY is about enjoying the process, rather than striving for perfection. Assembling custom-cut templates with aluminum profiles in the evenings is fun for her. “It’s like adult Lego; but crafting functional, eco-friendly furniture delivers a reward no toy can match—the satisfaction of creation,” she told the *New Weekly* magazine.

Beijing-based Wang Xiaochen also views DIY furniture as “adult-scale

toys.” “Growing up in an era of scarcity, the toys my father and grandfather handmade became our most treasured comforts,” the 30-something told newspaper *Beijing Daily*.

Last year, when his daughter was born, he built her crib from scratch. “Seeing her lying there, fluttering her eyes and giggling, I realized the crib had transformed from solitary craft into our bridge of connection,” he said, his voice softening. “It cradles her dreams.”

Necessity to comfort

For Zhang Baibai, these handcrafted pieces now transcend mere functionality. After moving out of her first apartment in Guangzhou, Zhang brought all her DIY furniture to her new home. “When moving to a new place, I initially feel a bit unfamiliar with the surroundings. But with these self-made furniture pieces keeping me company, I quickly grew accustomed to my new home,” she said.

The new apartment was slightly larger than her previous one and the old furniture she brought wasn’t enough to fill it, so she crafted a new batch of DIY pieces. This time, the motivation was more about passion than necessity.

She even taught herself computer aided design software, designing blueprints that she sent directly to manufacturers. The factories would cut the wooden boards according to her designs, and she’d assemble them herself.

Nearly everything visible upon entering her home is handmade by her and her husband, including a bookshelf, an extendable dining table, a vanity mirror stand, jewelry storage boxes, and a coffee table. To make more than a dozen furniture items, she used just five wooden boards, costing around 5,000 yuan (\$700).

These handcrafted pieces serve as living archives of her life—each bearing witness to her evolving tastes, from her retro-inspired phase to her minimalist era. The collaborative building process with her husband forged deeper bonds between them. “Though my home lies far from work—over an hour’s commute each way—returning here each day brings profound comfort,” she said. “Every piece we built together transforms this space into a sanctuary.” **BR**

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Petals and Partnerships

A Dutch horticulturist cultivates connection between his homeland and China

By Kang Caiqi

Windmills rotate gracefully, European-style buildings stand prominently and vast fields of wildly colored tulips extend to the horizon... Such a picturesque scene can not only be spotted in the Netherlands but also in Dafeng District, Yancheng City of Jiangsu Province in east China, at a place called—Holland Flower Park.

Even on weekday mornings, tourists flock to the park in droves. According to data from the government of Dafeng, during this year's May Day holiday (May 1-5) alone, the number of tourists exceeded 690,000.

Behind the iconic tulips that brighten up the park is Nicolaas Kaaijk, a Dutch horticulturist who has brought his homeland's specialty to China.

Born into a tulip-growing family in 1956, Kaaijk has nurtured a deep affection for tulips, the Dutch national flower, from a very young age. By the time he was 7, he had already learned to trim blossoms and identify diseased bulbs. At age 10, he could drive a tractor to help his parents harvest tulip bulbs. At 17, upon graduating from an agricultural technical school, Kaaijk took over the family business and

began his entrepreneurial journey as a gardener. "Ever since I was a child, I've had a dream to spread tulips to more places in the world," he told *Beijing Review*.

In 1998, armed with both the passion and professional skills to promote tulips, Kaaijk came to China, and has successively engaged in the cultivation and sales of tulips in several places across the country. As Dafeng set out to build a "Holland Town" in 2013—a tourist destination, Kaaijk was invited to become the technical advisor for the Holland Flower Park, initially part of the Holland Town. He embraced the project and over one decade later, he's still shaping the landscape.

From wasteland to wonderland

The Dutch-themed tourist attraction was not created randomly, but in order to commemorate and continue the friendship between the two countries. A century ago, Dafeng was an unforgiving stretch of saline-alkali land, where crops struggled and farmers despaired. In 1919, Chinese national industrialist Zhang Jian invited Dutch hydraulic engineer Hendrik de Rijke to help design and construct a world-class drainage system. This pioneering infrastructure transformed the land, enabling dozens of square km of cotton to grow in this soil. This chapter of history, and the waterways it left behind, led Kaaijk to believe in the future of tulip cultivation in this region.

The development of the tulip industry involves series of fundamental technical processes, including bulb storage, soil balancing and field management. In particular, large-scale cultivation and bulb propagation had long remained uncharted territory in China. Kaaijk devoted immense time and energy to growing the flowers.

"At the very beginning, growing tulips in Dafeng relied entirely on the importation of flower bulbs, which incurred substantial costs. Furthermore, owing to the disparities in climate and soil conditions, the survival rate of the flowers was relatively low, and some blooms failed to achieve satisfactory results," he recalled.

"I had tried to plant small bulbs first and cultivate them into larger ones in one or two years before they blossomed, so that they could better adapt to the soil environment here," Kaaijk said as he introduced one of the methods he had attempted. "Also, because the climate here is much warmer than that in the Netherlands, the probability of pests and viruses occurring increases accordingly. So I selected and cultivated virus-resistant varieties," he added.

During the 2014 Spring Festival, China's biggest annual holiday, Kaaijk organized his first indoor tulip exhibition in China. Buoyed by the warm reception, he pressed forward and decided to take on a greater challenge: a large-scale outdoor tulip display. In just three years, he and his team managed to transform the Holland Flower Park into the only scenic destination in China capable of showcasing tulips outdoors for eight consecutive months every year.

Today, the 2-square-km Holland Flower Park is home to 30 million tulip blossoms spanning over 300 varieties. It has collected and preserved 13 species of wild tulips native to China and achieved the independent propagation of eight cultivated varieties. And yet, this floral sea stretches far beyond, as a vast plan is



OWENJZ/REX

The bi-color tulips cultivated by Nicolaas Kaaijk at the Holland Flower Park in Dafeng District, Yancheng, Jiangsu Province, on March 31



Kaaijk (right) introduces the tulips he cultivated independently to a Dutch friend in Dafeng on March 31

unfolding to upgrade the experience for its tourists.

“We are now working on a tulip-picking garden, so that the tourists take home the tulips they handpicked. It is noteworthy that all the tulips there (Holland Flower Park) are replanted. We collected the bulbs planted in the Holland Flower Park last year and transplanted them here. This way, the bulbs are fully utilized, which is both economical and environmentally friendly,” Kaaijk explained.

The language of tulips

In recent years, the Holland Flower Park has grown in renown nationwide. Featuring expansive flower fields and European-style architecture, the park has become a popular destination for couples to have their wedding pictures taken. Consequently, the park has developed related services, including wedding planning, floral arrangement, performances and professional photography.

The park also hosts a flower and potted plant market, a children’s playground, dining venues, a cinema, a camping area and resort hotels—thoughtfully designed to cater to visitors of all ages.

The decade-long tulip cultivation has not only yielded significant economic gains, but also fostered lasting cultural ties between the two nations. “The Flower Park has naturally fostered trade between the Netherlands and China—but I truly hope for a deeper exchange,” Kaaijk said.

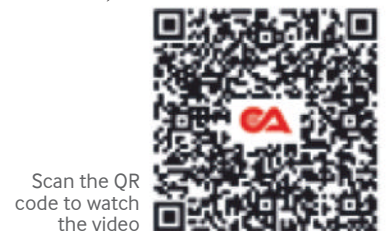
Beyond his work in fields and warehouses, he has actively engaged with Dutch universities and floriculture associations, advocating for collaboration between the Holland Flower Park and the Dutch Wageningen University & Research, one of the leading international universities in the field of healthy food and

living environment, to secure greater technical support. He has also taken the initiative to organize Sino-Dutch floriculture and cultural tourism forums, as well as trade fairs, inviting renowned Dutch experts, business leaders and government officials to China for in-depth interactions.

Now, the Holland Flower Park is a platform for Dafeng to further expand its exchange and cooperation with Holland in different fields like culture, tourism and education.

“Coincidentally, the language of tulips is love and friendship. I brought tulips from Holland with the hope that they would flourish on Chinese soil and, even more so, I aspire for these tulips to convey the love and friendship they stand for,”

Kaaijk said. **BR**



Scan the QR code to watch the video

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Comments to kangcai@icgamericas.com



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SPRING BUD PROJECT

TOGETHER LET'S HELP LITTLE FLOWERS BLOSSOM

CHINA MOSAIC

Weekly video commentary direct from Beijing

中国3分钟



New Landmark in The Porcelain Capital

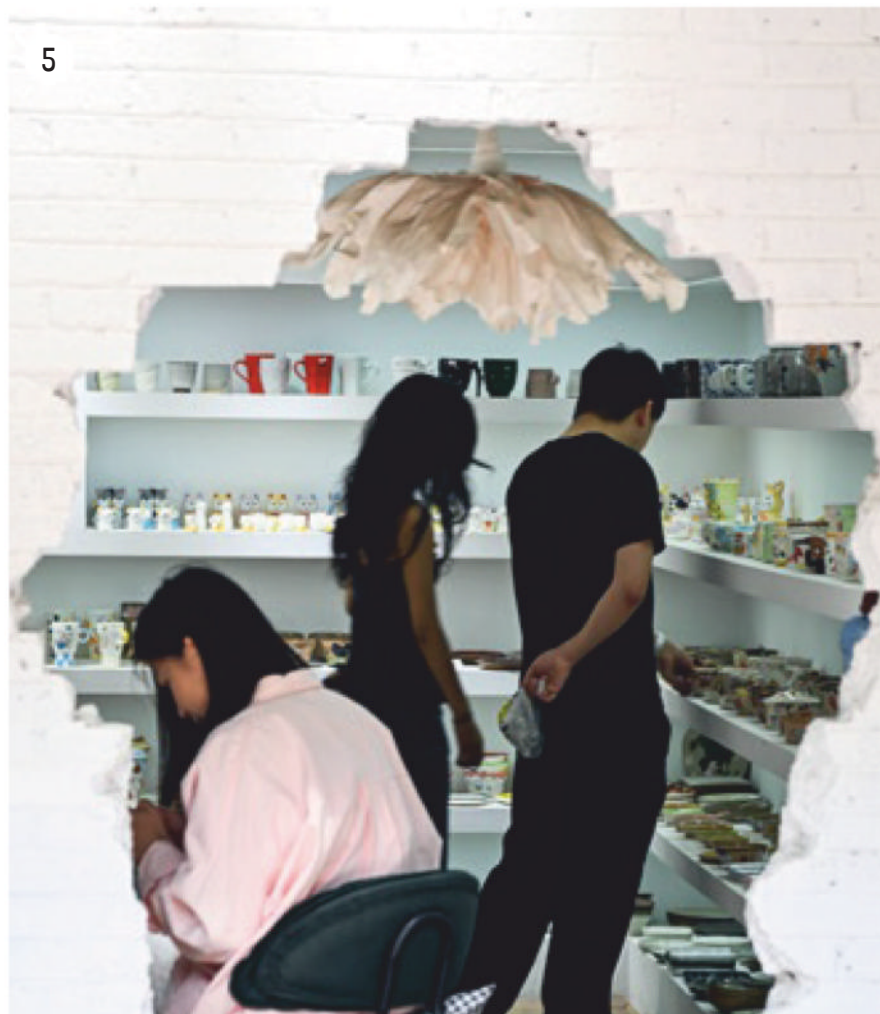
Jingdezhen in Jiangxi Province, known as China's Porcelain Capital, is one of the country's most famous cultural and historic cities, with a 2,000-year history of ceramic production.

The city's Taoxichuan Ceramic Art Avenue is a modern redevelopment of the site of a former state-run ceramics factory. The 22 old factory buildings and other industrial facilities of the original factory have been transformed into cultural landmarks that integrate tradition, fashion and modern technology.

Tourists can buy ceramic products from shops in the area, and visit the Jingdezhen Industrial Heritage Museum and the Taoxichuan Art Museum. During holidays, Taoxichuan attracts hordes of tourists from China and abroad. **BR**

(Text and photos by Wei Yao)

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Comments to weiyao@cicgamericas.com





1. Ceramic refrigerator magnets are popular souvenirs
2. A shop selling ceramic paintings
3. The Taoxichuan Ceramic Art Avenue
4. The Taoxichuan Ceramic Art Avenue is home to more than 100 ceramics shops like this one
5. Tourists browse at one of the area's numerous ceramic shops



Balancing Tradition With Progress

By Donatien Niyonzima



Tourists enjoy a banquet with locals in Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, on May 3

Nujiang, a mountainous region in Yunnan Province, has undergone rapid change in recent years. Once one of China's poorest areas, it is now a place where modern homes and infrastructure sit alongside centuries-old traditions. The local ethnic groups, including the Lisu, Nu and Dulong, also spelt Derung, have embraced new opportunities while holding on to their cultural roots.

The government's efforts to improve living standards have been significant. Large-scale poverty alleviation projects have relocated thousands of people from remote villages to towns with better facilities, schools and health care. Roads that once took days to travel now take minutes. Vocational training and education have opened doors for younger generations.

Today, new roads crisscross the mountains, connecting remote villages to towns, and the Internet reaches homes that once lacked electricity. The impact of the government's poverty alleviation efforts is obvious, yet what impresses even more is how the people of Nujiang have managed to preserve their traditional culture while embracing progress.

The people of Nujiang continue to

practice their traditional crafts and customs despite important changes in the development of their region. Embroidery, weaving and dance remain part of daily life. This blending of old and new is not accidental—it reflects a broader understanding that development does not mean erasing identity.

The cultural heritage of Nujiang's ethnic groups is seen as a strength, not a hindrance. These traditions provide a sense of future with confidence. At the same time, they attract tourists and create economic opportunities through cultural tourism and handicrafts. This approach aligns with China's wider policy of celebrating ethnic diversity while pursuing national progress.

Nujiang's success story shows that modernization and cultural preservation can go hand in hand. The region's development is a reminder that improving lives does not require abandoning history. Instead, it is about finding ways to keep traditions alive in a changing world.

In a Lisu village, it's very common to see a woman weaving tricky textiles using techniques passed down through generations. The patterns and motifs reflect their history, beliefs and connection to the land. These textiles are not merely decorative; they are an integral part of their identity, worn during

festivals, weddings and other important ceremonies. These cultural practices are not relics of the past but living traditions that continue to evolve and adapt to the present.

Tourism has emerged as a significant source of income, with visitors drawn to Nujiang's stunning scenery and vibrant cultural scene. Local entrepreneurs have also found innovative ways to market traditional handicrafts, creating livelihoods that both preserve cultural heritage and generate income.

China's journey to becoming a global economic power has been fueled by many factors, including strategic investments in infrastructure, education and technology. However, it is equally important to recognize the role that cultural values have played in this transformation. Values such as community cohesion, respect for elders, and a strong work ethic have long been integral to Chinese society, fostering social stability and driving economic growth. These values are particularly evident in rural communities like those in Nujiang, where people rely on each other for support and work together to overcome challenges.

Moreover, China's emphasis on unity and national identity has been crucial in mobilizing resources and achieving common goals. As the country continues to modernize, it is essential to preserve and promote these cultural values, ensuring that economic progress does not come at the expense of social cohesion and cultural diversity.

The values embedded in these ethnic cultures—respect for nature, community solidarity, and the passing down of knowledge—have contributed to China's broader social and economic progress. They have helped build a society where diverse identities coexist and contribute to national strength.

Nujiang offers a clear example of how development can be inclusive and culturally sensitive. It shows that preserving cultural identity is not just about looking back, but also about shaping a future that honors the past. **BR**

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