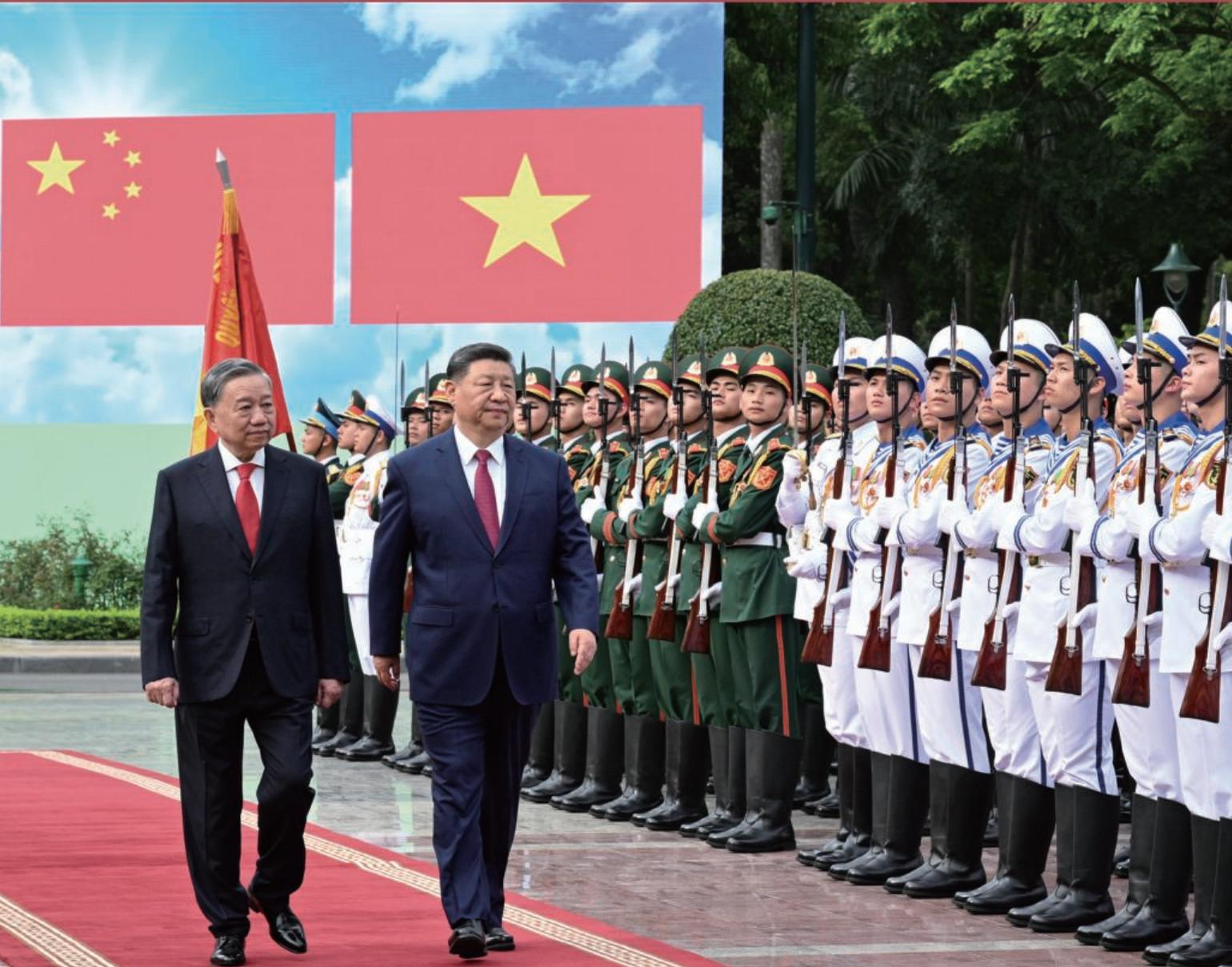


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# CONTENTS

## EDITOR'S DESK

**02 The Proximity Advantage**

## THIS WEEK

## COVER STORY

**12 Together We Thrive**

President Xi's visit consolidates ties with Southeast Asia

**16 Powering Synergy for a Shared Future**

A fruitful framework for socioeconomic development

**18 Bridging Histories, Building Futures**

Celebrating 75 years of China-Viet Nam diplomatic relations

Cover Photo: Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese President, and To Lam, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Viet Nam Central Committee, inspect the guard of honor during a welcome ceremony hosted by To Lam in Hanoi, Viet Nam, on April 14 (XINHUA)

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## OPINION

**22 Maintaining Global Order, Rewriting Rules**

The evolving strategies of America's key counterparts

**24 Bracing for Headwinds**

U.S. extreme tariffs won't disrupt China's growth trajectory

**26 Anti-Geopolitical Recession**

The UN at 80: how to offer hope in a divided world?

**28 Space Security: A Shared Responsibility**

An issue that transcends national boundaries

**30 Protectionism Will Not Revive U.S. Shipbuilding**

Proposed port fees are bad for business

**31 How China's Forex**

**Reserves Help Mitigate Risks**

Adapting to challenges and holding strong

## FEATURES

**32 Steady Out of the Gate**

China's Q1 economic performance

**36 Navigating the Storm**

Trade wars, new routes: mapping China's export end-runs

**38 A Beacon for the Future**

Think Asia Forum promotes unity amid uncertainty

**40 New Challenges, New Choices**

More students are choosing non-traditional destinations for overseas study

**42 Unfurling the Future**

China's blueprint for a sustainable world at the 2025 World Expo

**44 Raising the Roof**

New regulations set to improve housing quality

## CULTURE

**46 A Miracle of Milu Protection**

A wetland's efforts to restore, protect and grow its biodiversity

## FORUM

**48 Fast-Track to 'I Do': The Pros and Cons of China's New Marriage Policy**



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## The Proximity Advantage

Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to Viet Nam, Malaysia and Cambodia on April 14-18. This was a high-profile neighborhood diplomatic move by China at a time when the world is undergoing changes unseen in a century.

This visit not only was important for China's relations with these three countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), but also injected new momentum into regional and global peace and development.

China has long upheld a policy of fostering friendship and partnership with neighboring countries, striving to create a harmonious and friendly regional environment. At the Central Conference on Work Related to Neighboring Countries in Beijing on April 8-9, China reaffirmed its commitment to building a community with a shared future for humanity, and strengthening amicable, secure and prosperous neighborhood relations. It also underlined the importance of upholding the Asian values of peace, cooperation, openness and inclusiveness as the foundation for regional cooperation.

Xi's visit to the three Southeast

Asian countries immediately after the conference underscored the Chinese Government's commitment to its words. China's relations with its neighbors today are stronger than at any time in modern history, even as regional dynamics become ever more connected to global shifts.

Building a community with a shared future requires China to deepen strategic trust with neighboring nations while supporting regional stability and sustainable development. Through dialogue, differences can be managed. Through enhanced connectivity and supply chain cooperation, economic integration can flourish. Security collaboration addresses shared risks, while expanded cultural and people-to-people exchange build lasting bonds.

Today, the world faces uncertainty and instability due to sluggish global economic recovery, the rise of trade protectionism and intensified geopolitical conflicts. Against this backdrop, strengthening cooperation between China and ASEAN is particularly urgent and important. Xi's visit to the three Southeast Asian countries demonstrated China's confidence in teaming up with its neighbors to address global challenges. **BR**



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# LET THE GOOD TIMES BEGIN!

Tourists and locals celebrate the water-splashing festival in a square in Jinghong, Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, on April 15.

Several ethnic groups in China, including the Dai, Achang and Blang, ring in the New Year on the Dai calendar with the water-splashing festival.

During the festival, water is considered an auspicious symbol and people splash water on one another as a blessing, symbolizing wishes for happiness and good fortune.



## Love Is Life!

Participants in traditional costumes celebrate the Miao Sisters Festival in Taijiang County, Guizhou Province, on April 12. The festival honors love and spring through singing, dancing and the exchange of traditional gifts and tokens, such as handwoven belt to express commitment and dyed eggs symbolizing fertility.

## Inbound Tourism

Beijing experienced a surge in inbound tourism in the first quarter of 2025, welcoming 891,000 visitors—a 61.3-percent year-on-year increase. This growth is attributed to the Chinese capital's intensified efforts to improve travel and payment convenience, diversified tourism experiences and China's relaxed visa-free tourism and transit policy.

Data released by the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism on April 15 revealed that visitors from Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and Taiwan Province totaled 147,000, a 32-percent year-on-year increase. Foreign tourists accounted for the majority of inbound visitors, with 744,000 arrivals, representing a 68.7 percent jump and 83.5 percent of all inbound visitors to the city.

To boost inbound tourism,

Beijing has launched one-stop comprehensive service centers for arriving tourists at its two airports. It is also offering more convenient payment and telecommunication services.

The city is also expanding its range of in-depth travel products, encouraging visitors to explore beyond iconic landmarks like the Great Wall and the Temple of Heaven.

Looking ahead, Beijing plans to enhance its entire tourism service chain, encompassing customs clearance, transportation, accommodation, sightseeing, shopping and payments. The city aims to establish itself as China's premier inbound tourism destination.

## National Security

In commemoration of the 10th National Security Education Day, China's Ministry of State Security

announced on April 15 that over 90 individuals have been recognized for their substantial contributions to national security. This is the seventh consecutive year since 2019 that citizens have been honored for their major role in protecting national security, particularly through reporting suspicious activities.

Among those commended was a fisherman, surnamed Lu, from a coastal region, who received a major contribution award for retrieving a foreign espionage device from the sea. In Liaoning Province, an office worker, surnamed Liu, was recognized for reporting individuals covertly photographing military facilities. A scholar, surnamed Shi, in Zhejiang Province, was honored for identifying a foreign organization's illegal efforts to collect sensitive Chinese data.

The honorees represent a broad spectrum of society,

including soldiers, doctors, engineers, civil servants and farmers, ranging in age from a 16-year-old high school student to a 70-year-old retired teacher.

The ministry lauded the recipients' vigilance and dedication, stating that citizens from all segments of society have made "extraordinary contributions from ordinary posts" by confronting activities that threaten national security.

National Security Education Day, observed annually on April 15, serves to raise public awareness of national security issues and foster greater civic engagement in safeguarding the country.

## Malicious Short Videos

China's top Internet regulator initiated a nationwide campaign on April 15 to curb malicious marketing in the short video sector. The initiative seeks to cultivate a healthier and more trustworthy online environment.

The three-month campaign, spearheaded by the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, targets several key offenses: fabricated content, disinformation, conduct that violates public order and morals, and practices that violate policies to attract viewers.

Specific examples of targeted offenses include staging emotionally manipulative content to exploit public sympathy for financial gain and using deepfakes or altered audio or visuals to fabricate narratives.

The campaign emphasizes accountability, requiring short video platforms to curb malicious marketing. Platforms and accounts found in serious violation will face strict penalties.

China has a large short video market, with 1.05 billion users

as of June 2024, representing 95.5 percent of the nation's total Internet population.

## Civil Affairs Services

China unveiled new guidelines on April 14 designed to bolster its high-skilled workforce in the civil affairs services sector.

The document, the first joint release by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, establishes a comprehensive framework to improve talent development, evaluation, utilization and incentive mechanisms for individuals in civil affairs-related fields.

The policy envisions a more capable and well-structured workforce by 2030, with enhanced qualifications, stable income growth and greater public recognition. It also aims to foster a more supportive policy environment and strengthen societal respect for careers in civil affairs services.

To strengthen vocational training, the document calls for accelerating the development of specialized programs in areas like eldercare, disability

rehabilitation, marriage and funeral services, child welfare, philanthropy and social organization management.

Vocational schools and polytechnic institutes are encouraged to offer relevant courses, supported by school-enterprise partnerships, to cultivate highly skilled talent. The guidelines emphasize aligning training with social needs and employer demands and propose reforms to talent development models through mechanisms like apprenticeship systems.

## Supporting Left-Behind Women

China has launched a multi-department program to provide vocational training, job support and other assistance to rural left-behind women, aiming to address their difficulties, according to a recent document, Xinhua News Agency reported on April 12.

Rural left-behind women are those who remain in rural areas while their husbands work away from home for more than six months.

The action plan, jointly



## Robot Greetings

A humanoid robot engages with attendees at the China International Consumer Products Expo in Haikou, Hainan on April 16. The fifth edition of the expo, which ran from April 13-18, introduced specialized exhibition areas for AI and the burgeoning low-altitude economy. The low-altitude economy includes economic activities happening up to 1,000 meters above the ground.

issued by 11 state departments, proposed providing vocational and handicraft training for rural left-behind women to enhance their skills and improve employment opportunities. It also encourages their involvement in care services for left-behind children, elderly care and support for people with disabilities.

The plan further calls for assistance to rural left-behind

women with disabilities or financial difficulties, along with support for their families. It also supports charitable organizations to launch targeted public welfare initiatives.

Furthermore, the state departments will strengthen the protection of their legal rights, work to prevent discrimination and domestic violence and expand their access to healthcare services.



## AI in Action

An integrated patrol robot designed for inspection and combat draws attention at the 137th edition of the China Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province on April 15. The fair's first phase (April 15-19) highlighted advanced manufacturing and, for the first time, featured a dedicated zone for service robots, spotlighting China's AI advancements.

## Service Opening up

China will expand its comprehensive pilot programs to more cities to accelerate the opening up of the service sector, according to the State Council, the country's highest state administrative organ, on April 11.

Nine additional cities—Dalian, Ningbo, Xiamen, Qingdao, Shenzhen, Hefei, Fuzhou, Xi'an and Suzhou—will be able to carry out comprehensive pilot programs, the State Council said in its approval of a work plan that aims to expand the programs.

Efforts should be made to expand voluntary opening up in an orderly manner, tap into the potential of China's supersized market, promote high-quality development of the service sector and contribute to building new institutions for a higher-standard open economy.

The pilot programs will cover key sectors such as finance and healthcare and include measures like improving social security services for foreign residents and promoting inter-hospital data

sharing, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

China's annual trade in services exceeded \$1 trillion for the first time last year, demonstrating significant potential for further growth.

## Financial Statistical Standards

China issued a document to clarify the statistical standards for five financial sectors in its latest efforts to achieve full coverage of statistical data, the People's Bank of China (PBC), China's central bank, announced on April 15.

The document, issued by the PBC in collaboration with the National Financial Regulatory Administration, the China Securities Regulatory Commission and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, said high-quality statistical data support is required for:

- technology finance—the financial system and products that support technological advancement, the transformation of achievements and the growth of

hi-tech industries;

- green finance—any financial activity that aims to ensure a better environmental outcome;

- inclusive finance—the provision of affordable financial services to individuals and businesses that lack access to traditional banking systems;

- pension finance—the industry that provides financial products and services such as pension plans, pension savings and pension insurance for individuals or institutions to meet their late-life living needs;

- digital finance—financial services that rely on digital technologies for their delivery and utilization by consumers. These services leverage digital platforms, including mobile devices and the Internet, to provide convenient, accessible and secure financial solutions.

The document focused on standardizing the statistical entities, scope, indicators, methodologies, identification criteria, data collection, sharing, publication and division of responsibilities among

the departments concerning these sectors.

## Battery Safety Standard

Safety Requirements for Power Batteries Used in Electric Vehicles (EVs) (GB38031-2025), an updated mandatory national standard on the safety of EV batteries in China, is set to take effect on July 1, 2026, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

The revisions include updates to thermal diffusion testing of batteries, further clarifying the temperature requirements, observation time and vehicle testing conditions.

A new bottom impact test has been introduced to assess the protective capabilities of the battery upon impact to its base. A new safety test following fast charging cycles has also been added, which requires external short circuit testing after 300 fast charge cycles, mandating no fire or explosion.

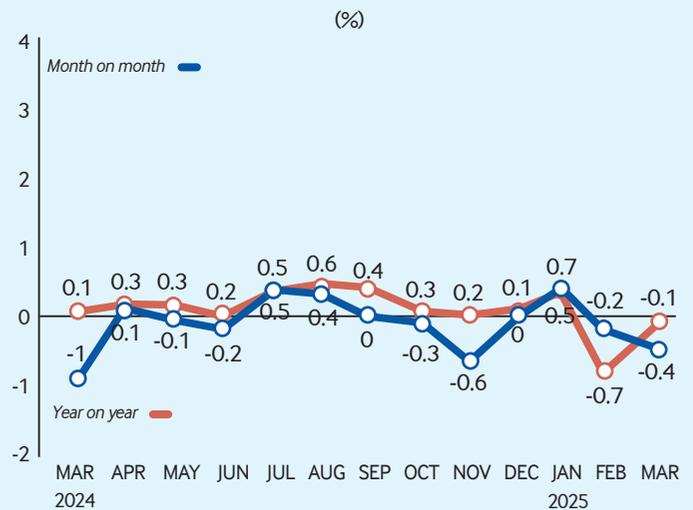
The revised version clearly

## NUMBERS

China's Producer Price Index Growth



China's Consumer Price Index (CPI) Growth



states that the standard applies to power batteries for EVs, excluding non-propulsion batteries.

## Tax Data

In the first quarter (Q1) of this year, sales revenue in hi-tech manufacturing rose by 12.1 percent year on year, 3.1 percentage points higher than the same period of last year, according to the latest value-added tax invoice data released by the State Taxation Administration.

Sales revenue in equipment manufacturing grew by 9.7 percent, with the growth rate accelerating by 3.5 percentage points from a year earlier.

In Q1, sales revenue in digital product manufacturing rose by 12 percent year on year, while spending by manufacturing firms on digital technologies increased by 8.7 percent year on year.

Sales revenue in smart equipment manufacturing rose by 13.2 percent year on year, according to the data.

Sales revenue for energy-intensive manufacturing accounted for 29.2 percent of that for the

total manufacturing in Q1, down 1.4 percentage points from the same period last year.

## Railway Cargo Transportation

China's railway network transported 970 million tons of cargo in Q1 of this year, up 3.1 percent year on year, the railway operator said on April 13.

Daily loading amounted to 179,000 cars, an increase of 4.2 percent year on year, according to China State Railway Group Co. Ltd.

The railway network also facilitated cross-border trade in this period. China-Central Asia freight trains operated 3,582 services, a year-on-year surge of 25.5 percent, the railway operator revealed.

The China-Laos Railway, which links Kunming in Yunnan Province and the Laotian capital Vientiane, transported 1.51 million tons of cross-border cargo in the January-March period, up 10 percent year on year.

## SME Performance

The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Development Index, based on a survey of 3,000 SMEs across eight major industries, stood at 89.5 in Q1 of this year, 0.5 points higher than the previous quarter, according to a report from the China Association of Small and Medium Enterprises.

The index uses a 0–100 scale where a reading over 50 indicates expansion and a reading under 50 indicates contraction.

In terms of sectors, the sub-indexes for industry, social services, transport, wholesale and retail, and information transmission software all expanded compared with the previous quarter, while the sub-index for the construction industry remained flat. The sub-indexes for the real estate and accommodation and food and beverage sectors, meanwhile, continued to decline.

## Advertising Revenues

China's advertising industry recorded a 17.9-percent year-on-

year growth in 2024, with total revenues surpassing 1.5 trillion yuan (\$205 billion), official data showed on April 10.

Among all forms of advertising, including TV, film, radio and newspapers, online advertising led the way with strong growth, claiming the lion's share of total revenues.

Revenues from Internet advertising reached 891.91 billion yuan (\$122 billion) in 2024, up 24 percent year on year. This figure accounted for 86.5 percent of total advertising revenues across all media platforms, according to the data released by the State Administration for Market Regulation, China's top market regulator.

Given the strong link between the advertising industry and the real economy, more than 10 provincial-level regions in China allocated over 10 billion yuan (\$1.4 billion) each in funding last year to support businesses and farmers in building their brands. This initiative has contributed to the growth of domestic consumption, according to the regulator.



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)





## SERBIA

Djuro Macut (front) and new cabinet members take the oath of office at the parliament building in Belgrade on April 16



## ITALY

Former Italian cross-country skier Stefania Belmondo (left) and Paralympic fencing champion Beatrice Vio pose with the torches for the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games during the unveiling ceremony in Milan on April 14



## IRAQ

Protestors holding banners and flags attend a rally to support Palestinians in Baghdad on April 11



# THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

## ↓ HEAD COACH OF WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL TEAM

**Zhao Yong** has replaced Cai Bin as head coach of the Chinese women's volleyball team, the Chinese Volleyball Association announced in early April.

The 49-year-old will lead the team into a new phase of preparations for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games.

"Zhao demonstrates strong resilience under pressure, emphasizes discipline in training, and excels in team management. His competence makes him well-suited for the role of head coach of the Chinese women's volleyball team," Lai Yawen, Chair of the Chinese Volleyball Association, said after the announcement.



In recent years, Zhao has inspired several Chinese squads to notable success in international competitions, including the Chengdu FISU World University Games, the Asian Women's Volleyball Championship in 2023, and the 2024 FIVB U17 Women's Volleyball World Championship.

## Festival Features

**People's Daily**  
April 11

Though the Qingming Festival, a traditional Chinese festival for honoring ancestors, has never been a high time for movie-going, the recently concluded Qingming box office season, which ran from April 4 to 6, saw a respectable gross taking of over 378 million yuan (\$52 million).

For the upcoming Labor Day holiday, which is scheduled for May 1 to 5, the Chinese box office boasts a stellar lineup: *The Dumpling Queen*, which chronicles

the story of Zang Jianhe, a single mother who rose from poverty to create one of Hong Kong's biggest food companies; *I Grass I Love*, a comedic road trip adventure of a truck driver and an aspiring rapper; and *The Gilded Game*, a financial thriller that stars Andy Lau as a capital markets expert.

The sweeping success of *Ne Zha 2*, a Chinese animated action fantasy loosely based on the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) novel *The Investiture of the Gods*, underscores the massive global appeal of films with distinct Chinese features. Hopes are high that this upward momentum will carry forward into the Labor Day box office season.



## Classic Culture, Modern Merchandise

**Oriental Outlook**  
April 3

On March 25, a refrigerator magnet inspired by the Ming Dynasty Empress Xiaoduan's phoenix crown, created by the National Museum of China, surpassed 1 million units in sales. This milestone brought the total revenue of the phoenix crown franchise to over 100 million yuan (\$13 million), the highest sales record for the museum in two decades.

The phoenix crown magnet is just one of the many *wenchuang*, or cultural and creative merchandise, that have gained traction among today's young

"The Silk Road is increasingly becoming a top choice for international travelers seeking a deeper understanding of China. The natural scenery and cultural heritage draw a steady flow of international visitors, making the region a core hub for inbound tourism growth."

**Xu Peng**, Vice Chairman of the World Tourism Alliance, at the 2025 Gansu Silk Road International Tourism Conference, held from April 7 to 12

"Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) can help prevent diseases in an affordable approach, and that is why treatments like acupuncture are gaining popularity among patients and doctors worldwide."

**Kiu Caracani**, a Swiss TCM practitioner and founder of the International Group of Researchers and Development for Complementary Medicine, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

Chinese consumers. Over the past few years, purchasing *wenchuang* items has evolved into a trending lifestyle, whereby interest-based communities have formed around the collection of all types of creative souvenirs.

In the latter half of 2024, plushies resembling some of the country's most iconic delicacies, such as *roujiamo*, a Chinese pork sandwich, and *malatang*, a kind of spicy hot pot, became one of the biggest trends in the *wenchuang* circle. Perhaps equally intriguing as the toys themselves is the "cooking" performances, during which plushy ingredients are "cooked" and served as if they are real dish.

While these soft items provide buyers with comfort through touch and imagination, Chinese cultural and creative products have also ventured into the digital domain. An example would be a digital art show curated by the Zhengzhou Museum in Henan Province. Inspired by the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) literary masterpiece *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the show integrated art installations, interactive light displays and augmented reality to create a fully immersive experience.

By blurring the lines between the physical and the virtual, these new inventions are redefining how culture is seen, touched and felt.

## Climate Crisis Creates Costly Coffee

Gmw.cn

April 14

Nescafé, one of the largest coffee brands in the world, has recently initiated a new round of price adjustments in the Chinese market. The company has already raised prices on many of its instant coffee products in the Chinese market by 11 to 15 percent. This double-digit price hike is part of a broader surge in global coffee prices, which have soared to their highest in nearly 50 years.

Over the past few years, the global

coffee market has been expanding at an astounding rate, driven largely by China's rapid rise as a major market for coffee products. While demand is soaring, the supply situation presents daunting challenges.

In 2024, heavy rains and extended droughts in Brazil, Viet Nam and some other major producers of coffee have devastated coffee yields, severely disrupting the global coffee supply chain.

The escalating climate crisis is taking a toll on the coffee industry, yet discussions on the issue remain scarce. Therefore, it is vital to raise environmental awareness and improve the coffee industry's abilities to mitigate climate risks.

### NEW CIDCA CHIEF

**Chen Xiaodong** has assumed the chairmanship of China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), the State Council, China's highest state administrative organ, announced on April 16.

Chen, 59, was vice minister of foreign affairs from March 2024 until the new appointment. As a veteran diplomat, Chen had worked in several overseas missions, including serving as ambassador to Iraq (2006-08), Singapore (2015-17) and South Africa (2020-24). In 2017, he was appointed assistant minister of foreign affairs.



According to its official website, the CIDCA aims to formulate strategic guidelines, plans and policies for foreign aid, coordinate and offer advice on major foreign aid issues, advance the country's reforms in matters involving foreign aid and identify major programs and supervise and evaluate their implementation.

**"China has made significant strides in end-stage heart disease treatment, progressing from a follower to a leader in select fields."**

**Xia Jiahong**, President of Union Hospital affiliated with Tongji Medical College of Huazhong University of Science and Technology in Wuhan, Hubei Province, as doctors at the hospital recently implanted the world's smallest artificial heart, weighing just 45 grams and measuring 2.9 centimeters in diameter, in a 7-year-old boy

**"Marine heatwaves can devastate underwater ecosystems. Extended periods of unusually warm water can kill coral reefs, destroy kelp forests and harm seagrass meadows."**

**Feng Xiangbo**, a senior researcher of tropical cyclones at the University of Reading in the UK and co-author of a recent study that found the number of days each year that the world's oceans experience extreme surface heat has tripled over the past 80 years due to global warming

# 中越铁路合作机制 启动仪式

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Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese President, and To Lam, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Viet Nam Central Committee, attend the launch ceremony of the China-Viet Nam railway cooperation mechanism in Hanoi, Viet Nam, on April 15

## COVER STORY

# TOGETHER WE THRIVE

Neighborhood diplomacy takes center stage as Xi pays visit to three Southeast Asian nations By Ma Miaomiao

**T**his world is always changing, but it is also true that some things remain constant, with the continuity and stability of China's policies toward its neighbors being a fine example.

These consistent policies have been reaffirmed during the five-day, three-nation tour of Southeast Asia by Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party

of China Central Committee and Chinese President, from April 14 to 18. The visit was also Xi's first overseas trip this year.

"We will stay committed to the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness. We will continue to pursue the policy of forging friendship and partnership with our neighbors. And we will steadily deepen friendly cooperation with them to advance Asia's modernization," Xi said in a signed article published in Viet Nam's *Nhân Dân* newspaper.

Xi arrived in Viet Nam on April 14 for the first

leg of his visit.

Pham Phu Phuc, former deputy head of the World News Desk at Vietnam News Agency, welcomed China's diplomatic approach. In light of unexpected and uncertain changes in the region and across the world in recent years, this vision emphasizes peace, sincerity, mutual benefit and shared development through cooperation, he told Xinhua News Agency.