

# BEIJING REVIEW

VOL.69 NO.20 MAY 14, 2026

北方周報 WWW.BJREVIEW.COM

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RMB9.00  
USD1.70  
AUD3.00  
GBP1.20  
CAD2.60  
CHF2.60  
JPY188

ISSN 1000-9140



9 771000 914260

邮发代号2-922·国内统一连续号: CN11-1576/G2

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Cover Photo: A performer interacts with audience members in Dingxi, Gansu Province, on May 2 (VCG)

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A News Weekly Magazine  
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Published every Thursday by  
CICG Center for Americas, 24 Baiwanzhuang Lu,  
Beijing 100037, China  
**Overseas Distributor:** China International Book Trading  
Corporation, P. O. BOX 399,  
Beijing 100048, China  
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17/F, Paramount Bldg, 12 Ka Yip St, Chai Wan, HK  
**Tel:** 852-28046687 **Fax:** 852-28046409

*Beijing Review* (ISSN 1000-9140 USPS 2812) is published weekly  
in the United States for US\$64.00 per year by Cypress Books,  
360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080  
News Postage Paid at Burlingame, CA 94010-9997  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Beijing Review*,  
Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48,  
South San Francisco, CA 94080

## The Holiday Machine

An estimated 1.525 billion journeys, or an average of 305 million per day, were made during the recently concluded May Day holiday, which ran from May 1 to 5.

Older people were a major constituent of travelers during the five-day break, with the two main categories of travel by volume being group travel by senior citizens and family travel by children, parents and grandparents together. A May 5 report released by Tongcheng Travel, a leading travel platform in China, based on big data from its online platform revealed bookings for family-friendly hotel rooms in popular tourist cities increased nearly 50 percent from last year's May Day holiday, and bookings for family-friendly destinations such as theme parks, museums, zoos and aquariums increased nearly 100 percent.

The "ticket stub economy," a model in which ticket stubs from cultural, sporting or entertainment events can be used as vouchers for discounts for other events, venues and products, became particularly prominent during the holiday. Tickets for concerts and music festivals were interconnected with local commercial districts, hotels, restaurants and retail outlets, driving consumption across the entire urban consumption chain. Travel and consumption were further supported during the holiday by China's well-developed high-speed

railway and highway networks, along with highly efficient public services.

Figures from Tongcheng Travel show a significant increase in both the number of Hong Kong residents traveling to the mainland and that of mainland tourists visiting Hong Kong. The number of overseas tourists making transfers through Hong Kong to mainland holiday destinations, including Sanya in Hainan Province, Chengdu in Sichuan Province, Changsha in Hunan Province and Wuhan in Hubei Province, increased significantly from the previous year. Popular outbound travel destinations for mainland tourists included Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Viet Nam and Singapore. In addition, bookings for long-haul outbound travel destinations such as Britain, Denmark, Italy and Spain all increased more than 100 percent year on year.

The booming consumption during the May Day holiday demonstrated the strong potential of China's huge market and the ongoing recovery of consumer confidence. The fact that people are willing to go out and spend is essentially a positive recognition of the employment situation, income expectations and the stability of living standards. **BR**



### WRITE TO US

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JAPAN.....JPY188 EUROPE.....EUR1.90  
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主管单位：中国外文出版发行事业局  
主办单位：中国外文局美洲传播中心（北京周报社）  
出版单位：中国外文局美洲传播中心（北京周报社）  
地址：北京市西城区百万庄大街24号 邮编：100037  
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总编室电话：(010) 68996252 发行部电话：(010) 68310644  
印刷：北京华联印刷有限公司  
北京周报 英文版2026年 第20期 ISSN 1000-9140  
国内统一连续出版物号：CN11-1576/G2 邮发代号：2-922  
广告许可证0171号 北京市期刊登记证733号  
国内零售价：人民币9.00元



PHOTO

## FAREWELL, FREIGHTER

This image captured at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center on May 6 shows China's *Tianzhou-9* cargo craft undocking from the station combination. The cargo craft re-entered the atmosphere in a controlled manner on May 7.

Launched on July 15, 2025, the cargo craft then docked with the orbiting *Tiangong* space station, delivering supplies, including astronaut consumables for in-orbit stay, propellant and experiment equipment.



## A Floating Frontier

China's first privately funded scientific research vessel, *R/V Haiying Surveyor*, is launched in Wenling, Zhejiang Province, on May 5. It has a total length of 82 meters, a designed full load displacement of 3,500 tons and a cruising range of 10,000 nautical miles.

## Aerospace Science Center

A major new hub for space education opened its doors in Beijing on April 28 to offer young people a hands-on journey through China's space achievements and beyond. The China (Beijing) Aerospace Science Center, located inside a huge park-style commercial complex in Changping District in northwest Beijing, is designed to fill a gap in high-quality aerospace education in China, newspaper *Science and Technology Daily* reported.

With an area of 3,700 square meters, the center targets visitors aged 6 to 16, combining authentic space technology resources with interactive entertainment.

The venue is structured around six themed zones. A

"time tunnel", for example, section presents 100 major space milestones, with a strong focus on China's full-cycle space journey. Visitors can experience the countdown simulation of a rocket launch, watch a step-by-step breakdown of satellite interiors and learn about the engineering logic behind every link of a space mission.

One of the most popular attractions is likely to be a life-size replica of the *Tiangong* space station core module. Next to it, a lunar surface experience area allows guests to try on a moon landing suit, drive a simulated lunar rover, and observe a panoramic model of Martian weather. There are also deep-space digital simulation zones where visitors can take a virtual tour of the solar system.

## AI Content Production

China's cyberspace regulator has launched a four-month campaign against disinformation and malicious content generated by AI.

The Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) said on April 30 that the campaign will curb the misuse of AI to create and spread disinformation, violate minors' rights, and distort or misrepresent traditional fine cultural works and classic literary texts, among other offenses.

Also targeted is AI-produced low-grade content dubbed "digital swill," referring to materials with muddled logic, harmful values and distorted cultural narratives.

The campaign will also examine large AI models on

registration compliance, safety review mechanisms and model training datasets security.

A CAC official stressed the campaign is vital to fostering the orderly development of AI services and protecting Internet users' legitimate rights and interests.

## UAV Management

A mandatory national standard on real-name registration and activation requirements for civil unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) took effect on May 1.

Aimed at establishing a traceable management system that covers the entire life cycle, the standard is expected to provide basic guarantees for public safety, airspace order and individual rights and interests.

The standard applies to all civil UAVs engaging in flight operations outdoors, regardless of their purpose, source or ownership, the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) said.

China's registered UAV fleet totaled nearly 3.29 million units by the end of 2025, a 51-percent increase year on year, the CAAC said in its 2025 statistical bulletin on civil aviation industry development.

It added that UAV flight hours surged to 45.3 million in 2025, up 69.9 percent from the previous year.

## Migrant Worker Income

China's migrant workers saw rising incomes and enjoyed improved quality of life over the past year, according to survey results released by the National Bureau of Statistics on April 30.

Migrant workers are rural residents with agricultural household registration who are engaged in non-agricultural

work locally or outside their hometowns for six months or longer annually.

In 2025, the total number of migrant workers in the country reached 301.15 million, up 1.42 million from the previous year, representing an increase of 0.5 percent, the survey results showed.

The average monthly income of migrant workers rose to 5,075 yuan (\$739) in 2025, up 2.3 percent year on year. Those working outside their hometowns earned an average of 5,774 yuan (\$847) per month, up 2.5 percent, while those working within their registered townships saw a wage growth of 2 percent, with average monthly earnings reaching 4,376 yuan (\$642).

The tertiary sector continued to dominate migrant worker employment in 2025, accounting for 54.7 percent of the workforce. Meanwhile, the share of workers in the secondary sector declined by 0.2 percentage points to 44.5 percent.

The quality of migrant workers' living space also showed improvement. The average living space in urban areas increased to 24.9 square meters per person, up by 0.2 square meters from 2024.

## Senior care Services

China has unveiled a policy document to promote the development of mutual-aid eldercare services, as the country steps up efforts to address the challenges of an aging population and meet the increasingly diverse needs of older residents, authorities said on April 29.

As of late 2025, more than 320 million people in China were aged 60 or above, accounting for 23 percent of the total population. This number is expected to exceed 400 million within a decade. As a result, senior care has become an increasingly pressing national issue.

The guideline, jointly issued by 11 Central Government departments, including the Ministry of Civil Affairs, defines mutual-aid eldercare as voluntary, non-profit services delivered through mutual assistance among neighbors or residents within villages and communities.

According to the document, by 2030, no less than 70 percent of urban and rural communities are expected to be equipped with elderly care facilities capable of providing mutual-aid services.



## Cycle of Innovation

A visitor test-rides a bicycle at the 2026 China International Bicycle Fair in Shanghai on May 6. The fair, held on May 5-8, attracted more than 1,600 exhibitors from home and abroad, including industry leaders Giant, Phoenix and Forever.

A nationwide mechanism for regular visits and care services for elderly people in particular difficulties will also be fully established, while the sustainability of such services will be significantly strengthened.

Efforts will also be made to

advance mutual-aid eldercare services in rural areas based on local conditions, including re-purposing existing facilities such as township nursing homes, rural eldercare centers and idle school buildings to build elderly-friendly mutual-aid communities.



## Nihao, Italia!

The exhibition *Homage to the Virtuosos: From Leonardo da Vinci to Caravaggio—Masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance* at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing on May 5. The exhibition displays 36 masterpieces by more than 20 renowned Italian artists from the 15th to the 17th centuries. It will run until August 28.

## Smart Economy

Across China, national daily token calls exceeded 140 trillion in March, representing a more than 1,000-fold surge from 100 billion at the beginning of 2024, according to official data.

A token call is simply a request to an AI model, measured in chunks of text (tokens), and it determines how much you pay and how much the model can remember.

Tokens, then, have become a barometer of industry development and a fundamental indicator of AI adoption.

“The massive increase in daily token calls demonstrates that China’s AI development has entered a rapid growth phase,” Liu Liehong, head of the National Data Administration, said. “From conversational AI to decision-making intelligent agents, China’s AI industry competitiveness has intensified.”

China’s 2026 central government work report, released in early March, for the first time

called for the creation of “new forms of a smart economy.”

The smart economy’s ripple effects are reshaping entire supply chains. In the first quarter (Q1) of 2026, upstream electronic specialty materials manufacturing jumped 32.5 percent year on year, midstream integrated circuit manufacturing surged 49.4 percent and downstream smart equipment manufacturing expanded 16.9 percent.

The smart economy is spawning new business models and operational paradigms as barriers to starting a business crumble amid more accessible, affordable AI tools.

## Logistics Growth

The logistics sector maintained steady momentum in Q1 of this year, with major indicators posting solid growth, data from the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing showed.

From January to March, China’s total social logistics value came in at 96.4 trillion yuan

(\$14 trillion), up 6.2 percent year on year based on comparable prices. The growth rate accelerated 1.1 percentage points from the full-year level in 2025 and by 0.5 percentage points from Q1 of 2025, respectively, the federation said.

The industrial sector was the biggest driver of logistics growth. The value of industrial goods logistics rose 5.8 percent year on year, contributing more than 80 percent of the increase in total social logistics value over the period. Within the sector, manufacturing accounted for over 80 percent of logistics demand.

## Equipment Upgrades

China has allocated 91.5 billion yuan (\$13.3 billion) in new ultra-long special treasury bonds to fund large-scale equipment upgrades in 2026, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the country’s top economic planner, announced on April 30.

Ultra-long special treasury bonds are government securities with maturities typically of 10 years or longer. They are used as a policy tool to finance long-term, large-scale investments aligned with national priorities while also helping to stabilize growth by injecting sustained fiscal support into the economy.

This is the second batch of funds raised through such bonds for the programs this year, the NDRC said in a statement.

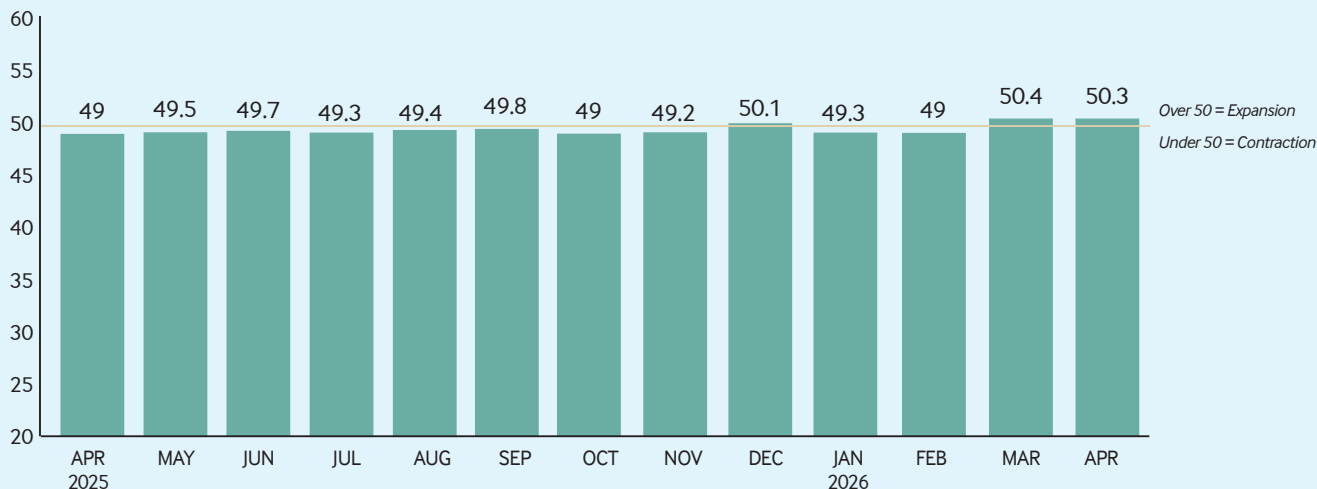
These funds will back more than 6,700 projects across 16 sectors, including industry, electronic information and recycling, driving a total investment of over 380 billion yuan (\$55.7 billion), the commission said.

The program also continues to support the scrapping and updating of old freight trucks, new-energy city buses and outdated agricultural machinery.

Including the first batch of 93.6 billion yuan (\$13.7 billion) allocated earlier this year, a total of 185.1 billion yuan (\$27 billion) has been earmarked for equip-

## NUMBERS

China’s Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI)



ment upgrades in 2026, the commission noted.

Driven by the program, investment in equipment and tools grew 13.9 percent year on year in Q1 of 2026, accelerating 2.4 percentage points from the January-February period and contributing 2.3 percentage points to overall investment growth.

## Nonferrous Metals

The nonferrous metals industry saw its total profits surge 110.7 percent year on year in Q1 of 2026, driven by factors like rising demand from emerging fields, the China Nonferrous Metals Industry Association said on April 29.

China's 12,325 major nonferrous metals enterprises, each with an annual main business revenue of at least 20 million yuan (\$2.8 million), saw their combined profits reach 192.85 billion yuan (\$28 billion) in Q1, the association stated at a press briefing.

In Q1, the industry demon-

strated strong resilience amid a complex environment and rising external risks, Chen Xuesen, deputy head of the association, said.

Chen attributed the sector's surging profits to factors including the heightened strategic value of nonferrous metals, the combined effects of China's macro policies and capacity control efforts, as well as boost from emerging demand and industrial restructuring toward higher-end segments.

Rapid growth in AI, energy storage technologies, new-energy vehicles, humanoid robotics and the low-altitude economy has driven demand for battery materials such as nickel, cobalt and lithium. Demand for copper foil, aluminum foil and high-end copper products has also increased, according to Chen.

## Mineral Reserves

China holds the world's largest reserves of 14 mineral resources, including rare earths, tungsten, tin,

molybdenum, antimony, gallium, germanium, indium, fluorite and graphite, its latest mineral resource data shows.

In 2025, the country also ranked first globally in the production of 17 mineral resources, including coal, vanadium, titanium, zinc, rare earths, tungsten, tin, molybdenum, antimony, gallium, indium, gold and tellurium, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources on April 29.

China's mining industry output reached approximately 32.7 trillion yuan (\$4.8 trillion) in 2025, accounting for more than 23 percent of the country's GDP, underscoring its position as the world's largest in mineral production, smelting and processing.

China is also a dominant supplier to the global smelting and processing industries, officials with the ministry told a press conference on April 29, adding that China's resource base helps secure the stable industrial chains of the country as well as the development of its emerging sectors while also contributing to global livelihoods.

## Instant Tax Refunds

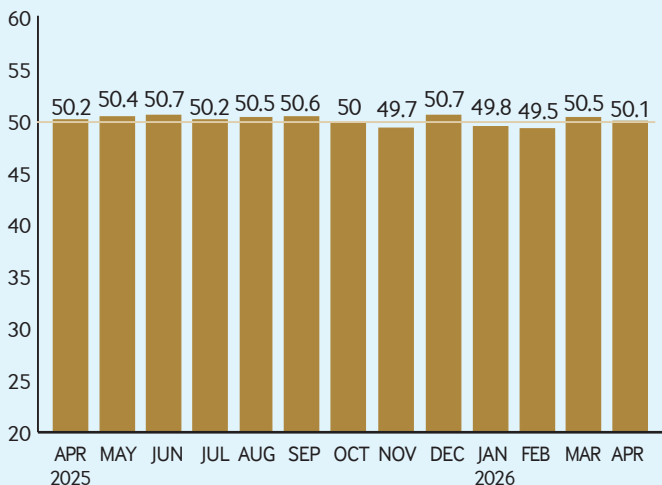
The number of overseas visitors claiming China's instant tax refund surged 12.96-fold within one year after the policy's nationwide rollout, the State Administration of Taxation said on April 27.

During the same period, both the sales of tax refund-eligible goods and the total instant tax refunds jumped 9.35-fold year on year, official data showed.

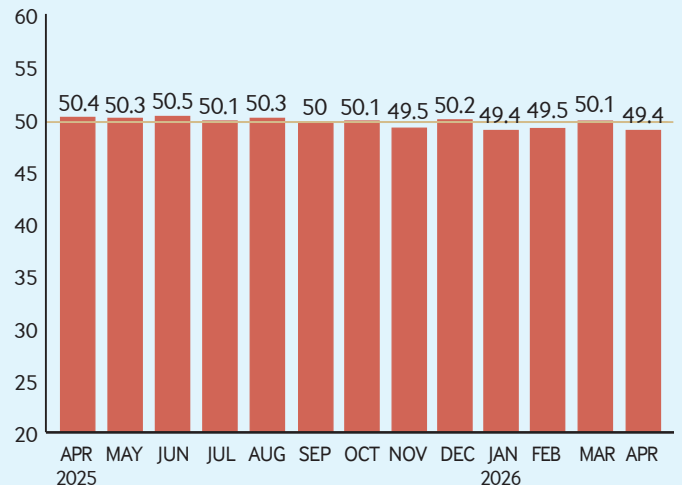
As an upgrade within China's existing departure tax refund policy, instant tax refunds allow overseas visitors to receive a tax rebate in cash on the spot at designated retail stores after signing an agreement and processing a credit card pre-authorization.

China launched the policy in April 2025, setting up instant tax refund counters in major shopping districts in major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, Chengdu and Guangzhou. As of May, the number of stores offering the service has more than doubled to over 8,000.

China's Comprehensive PMI



China's Non-Manufacturing PMI



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)



## UNITED STATES

A rally in Los Angeles, California, on May 1, protesting against the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran and defending labor and immigrant rights



## CAMEROON

A parade in celebration of International Labor Day in Yaounde on May 1



## CABO VERDE

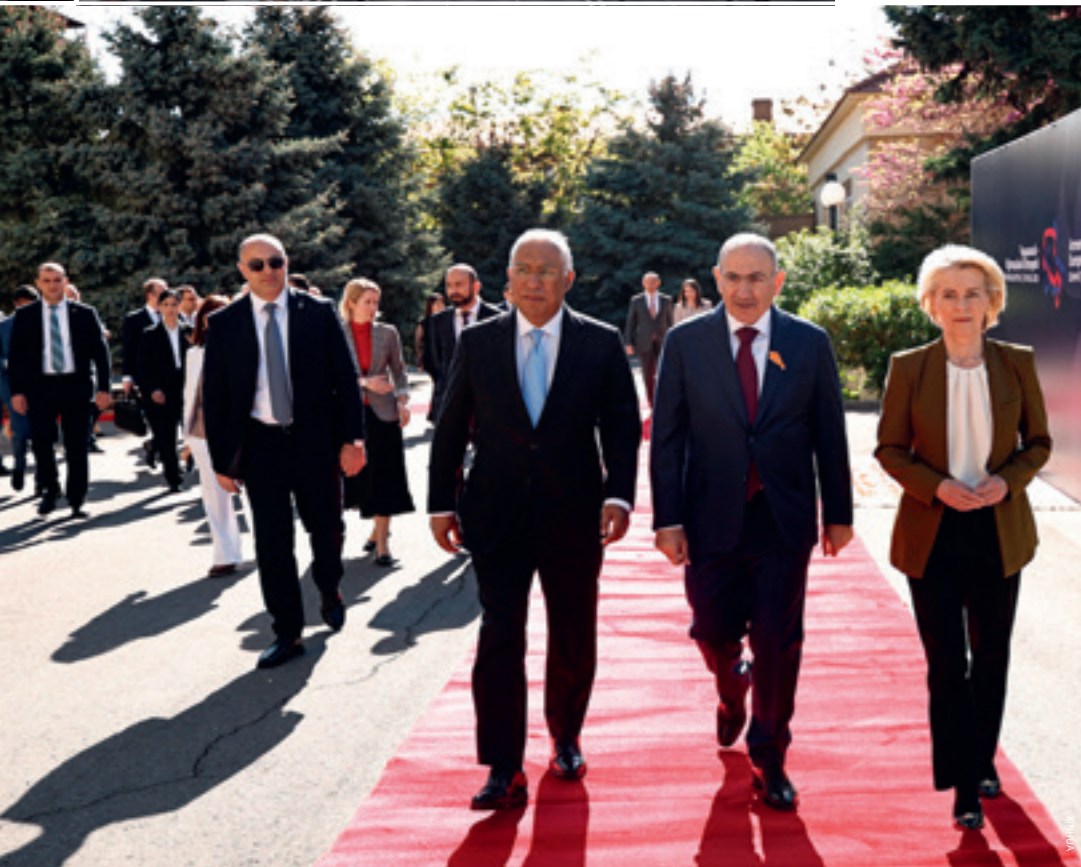
An ambulance waits for passengers suspected to be infected with the hantavirus, a potentially deadly virus that affects the lungs, in Praia on May 6, following the air evacuation of three possibly infected passengers from the Dutch cruise ship *MV Hondius*





## RUSSIA

The Victory Day military parade rehearsal in Moscow on May 4



## SPAIN

Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine holds the trophy after winning the women's singles final against Mirra Andreeva of Russia at the 2026 Madrid Open tennis tournament on May 2



## ARMENIA

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (second right), President of the European Council António Costa (third right) and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen attend the first Armenia-European Union Summit in Yerevan on May 5. The two sides signed a connectivity partnership deal to strengthen economic and security cooperation

# THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

## TV HOST RECEIVES MAY DAY HONOR

On April 28, **Sa Beining**, a veteran host with China Media Group (CMG), became one of 1,462 individuals honored this year by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions with a National May 1 Labor Medal.

Honored for his decades of contribution to Chinese television, Sa began his broadcasting career in 1999, after graduating from Peking University Law School. Beginning as the host of a daily TV program covering legal cases, Sa has since become a familiar face on a range of programs, including many times as host of the annual CMG Spring Festival Gala.



Sa hosts a popular youth-oriented talk show that invites accomplished figures from diverse fields to share their life stories. He has also anchored acclaimed cultural programs in recent years, including a documentary series about the eight great literary masters of the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties.

## Cheap to Chic

*Economic Daily*

May 6

On April 30, Pop Mart, the Chinese toy maker behind Labubu, opened a new section of its Beijing theme park, Pop Land. First launched in September 2023, the park has become a must-visit destination for fans of the brand, especially after Labubu became a global phenomenon in 2024. In 2025, despite only about one third of the park being open, Pop Land's visitor numbers rose by more than 70 percent from a year earlier.

The company represents a different face of

Chinese manufacturing. Rather than competing on low prices, its products are far from cheap: Tickets to Pop Land cost 178-288 yuan (\$25-40), blind-box figurines are 60-70 yuan (\$8.3-9.7), and larger dolls often cost more than 1,000 yuan (\$139). Yet new releases routinely sell out online within minutes of launch and draw long queues across the globe offline.

From Labubu to Heytea's fruit teas, a growing number of Chinese brands are matching international peers not only on price, but also on global appeal. Their rise is underpinned by improved quality, more mature supply chains and a sharper sense of branding and design.



## Escaping Employment

*China Newsweek*

April 27

For decades, going to work has been treated as the default route people are expected to follow. That assumption is weakening among young Chinese. Surveys by Zhaopin, a Chinese recruitment platform, show that from 2022 to 2024, the share of Chinese college graduates who delayed entering the workforce rose from 15.9 percent to 19.1 percent. Some used the time to prepare for civil service exams, public sector recruitment

“Niche tourism destinations, with fewer crowds and superior experiences, often offer better value for money.”

**Tuo Yanzheng**, an associate professor at Nankai University's College of Tourism and Service Management, in an interview with Xinhua News Agency about the booming of niche tourism during the May Day holiday (May 1-5)

“With large language models, computing platforms and AI tools, one person can now do what used to require an entire team.”

**Pang Haoyang**, an entrepreneur based in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, speaking about the efficiency of “AI employees” that he directs to produce short films

or postgraduate study. Others simply chose to take a break.

The phenomenon has split public opinion. Many older Chinese see young people outside regular employment as irresponsible, dependent on their parents or giving up too easily. Among some young people, however, choosing not to work has become a desirable lifestyle. On social media, life after leaving the office is often portrayed as a form of liberation, marked by better health and greater control over one's time.

Yet not working is rarely as effortless as it looks online. Some young people are not rejecting work so much as being forced to leave. Many struggle with a sharp mismatch between expectations and a reality defined by fierce competition, toxic office politics and jobs that offer little room for growth. And even when they step away, the pressures do not simply disappear: They remain part of a society that still measures people by their jobs.

A complete escape is almost impossible. But slowing down and taking a pause can still be worthwhile. In an age when many feel trapped in a relentless rat race, stepping back can offer a rare window for recovery, self-discovery and exploration of the wider world and the many possibilities it holds.

## No More Free Rides?

**Rednet.cn**

**May 6**

Doubao, one of China's most popular AI models, is testing a tiered subscription model, with prices set at 68 yuan (\$9) per month for a standard plan, 200 yuan (\$28) for an advanced plan and 500 yuan (\$69) for a professional plan. The move quickly drew public complaints, not least because the entry-level plan is already approaching the price of ChatGPT Plus or Claude Pro.

There is also a deeper anxiety: Users

worry that the free version may be quietly downgraded to push them toward paid plans. In response, Doubao has said that daily chat, basic writing and simple translation will remain free, while paid plans focus on computing-heavy tasks.

Paid plans are not the problem in themselves. Training and running AI models are extremely costly. The real test is whether the paid features can deliver higher performance. Chinese AI companies should make sure their charging policies translate into tangible improvement in efficiency and output quality, rather than merely more computing power.

## ↓ FOOD SCIENTIST PRESERVES MICROBES OF XIZANG

**Zhang Yuhong**, a senior researcher at the Institute of Agricultural Products Development and Food Science, Xizang Academy of Agricultural and Animal Husbandry Sciences, was awarded the National May 1 Labor Medal this year for her work in preserving the region's microbial heritage.

Based in Lhasa, Zhang has spent her career applying microbial science to improve food quality. Since joining the institute in 1998, she has built a bank of more than 2,000 food microbial strains collected from traditional foods across the region. Her work to date has included improving the yield in highland barley liquor production and producing yogurt starters that use local strains of bacteria.



"Micro-organisms are the invisible treasure of the plateau," Zhang said. "We must use modern technology to awaken these plateau flavors."

"Cultural creation should go beyond the simple assembly of symbolic elements and instead delve into the deeper essence of traditional culture, ensuring that technology serves cultural expression."

**Gao Weihua**, a professor of animation at the Communication University of China, in an interview about the integration of digital technology in the process of intercultural exchange

"It usually takes a long time for young traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) practitioners to become proficient, requiring at least five to six years of mentoring from senior doctors."

**Fan Chong**, a partner of Bamai Technology, in an interview with Xinhua about a system developed by the company that digitally inherits the expertise of senior practitioners and supports TCM standardization



COVER STORY

# THE NEW COMPASS

Experiences, not landmarks, now drive China's travel boom By Tao Zihui