HKSAR

Art gazing

A visitor shows interest in a dog sculpture during Art Basel's preview event at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on Wednesday. The three-day art fair, which will open to the public on Friday, features works from 240 galleries representing 42 countries and regions. This year's edition highlights the fusion of digital and traditional media, offering a diverse range of artistic expressions. General admission ranges from HK$400 ($51.40) to HK$730 per day. ANDY CHONG / CHINA DAILY

Study aims to tap tourism value of GBA

Research proposes unified branding to boost regional travel development

By **LI LEI** in Hong Kong
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A group of researchers has proposed pooling tourism resources across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to create a globally competitive destination.

The initiative, outlined in a study published on Wednesday by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University's School of Hotel and Tourism Management, aims to boost infrastructure investment, preserve historical heritage and drive integrated regional development.

Titled "Developing a Tourism Cluster in the Greater Bay Area: A Dual Branding Perspective", the report recommends that Hong Kong, Macao and the nine Guangdong cities in the GBA adopt a collective branding strategy to build a cross-border tourism cluster known for seamless connectivity and diverse attractions.

The study calls for an inter-regional task force to coordinate branding and marketing while preserving each city's unique identity.

"The primary aim of this research is to unlock the Greater Bay Area's tourism potential by showcasing individual cities' strengths under a unified cluster brand while fostering regional collaboration," the report stated.

Under the proposed model, tourism offerings could be combined to cater to different interests. Heritage trails, for example, could feature Hong Kong's Clock Tower in Tsim Sha Tsui and Jiangmen's *diaolou*, multi-story defensive village houses. Nature-focused itineraries could include Zhaoqing's karst landscapes and Huizhou's coastline, while family-friendly packages could link Hong Kong Disneyland Resort and Ocean Park with Zhuhai's Chimelong Ocean Kingdom.

The study also suggests leveraging social media to attract younger travelers and partnering with airlines, travel agencies and hospitality providers to offer discounted, flexible travel plans.

The recommendations are based on field research conducted by a team from PolyU, the University of Macau and the Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, which assessed tourism resources and infrastructure across all 11 Greater Bay Area cities.

Researchers analyzed 200,000 social media reviews from platforms such as Weibo and Trip.com and interviewed 182 residents, officials and business owners. Their findings revealed strong tourism assets but a lack of coordinated branding efforts.

The study, supported by the Hong Kong government's Public Policy Research Funding Scheme, aligns with Hong Kong's push for a mega-event economy. A successful GBA tourism cluster could attract major international events, conferences and exhibitions, it said.

Lead researcher Hung Kam, a professor at PolyU's School of Hotel and Tourism Management, said the initiative would allow the region to maximize its collective strengths, spur innovation and create sustainable growth opportunities.

"This study advances academic research on destination branding, particularly for tourism clusters, and offers valuable insights for other regions exploring similar strategies," she said.

The study follows a pro-tourism guideline issued on Tuesday by the Guangdong government, which aims to transform the province into a premier travel destination as part of a broader push to stimulate consumption and economic growth.

The plan highlights the creation of curated tourism itineraries, capitalizing on the GBA's iconic skyscrapers and major infrastructure projects such as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and the cross-sea Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link.

HK to drive science, tech innovation at Boao Forum

By **MIKE GU** in Boao, Hainan
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The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is uniquely positioned to harness its competitive advantages to empower global technological advancement and innovation, as it prepares to host a high-end innovation and technology forum.

Details of the upcoming International Science, Technology and Innovation Forum, scheduled for June 6-7 in Hong Kong, were unveiled on Wednesday during a news conference at the ongoing Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2025.

Zafar Uddin Mahmood, policy adviser to the secretary-general of the BFA, described the event as one of the BFA's important thematic subforums that complements its annual main conference. Mahmood previously served as the special envoy for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

This year's subforum, themed "Technology Leads the Future, Innovation Drives Transformation", is expected to attract around 800 top-notch experts, scholars, officials, and business leaders. It will feature an opening ceremony, a Hong Kong forum, panel discussions and roundtable sessions.

Attendees will engage in in-depth discussions on a wide range of topics, including the global innovation ecosystem, global technology governance, technological innovation, and the upgrading of industrial chains under new quality productive forces. The event will also explore cutting-edge fields such as life sciences, artificial intelligence, future mobility, and quantum technology.

This marks the fourth iteration of the science-and-innovation-focused subevent, following successful editions hosted by other cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area — Macao in 2020, Guangzhou in 2022, and Zhuhai in 2023.

Leong Vai-tac, the subforum's executive chairman, highlighted the subforum's focus on the latest global technology growth, future trends and opportunities, and the potential risks within.

Leong, who is also former secretary for economy and finance of the Macao SAR government, added that the upcoming event will explore ways to strengthen global governance in science and technology, bridge the digital divide, and enhance international cooperation, paving the way to support the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Sun Dong, secretary for innovation, technology and industry of the Hong Kong SAR government, said that the subforum serves as a high-level international platform for collaboration and exchanges. The Hong Kong event, jointly hosted by the Hong Kong SAR government and the BFA, highlights the event's Greater Bay Area characteristics while affirming Hong Kong's strengths as a highly internationalized hub, Sun added.

During the subforum, Hong Kong will fully leverage its roles as a superconnector and super value-adder to create high-quality international synergies, Sun said.

He expected to partner with the BFA to deliver a successful international event, injecting new momentum into innovation and technology development for both the nation and the world.

Sun added that the SAR government has identified AI as a strategic priority, recognizing its reshaping effect on the global economic landscape. The city has promoted the "AI+" initiative to drive innovation and empower various industries. Notably, the first-phase facilities of the AI super-computing center at Hong Kong's Cyberport became operational late last year, providing enterprises with critical computing power, Sun said.

With unwavering determination to realize Hong Kong's vision of becoming an international innovation and technology hub, and with the strong support of the central government, Hong Kong is actively fostering a vibrant innovation and technology ecosystem and developing a new real economy that capitalizes on its unique advantages, Sun said.

Sun also called on global enterprises to come and invest in Hong Kong, and to make use of the city's unique position as an international financial center.

Hong Kong, Hainan to bolster trade, talent collaboration

By **LU WANQING** in Hong Kong
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The governments of Hainan province and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region signed a memorandum of cooperation in Boao, Hainan, on Wednesday, pledging to deepen collaboration in trade and investment, finance, cross-border data flow, tourism and talent exchange.

The agreement also promises greater market access in Hainan, the nation's southernmost province, for Hong Kong-registered professionals.

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu, who attended the signing ceremony, said that the development would open more doors for professionals in the city while also supporting Hainan's growth as a world-class free trade port by enabling it to leverage the complementary strengths of both regions.

He said he expects the new agreement to further integrate the advantages of Hong Kong and Hainan, and deepen economic and trade exchanges between the two regions.

Lee added that Hong Kong's and Hainan's proximity in terms of geographical location and cultural roots has fostered robust connections in the exchanges of people, goods, and capital.

With a significant number of Hong Kong-based enterprises opting to expand their operations in Hainan, the Hong Kong SAR has been one of Hainan's primary investment sources, Lee said.

Meanwhile, Hainan has championed Hong Kong's development, Lee said, adding that Hainan is the first provincial government on the Chinese mainland to utilize Hong Kong's financing platforms and services for its bond issuance.

For three consecutive years, the Hainan government has been issuing offshore renminbi bonds in Hong Kong, totaling around 13 billion yuan ($1.79 billion), which signals Hainan's full confidence in the SAR as a financial hub, Lee said.

In 2020, the central authorities outlined a comprehensive plan to build Hainan into a leading free trade port. Since then, the province has been intensifying its efforts to transform itself into a key gateway that drives the country's commitment to opening-up.

As Hainan aims to establish independent customs operations by the end of the year, Lee said that enhanced collaboration with Hong Kong will help the province upscale its openness and market liberalization.

Lee vowed that Hong Kong, as a stalwart of free trade and multilateralism with robust global connections, is well-positioned to connect stakeholders in Hainan to an array of overseas projects and resources, paving the way for their business investments in overseas markets.

"It is my hope that our two cities can tap the opportunities put forth by a 'dual port synergy' to broaden both of our development prospects, jointly contributing to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," said Lee.

In the afternoon, Lee met with young Hong Kong entrepreneurs living in Hainan, learning about their lives and experiences in the province. Lee urged them to explore the favorable policies under the latest agreement, and seize the upcoming opportunities to achieve their life goals.

Lee was in Hainan to attend the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2025. He will return to Hong Kong today.

Rescue simulation

Firefighters from Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao conduct a joint emergency response and rescue exercise in Tseung Kwan O, Hong Kong, on Wednesday. The three-day drill, which began on Tuesday, tests cross-border coordination capabilities in extreme scenarios, while promoting the use of advanced technology and enhancing personnel training. During the drill, fire personnel from Guangdong and Macao entered Hong Kong through the green channels at Shenzhen Bay Port and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge in response to the Hong Kong authorities' "request for assistance". ADAM LAM / CHINA DAILY

Local exporters' confidence rises despite headwinds

By **WU MENGLEI** in Hong Kong
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The confidence of Hong Kong exporters has risen moderately despite the headwinds of the tariff hikes imposed by the United States, according to the Hong Kong Trade Development Council's Export Confidence Index, released on Wednesday.

The Current Performance Index, which shows Hong Kong's trade performance in the first quarter, was 52.1, up 1.8 points compared to the last quarter, with the Expectation Index at 51.0.

A reading above 50 reflects an optimistic outlook, while anything below 50 indicates a pessimistic outlook.

Irina Fan Yuen-yee, the HKTDC's director of research, said, "The Expectation Index is lower than the Current Performance Index, showing the exporters held a more cautious attitude toward the next quarter while maintaining a positive attitude."

According to the survey, many Hong Kong exporters have adopted proactive strategies to deal with a more challenging global trade situation among the city's trading partners. These strategies include diversifying sourcing, expanding into new markets, and relocating their production lines, Fan said.

Despite frequent changes in US policy, exporter sentiment remained largely positive when looking beyond the US market, particularly with reference to the Chinese mainland, the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"No matter how the flow of goods changes, Hong Kong will maintain its role as an international trading platform; 99 percent of Hong Kong's total exports are reexports from overseas," Fan added.

The survey showed that Hong Kong's exports to the US accounted for 6.5 percent of its total exports, much less than other economies subjected to US tariffs. Exports to the US reportedly account for 79.6 percent of Mexico's total exports, 77.6 percent of Canada's, and 14.8 percent of the Chinese mainland's.

Although US tariffs have been applied to about two-thirds of the Chinese mainland's exports to the US since 2018, China's global export share rose from 12.7 percent in 2018 to 14.1 percent in 2023.

According to another HKTDC survey in 2024, 90 percent of Chinese mainland companies said they planned to expand overseas in the next two years. About 74 percent said they would consider ASEAN expansion, and 95 percent said they were interested in the markets of countries taking part in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Even though Hong Kong exporters are generally optimistic, the HKTDC holds a prudent attitude toward foreign trade, given the downside risks posed by possible future escalations in global trade tensions.

The council lowered its 2025 Hong Kong export growth forecast from 4 percent to 3 percent, which is in line with the average export growth rate over the past decade, Fan said.