

New storytelling format

Chinese mini-dramas manage to keep overseas audiences hooked

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# CHINA DAILY

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## Fleeing to safety



Palestinian families flee toward Rafah from the southern outskirts of Khan Younis, in Gaza, on Monday. The Israeli army bombarded Khan Younis, the latest epicenter of the conflict in Gaza, on Monday after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected Hamas' conditions for the release of hostages, amid mounting pressure from their families. AFP

## China's imports will boost US soybean trade

Agricultural official sees great potential for cooperation between intertwined economies

By ZHONG NAN  
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China's overall demand for soybeans is expected to drive continued growth in the United States' soybean trade, according to a US agricultural trade official.

Lance Rezac, vice-chairman of the US Soybean Export Council, said the Chinese and US economies are deeply intertwined, and there is a great deal of potential for cooperation.

He predicted that from the 2024 marketing year to the 2033 marketing year, China's total soybean imports, including those from the US, are expected to rise from 101.5 million metric tons to 134.1 million tons, an average annual growth rate of 3.1 percent.

The US Soybean Export Council projected on Tuesday that China is likely to import 30 million tons of soybeans from the US in the latter's 2024 marketing year, which began on Sept 1 and runs through Aug 31. This would match the amount imported in the previous marketing year.

Zhang Xiaoping, the US export council's director for China, said that China has already imported 20 million tons of US soybeans in the current marketing year, and that based in part on current market demand, the estimated import volume from the US is expected to remain at last year's level.

China imported 99.41 million tons of soybeans with an import value of 419.89 billion yuan (\$58.65 billion) in 2023, representing an 11.4 percent year-on-year increase in quantity and a 4.8 percent

increase in import value, compared with the previous year, data from China's General Administration of Customs showed.

The US Department of Agriculture confirmed on its website last week the private sale of 297,000 tons of US soybeans to China. This announcement followed a meeting between US Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Tang Renjian, China's minister of agriculture and rural affairs, in Washington on Thursday.

Wang Xuejun, a professor of economics at Jiangsu province-based Nanjing Agricultural University, said China has been emphasizing the principle of diversification when it comes to procuring grains, with market dynamics, supply, demand and prices playing crucial roles in determining its agricultural purchases.

Emphasizing that a harmonious Sino-US economic and trade relationship benefits consumers and businesses on both sides, Wang said the significance of the Chinese market remains evident, and there is substantial potential for agricultural cooperation between the two countries.

China has emerged as the world's foremost importer of agricultural products, while the US holds the position of the largest agricultural exporter.

"China stands as the primary market for US agricultural exports and also ranks as the leading purchaser of US commodities like soybeans, corn and cotton, among others," he said.

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## THRIVING HOMESTAYS BOOST RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Businesses provide jobs, welcome rising number of visitors

By YANG FEIYUE  
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A decision Zheng Yaming made three years ago to forsake city life to run a rural homestay helped him find his true calling.

Zheng, who is in his 30s and comes from a village in Jinzhai county, Anhui province, worked in hotels in Shanghai for nine years from 2012.

### in-depth

"I was away from my family a lot and only got to see them once every month most of the time," he said.

He continued with this work, but when his second child was born in 2021, he felt the need to be closer to his family.

"The birth made me aware that I needed to spend more time with my family and find some meaning to my life," Zheng said, adding that all he did in his spare time in Shanghai was go to a bar and chat with his friends about how to make money.

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## Groundless charges against nation's counterterrorism steps slammed

By CUI JIA  
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Groundlessly accusing China of using counterterrorism measures to carry out so-called "genocide" in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region will severely hamper global efforts to fight terrorism, experts said.

Counterterrorism measures in China can never be misused as political tools to violate people's freedom of religious belief or carry out genocide as constantly claimed by some Western countries because they are all law-based, Li Changlin, a professor at Southwest University of Political Science & Law's Human Rights Institute, said on Tuesday.

He made the remarks after the State Council Information Office released a white paper titled "China's Legal Framework and Measures for Counterterrorism" on Tuesday morning.

China, which has long faced terror threats, has established a sound legal framework to combat terrorism over the past four decades. Furthermore, the country has always been respecting and protecting human rights as an underlying principle in improving its practices in the field of counterterrorism, the white paper said.

"Some individuals and organizations in the West choose to portray the issues of terrorism in China as ethnic or religious issues. They also claim that the definition of terrorist activities in China is too broad while

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accusing the law enforcement forces of abusing their power in the name of counterterrorism," Li said.

The white paper has explained in detail how China's legal framework to combat terrorism has worked and has been continuously improved, which will counter such groundless accusations with hard facts, he added.

According to the white paper, terrorist activities have been clearly defined in the Counterterrorism Law, which was passed on Dec 27, 2015. The definition of such activities is consistent with the principles of international conventions.

Meanwhile, China has made consistent efforts to upgrade the counterterrorism provisions of relevant laws including the Anti-Money Laundering Law and the Cybersecurity Law to strengthen coordination among different laws, close legal loopholes and improve areas of weakness in counterterrorism practices, it added.

Besides building a legal framework to tackle terrorism, the county has attached great importance to promoting strict, impartial, procedure-based law enforcement, and ensuring impartial administration of justice and effective protection of human rights, the white paper said.

"The white paper also makes it clear that adopting double standards and politicizing counterterrorism issues in China will only severely hamper the global effort to fight terrorism, weaken the foundations of cooperation, and reduce operational effectiveness," Li said.

By attacking China's counterterrorism efforts and accusing it of "genocide", Western anti-China forces are trying to sabotage the stability of and instigate ethnic hatred in Xinjiang, which has been China's main battlefield against terrorism, said Yang Haitao, a professor at the Criminal Investigation Police University of China's School of Investigation and Counterterrorism.

"In fact, the human rights situation in Xinjiang has significantly improved after counterterrorism measures were effectively carried out in accordance with the law. Not a single terrorist incident has happened in Xinjiang for more than six years. Instead of fighting terrorism among different parties in the past, we can now actively tackle the problem," Yang said.

According to the white paper, China's legal framework works well both in preventing and punishing terrorist activities. Since 2014, China has continued to take tough action against violent terrorism and punish criminals who have plotted terrorist activities. It has foiled most terror schemes in the making and markedly improved people's sense of security.

## New Year vibes



Kids interact with lion dance performers on Monday during a cultural event in Rabat, Morocco. The event kicked off on Monday to celebrate the upcoming Chinese Lunar New Year of the Dragon.

HUO JING / XINHUA

## US should refrain from confrontational approach

Since the release of its National Security Strategy in February 2022, the United States has been actively implementing a containment strategy against China, leveraging its presence in the Asia-Pacific region, nurturing anti-Chinese sentiment and intervening in the affairs of countries in the region.

The US' unilateral, hegemonic approach poses risks to peace and prosperity and should be dropped,

### WORLD WATCH

By Khalid Taimur Akram

the sooner the better.

In pursuit of its goal, the US views regional small powers as potential force multipliers, and is working to enhance their defense capabilities and provoking them

against China for its personal interests in the Asia-Pacific.

For instance, the US has been waging wars, weaponizing countries, intruding on the sovereignty of other states and halting peace processes. The containment strategy involves a significant increase in the US military presence in the region, encompassing the deployment of military ships, planes and troops.

The overarching concept behind containment is to curb China's rise as an economic powerhouse and to militarize the region by encircling it through alliances, military bases and economic circles.

The US is attempting to maintain hegemony through camp antagonism, which threatens regional peace and security. In recent years, Washington has been actively promoting the so-called

"Indo-Pacific" strategy and great power competition to build an alliance in the Asia-Pacific region, with the primary goal of containing China and fueling a tense and zero-sum competition.

The formation of US-led regional frameworks, such as the Quad diplomatic partnership of Australia, India, Japan and the US, and the AUKUS security alliance of Australia, the United Kingdom and the US, as well as active involvement in the Asia-Pacific Economic

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# PAGE TWO

## Ventures: Local economies benefit significantly



Top: An aerial view of a homestay in Bijie, Guizhou province. Above left: A wintry view of a homestay in the Kanas scenic area, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY  
Above right: A visitor reads at a homestay in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, in November. LI BO / XINHUA

**From page 1**

At the end of 2021, Zheng quit his city job after being offered the manager's post at a rural homestay that was about to open in the mountains of Jinzhai.

"The business was expected to be a model for homestay development in the area, and the local government was supporting it," he said.

However, life for Zheng was much harder than it was in the city, especially at the start, when food deliveries were disrupted due to sudden flooding in March 2022. Four months later, the area experienced a severe drought.

As Zheng was put to the test in his new job, he was offered a silver lining in the form of concerted efforts from rural villagers and the local authorities.

He worked with the villagers to ensure supplies reached guests during the flooding by creating a temporary road over muddy ground. He also drove guests across the mountains to the homestay.

"I sensed that everyone at the homestay was giving help and support to make a successful go of the business," Zheng said, adding that for the first time this gave him a sense of purpose beyond merely making money.

Despite the rough times in 2022, the homestay earned revenue of more than 2 million yuan (\$279,900) — a major confidence boost for the villagers in developing rural tourism in Jinzhai and the surrounding area.

Years of working in big cities provided Zheng with the knowledge needed for homestay development in the county, where villagers approached him to ask about hotel service procedures, hygiene standards, and how to promote their homestays online.

"I suddenly felt that my years of working in big cities finally meant something," he said.

Over the past year, Zheng has organized six homestay skills training sessions, providing on-site guidance to 18 such businesses in the area. Some 500 homestay operators have visited his business to receive field training.

Zheng said he was thrilled to see 30 homestays opening in Jinzhai after his arrival, adding that service quality has improved significantly. "The going price for local homestays has risen by 30 percent," he added.

These positive changes have earned Zheng recognition and compliments from the villagers.

"This genuine gratitude and respect from others is quite precious, and something I rarely felt in big cities," Zheng said.

As he has settled down, he enjoys more time with his family members, who are becoming fond of the homestay.

"My son has made many friends through my business, and he enjoys going door to door visiting households in the neighborhood," said Zheng, who has developed a healthier lifestyle.

"I quit drinking after work, and instead take a walk in the mountains. I feel good being close to nature, going to bed early and getting up early," he said.

**Change of scene**

Like Zheng, Huang Jie decided to get away from city life to enjoy a change of scene. In May, he started work at a rural homestay near the Nalati scenic spot in Xinyuan county, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

Huang, who is in his 40s, has two decades of management experience at leading hotels in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

Three years ago, he started to run his own business in Hunan province, but when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted his plans, he took up the offer to run a rural villa in Xinjiang.

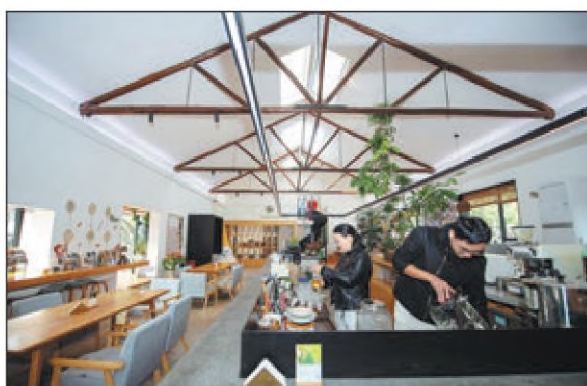
The venture, a joint effort between the local government and major travel agency Trip.com Group, is aimed at upgrading tourism services in the area.

A local official who used to be Huang's tutor at school asked him if he could come to Xinyuan to help with homestay development, and Huang readily agreed.

Against this rural backdrop, Huang has cast off his business suits in favor of outdoor attire, assuming a role similar to that of a farm owner.

He said that when guests arrive, he greets them in a casual manner. "I might make them a pot of tea, pour them a glass of wine, or even offer them a cigarette while chatting with them about local travel tips or trivia about daily life. In a five-star hotel, such informality is not allowed, but the guests who come here really appreciate this kind of approach," he said.

During his interactions with guests, surprises have come Huang's way.



Top: Staff members work at a homestay in Ningbo, Zhejiang province. JIANG HAN / XINHUA  
Above left: Decorations at a homestay in Wuyuan, Jiangxi province. DU LIANYI / CHINA DAILY  
Above right: Cuisine at a homestay in Jiyuan, Henan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In August, a guest from Shanghai decided to invest in a local art performance business after hearing from Huang about the lack of nighttime entertainment at the scenic spot. Huang put the guest in touch with the local authorities.

With his experience, Huang has helped raise the guest occupancy rate at the homestay above 50 percent, and its overall occupancy rate is nearly seven times higher than those at similar accommodations in surrounding areas. Guest reviews have also improved.

Since September, homestay owners in the area have flocked to Huang's villa to learn about his recipe for success, and have even sent their employees to him for internships.

As Huang's business makes its presence felt on the local tourist map,

villagers living in the Nalati area have found opportunities to make extra income.

To entertain the rising number of guests, herders offer them horse riding and distinctive cuisine from rural areas of Xinjiang.

Since Huang arrived in the area, more than a dozen new restaurants have opened.

Huang, who has made friends with many local herders, said he originally planned to stay for just a year, but is now moving his family to the area.

**Rising market**

The successful career changes made by Zheng and Huang mirror the rising rural tourism market nationwide.

Last year, the number of rural tours

made during the major holidays of Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Labor Day, Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day rose by 162 percent year-on-year and nearly doubled compared with 2019, Trip.com Group reported.

Bookings made through the travel agency for village homestays last year were up 2.6 times on those for 2019, before the pandemic emerged, the report said.

The number of homestays on the agency's website has risen to 330,000, compared with 220,000 in 2019.

The agency reported that revenue from its 25-plus rural vacation resorts across the country has benefited local economies by more than 860 million yuan, adding that total revenue at these resorts grew by 269 percent compared with 2022.

The report said members of Generation Z — those born in the late 1990s or early 21st century — from first- and second-tier cities were the fastest-growing group for rural tourism consumption last year, rising by 164 percent over the previous year.

The relaxing rural environment offers an effective remedy for alleviating the anxiety and stress of young people in big cities, the report said.

The requirements of the younger generation have also helped diversify rural tourism activities such as hiking, camping, parent-child study tours, agricultural experiences, and photography.

More than 500 new rural tourism product categories emerged last year, data from Trip.com Group show.

Wang Wenqing, who is in her 50s and comes from Henan, has made regular visits to rural homestays in Linzhou in the north of the province to acquaint travelers with the button-knotting technique, a local traditional cultural heritage item.

In 2017, Wang opened her own art workshop, but struggled to make ends meet due to the cost of raw materials and labor.

The tourism boom in surrounding

villages helped spread the news of her button-knotting work to travelers from outside the area.

"This was especially the case after the local government encouraged intangible cultural heritage items to be bought from homestays," she said.

Wang, who has received steady orders for her work, earns about 10,000 yuan a month, providing her with the funds to invest in button-knotting creations.

Li Shenglong, an official at the culture, radio, television, and tourism bureau in Ganzhou, Jiangxi province, said rural culture, including ancient architecture and intangible cultural heritage, is the "soul of rural tourism".

"Developing such tourism requires cultural empowerment, exploring the historical and cultural heritage of each village, and identifying core competitiveness," Li said.

"It is important to focus on cultural and creative planning, and provide quality tourism services to enhance the overall visitor experience."

Dai Xuefeng, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, suggested the development of rural tourism should be integrated with local production and lifestyles.

"For example, in Xinjiang, the development of rural tourism is combined with intangible cultural heritage, ethnic culture, and natural beauty, allowing visitors to explore the countryside while learning about the region's traditional culture," he said.

Dai proposed that greater convenience in land use, funding and financing be extended to help rural tourism development.

Liu Jiaming, an expert at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, said the modernization of rural areas is a major requirement for planning rural tourism, adding that tourism can play a significant role in achieving rural modernization.

"In China, rural areas share some similarities to a certain extent, because they were established under the guidance of traditional Chinese culture, and possess cultural attributes and patterns," Liu said.

He called on different regions to realize it is essential to maintain a unique identity and preserve local characteristics in developing rural tourism.

"Such tourism has entered a stage of high-level development, and it is essential to carry out top-level design," Liu said.

"Efforts should be directed toward the goal of creating rural vacation destinations, focusing on activities related to rural leisure and holidays, while integrating the concept of boutique homestays and luxury and eco-friendly vacations in rural areas."



Left and right: Food and drinks are served to visitors in a tent and at an outdoor table at a homestay in Suzhou. PHOTOS BY LI BO / XINHUA

## TOP NEWS

## Killings in Chicago



A policeman inspects a shooting scene in Joliet, Illinois, the United States, on Monday after eight people were shot and killed over two days at three locations in the suburbs of Chicago. The suspect fled to Texas following the shootings and shot himself after a confrontation with law enforcement officials, police said late on Monday. TYLER PASCIAK LARIVIERE VIA AP

## Visa-free policy well received by Italian tourists

By AN BAIJIE, HOU CHENCHEN and ZHOU MENGXUE

With a visa-free policy now in place for visitors from some countries, niche tourist spots in China can unlock their potential for international tourism, said Cristiano Varotti, the East Asia manager for the Italian National Tourist Board, in an interview on Friday.

Beyond the top destinations frequented by international travelers such as Beijing, Shanghai, Xi'an in Shaanxi province and Guilin in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, scenic spots along the ancient Silk Road and around the Yangtze River Delta can be highly attractive for Italian tourists, said Varotti.

In December, China introduced visa-free entry for visitors from Italy, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Spain. The latest update in January added Switzerland to the list for the visa-free arrangement, Xinhua News Agency reported.

The new policy allows ordinary passport holders from the European countries to enjoy up to 15 days of visa-free travel in China.

Italian citizen Leonardo Cozzi plans to visit China in February. He highlighted the policy's positive impact on travel decisions, especially for younger tourists.

"Young people like to leave their

travel plans to the last moment. If a destination requires obtaining a visa in advance, they might choose another place," Cozzi said.

In 2017, Cozzi started planning his trip to China two months in advance, including a three-week visa application procedure.

"It's much more convenient now. I applied for a one-month tourist visa this time and received it in just five days," Cozzi said. During the upcoming Spring Festival, he will visit Chongqing in Southwest China.

Varotti, of the Italian National Tourist Board, identified the areas covering Chongqing and neighboring Sichuan province as extremely promising tourism destinations, together with the western part of Central China's Hunan province, featuring the Zhangjiajie and Fenghuang areas, as well as a mountainous route between Southwest China's Yunnan province and the Xizang autonomous region, connecting cities such as Kunming, Dali, Lijiang and Lhasa.

While cultural tourism is popular in both countries, for many Italian tourists, a trip to China is considered a "long-haul" one, as it is not just about covering distances but navigating language and culture differences. To ease this, tourists often opt for tour groups, Varotti said.

He added that the visa-free policy is a crucial step to revitalize tourism. To attract more international tourists, the sector should focus more on brand promotion, he said.

For example, hotpot is known in Italy, but people may not link the popular spicy dish to the city of Chongqing, he pointed out.

He suggested promoting business-to-business cooperation and creating more tourism products to meet international tourists' increasingly diversified needs.

## Better understanding

Loredana Cursano and her husband, Giuseppe Russo, who live near Milan's Chinatown, have chosen Wenzhou, a city in East China's Zhejiang province, as their next Chinese destination.

"Wenzhou is the hometown of many Chinese migrants in Italy. I want to see the hometown of my Chinese friends. The 15-day visa-free travel is just right for us to wholeheartedly explore a city," Cursano said.

Her views on increasing understanding between cultures are in line with what President Xi Jinping has reiterated on several occasions — the importance of opening-up and people-to-people exchanges.

To that effect, China is making continuous efforts to promote high-standard opening-up, enhance mobility for Chinese as

well as foreign nationals and encourage people-to-people exchanges, according to Xinhua.

On Jan 11, the National Immigration Administration of China implemented five more measures to simplify the process for foreign nationals visiting China, making travel more accessible for purposes such as business, education and tourism.

For Cursano, a turning point in her views about China occurred in 1994, when she visited Beijing, Shanghai and Guilin. The real China, she noted, was different from the general European perception.

Inspired by the initial trip, Cursano saw China-Italy cooperation opportunities and encouraged her daughter Clotilde, who is now 15, to study the Chinese language.

Cursano said that with her daughter's help, the family would be able to communicate better with the locals this time.

The family aims to explore more of the countryside for an even more authentic Chinese experience. They have also considered sending Clotilde to China for further studies.

"We use our eyes to travel to a country for the first time, and we use our hearts afterward," Cursano said.

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## 'Status quo' Taiwan remarks draw rebuke

Chinese embassy spokesperson says any push for separatism 'doomed to failure'

By ZHAO HUANXIN in Washington  
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A spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in the United States said on Monday that "Taiwan independence" is a dead end and would only bring disaster to the people in the Taiwan region, and that any attempt to justify separatist moves under the pretext of "democracy" is doomed to failure.

In an opinion piece published in USA Today on Jan 14, and in an interview with The Associated Press on Jan 18, the representative of the "Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States" highlighted the "democracy versus authoritarianism" rhetoric, advocated the maintenance of the cross-strait "status quo", and claimed that Taiwan will continue to strengthen its security and economic ties with the US.

"The remarks are misleading and have distorted the truth," the embassy spokesperson said in a statement. "The Taiwan question has nothing to do with democracy, but bears on China's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

When it comes to "democracy", the "sincere desire and firm will" of the 1.4 billion Chinese people for national reunification is the true and greatest democracy, the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson said that by using "democracy" as a pretext, the "Taiwan independence" forces are trying to stoke confrontation and antagonism across the Taiwan Strait, justify their provocative moves in pushing forward separatism, and cover up their hidden agenda of splitting the country apart.

"Such attempts are doomed to failure," the statement said.

Echoing a Foreign Ministry comment on the result of the election in the Taiwan region on Jan 13, the spokesperson said the result cannot change the dynamics and direction of cross-strait relations.

Nor can it hold back the prevailing trend that China will and must achieve reunification, the spokesperson added.

In terms of the status quo of the

The Taiwan question has nothing to do with democracy, but bears on China's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

statement by a spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in the United States

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Taiwan question, the spokesperson said there is but one China in the world, Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China.

The spokesperson noted that Taiwan's return to China is a component of the post-World War II international order, and the one-China principle is a universally recognized basic norm governing international relations with China and a prevailing international consensus.

"Facts have proved that the 'Taiwan independence' forces and external forces colluding with them are the root causes of cross-strait tensions in recent years and the fundamental threat to peace and stability across the Strait," the spokesperson said.

The statement also said that whoever pushes for "Taiwan independence" will be splitting Chinese territory and will surely be judged harshly by history and law, and whoever goes against the one-China principle will be interfering in China's internal affairs and violating China's sovereignty, and will surely be opposed by the Chinese people and the international community.

No one should "underestimate the determination, resolve and capability of the Chinese people in safeguarding our sovereignty and territorial integrity," the statement added.

## Mountain blaze



A man adjusts his goggles amid thick smoke from a fire in the mountains around Ocean View, Cape Town, South Africa, on Monday. NIC BOTHMA / REUTERS

## Trade: China strives to maintain supply chain stability

From page 1

China has consistently opposed the politicization and weaponization of economic and trade issues. The country is committed to upholding global trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, as well as maintaining the stability of global industrial and supply chains, said Wang Wen, executive dean of Renmin Univer-

sity of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies.

Meanwhile, in another trade-related development, He Yadong, a spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce, has reiterated that the implementation of export control measures on specific graphite products is a widely accepted international practice.

Speaking at a weekly news conference in Beijing on Thursday, the

ministry spokesman said that China's export control regulations are designed to adhere to international nonproliferation commitments and protect its national security and interests.

He made the comments in response to reports that certain Chinese graphite exporters have received clearance to supply their products to South Korean battery manufacturers.

"China's export control measures should not be viewed as a complete export ban, and the Commerce Ministry has granted approval for several graphite export applications that were in alignment with the applicable regulations," he said.

China had previously announced its intention to refine export controls on specific graphite categories, and new regulations took effect on Dec 1.

## Approach: Engaging in bloc confrontation goes against trend of era

From page 1

Cooperation forum, are concrete examples of US interference in the region. Such bloc camps show long-term US strategic goals and are central to the pessimistic US foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific.

The administration of US President Joe Biden, which is trapped in a Cold War mindset, has been keen on creating "small cliques" directed against China. The US approach poses an immediate threat to the free and open international system and recklessly flouts the basic laws of the international order.

Tensions between China and the US often escalate due to the

increasing frequency and intensity of US military activities in the South China Sea. The US has been conducting close-in reconnaissance operations and military exercises in waters near China since 2009, amplifying tensions in the region. Such actions have also undermined the sovereignty of these nations.

The broader goal of this alliance is to counter China's rise and its strategic presence in the Asia-Pacific region, potentially giving rise to bloc-based divisions or destabilization that could undermine the broader goal of regional cohesion and progress. In this narrow domain, the US continues to aim to maintain regional dominance

**The Cold War mentality contradicts the interconnected nature of countries in the present era, posing a threat to common interests and peace.**

and has the potential to fuel regional tensions.

This not only poses a threat to China's national security, but also contradicts the spirit of the United Nations Charter and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Despite the US' persistent attempts to disrupt peace and its stance against China, many countries have opted not to align with the hard-line approach advocated by Washington.

Instead, these nations are expanding their economic collaboration with China, implementing cooperative strategies to diversify their business collaboration and establishing new supply chains in developing countries.

The Cold War mentality contradicts the interconnected nature of countries in the present era, posing a threat to common interests and peace. Amid increasing interconnectedness among countries, the US framework goes against the

trend of the times by engaging in bloc confrontation.

President Xi Jinping has put forward new major-power relations based on peace, mutual benefit and respect, rather than great-power rivalry and a zero-sum game. China consistently upholds a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, rather than confrontation.

Regional organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization offer a different approach that emphasizes dialogue, cooperation and long-term regional stability and prosperity. China's role in the SCO and with ASEAN is very pragmatic and

cooperative. China's vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity emphasizes win-win cooperation, genuine multilateralism and Chinese solutions to jointly safeguard world peace and development.

The right of each country to choose its own development path and safeguard its territorial integrity should be respected. China has always pursued cooperation, dialogue and a shared commitment to peace and mutual benefit. The US should steer away from confrontational approaches that jeopardize the interests of all nations.

The author is executive director of the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future in Islamabad. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA

## Snow day



Wrapped in red scarves, Gentoo penguins venture outdoors to meet visitors at Taizhou Ocean World in Taizhou, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday, after a significant snowfall. Led by animal workers, the penguins were allowed out from their enclosure at the park for the first time in years after the snowfall. PAN KANJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Shanghai sets growth target, key undertakings for 2024

Intl trade center role to be bolstered, Pudong to be further developed

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai  
zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

Shanghai's GDP is expected to grow by about 5 percent this year after reaching 4.72 trillion yuan (\$660 billion) in 2023, Gong Zheng, mayor of Shanghai, said on Tuesday.

The growth of residents' per capita disposable income will keep pace with economic growth, with the increase in consumer prices projected at about 3 percent, Gong said while delivering the Shanghai government work report at the annual session of the Shanghai People's Congress, the city's legislative body. "Shanghai aims to accelerate the pace of building itself into an international trade center this year. It will actively participate in the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative and the construction of a pilot zone for Silk Road e-commerce cooperation, while enhancing the international development capabilities of local service institutions in fields such as accounting and law," said Gong.

The pilot zone was approved in Shanghai in October.

Another focus of Shanghai's efforts will be comprehensively promoting the construction of Pudong New Area so that it can better fulfill its role as a pioneering area for Chi-

### City's key economic figures for 2023

- **1.6 trillion yuan:** scale of Shanghai's three leading industries — integrated circuits, biomedicine and artificial intelligence — in 2023
- **4.2 trillion yuan:** total import and export volume of foreign trade in 2023
- **\$24 billion:** actual use of foreign capital in 2023
- **4.4 percent:** proportion of R&D expenditure equivalent to the city's GDP in 2023
- **49.1 million TEUs:** container throughput at Shanghai Port last year, ranking it world No. 1 for the 14th consecutive year
- **1.28 million:** number of new energy vehicles in Shanghai last year, ranking first among cities worldwide

ZHOU WENTING

na's socialist modernization, facilitating the country's high-level reform and opening-up.

On Monday, the State Council released an implementation plan for Pudong's pilot comprehensive reform from 2023 to 2027.

"Shanghai will fulfill the 280 tasks specified in the central government's document and the city's action plan about Pudong, including exploring retail business pilots in cross-border e-commerce imports of over-the-counter drugs and medical devices, promoting bonded maintenance, re-manufacturing and bonded research and development outside the special customs supervision zone, and further building a leading area for international talent development," said Gong.

"A batch of new regulations in Pudong will be introduced," he said. Shanghai's new development

momentum grew steadily and the dividends of reform and opening-up were steadily released, said Gong.

After completing the 208 tasks in business environment benchmarking for the World Bank's new evaluation system, a new round of reform with 150 tasks and measures will be carried out this year to focus on being more market-oriented, international and with a better rule of law, Gong said.

An average of more than 1,900 enterprises were newly established in Shanghai per day last year, bringing the total number of enterprises in the city to more than 2.89 million. Altogether 606,000 new jobs were added.

The surveyed urban unemployment rate in Shanghai last year was 4.5 percent, and the target is aimed at below 5 percent this year, said Gong.

Research by China International Intellectual Co, a State-owned human resources and intellectual services provider, showed that 81 percent of enterprises have recruitment plans for fresh college graduates in 2024, including 32 percent of them saying that the headcounts for new graduates will increase.

"Enterprises in new energy, electronic communications and machinery manufacturing show a large number of recruitment needs, an increase of more than 22 percent compared with last year. Such sectors will continue to function as an effective support for employment absorption in the future," said Zhang Hui, general manager of the operations management department of CIIC.

Last year, the total output value of industrial strategic emerging industries in Shanghai accounted for 43.9 percent of the total output value of industries above designated size, and the scale of the city's three leading industries — integrated circuits, biomedicine and artificial intelligence — reached 1.6 trillion yuan.

Shanghai's total import and export volume of foreign trade reached 4.2 trillion yuan, a rise of 0.7 percent, and the actual use of foreign capital reached \$24 billion, a record high.

"Last year, the number of regional headquarters of multinational companies and foreign-funded research and development centers in Shanghai increased by 65 and 30 respectively, bringing the total number to 956 and 561," said Gong.

## Global community backs one-China principle

By ZHANG YI  
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The global community has continued to voice its unwavering support for the one-China principle following the elections in China's Taiwan region, reinforcing the principle that there is only one China and Taiwan is an inseparable part of it.

Over 100 countries and international organizations, including ASEAN, the League of Arab States and the African Union have openly reiterated their commitment to the one-China principle so far, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a recent briefing.

Dennis Francis, president of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, wrote recently on social network X to reaffirm that the work of the UNGA will adhere to the one-China principle guided by UNGA Resolution 2758.

During a meeting with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi last week, Tunisian President Kais Saied said his country upholds the one-China principle, abides by UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 and supports China in exercising sovereignty over its territory.

In a statement released last week, Gabonese Foreign Minister Regis Onanga Ndiaye reiterated Gabon's firm adherence to the one-China principle, opposing any words or actions that undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Nauru, an island country in the central Pacific, announced last week that it would recognize the one-China principle and sever "diplomatic ties" with Taiwan.

Chen Binhua, a spokesman for the State Council's Taiwan Affairs

Office, said recently that 10 countries have severed "diplomatic ties" with the island since the Democratic Progressive Party authorities took office in Taiwan since 2016.

The DPP authorities, who adhere to a separatist stance, have been using the hard-earned money of the people attempting to achieve "diplomatic breakthroughs" and gain international recognition, he said.

These actions attempt to deny the fact that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China, he said, adding that it is natural to oppose and restrain such actions.

Li Peng, head of the Graduate Institute for Taiwan Studies at Xiamen University, said that adhering to the one-China principle is a consensus in the international community, and establishing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China is a general trend.

The attempts by Taiwan authorities to highlight "sovereignty" through maintaining "diplomatic allies" are futile, as the vast majority of the international community will not recognize Taiwan's so-called sovereignty, he said.

Regarding Taiwan's attempts to pursue "independence" through internationalizing the Taiwan question, Li said such efforts will increasingly become unattainable as the Chinese mainland's development and international influence continue to rise. He said that the Chinese government is determined and resolute in upholding the one-China principle in the international community and possesses the strong capability to counter any external attempts to interfere.

Xu Wei contributed to this story.

## Nation's efforts on human rights praised at UN

By ATLAS SHAO in Hong Kong  
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Representatives of various countries on Tuesday lavished praise on the human rights development and progress made by China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region over the years, saying China's efforts have protected human rights and bridged the poverty gap.

The comments came at the 45th Session of Universal Periodic Review Working Group meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The UPR, which is its fourth cycle of review of all 193 member states, is a mechanism established under the council to peer review each UN member state's human rights record every 4.5 years.

Chen Xu, head of China's delegation to the meeting, said human rights protection is an important part of China's governance and China has forged a path of human rights development that keeps up with the times and is in line with its national condition.

He told the working group that China is willing to engage in dialogue with all parties on the basis of equality and mutual respect, to strengthen exchanges, to complement each other's strengths and to make progress together.

Eric Chan Kwok-ki, chief secretary for administration for the HKSAR government, attended the meeting as deputy head of China's delegation with officials from the

SAR government as members of China's delegation.

"With the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law and an improved electoral system, the days of social disturbance and fear are now over," Chan said in his opening remarks.

Hong Kong residents can continue to enjoy the legitimate rights and freedoms guaranteed by the country's Constitution, the Basic Law of the HKSAR, as well as the relevant provisions of international covenants that apply to Hong Kong, he noted.

A total of 163 countries have registered to give a peer review at the meeting.

A Jamaican representative noted the significant social and economic progress achieved by China, especially the improvement in the economic situation of nearly 100 million people in rural areas.

A member representing Indonesia appreciated China's commitment to the ongoing development of the Human Rights Action Plan of China (2021-25).

The Iranian representative hailed China's economic program and the adoption of the human rights action plan.

The Palestinian representative believed that China's sharing allowed others to learn about their latest progress in human rights, and commended the country for promoting and protecting human rights.

## Zibo looks to capitalize on windfall from BBQ craze

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan  
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The barbecue craze in Zibo last year has had a lasting impact on the city, with governments at various levels seeking to utilize the fame to boost consumption, said deputies at the ongoing session of the 14th Shandong People's Congress.

Tourist destinations in Shandong, such as Zibo and Weihai, gained nationwide recognition last year, leading to a 60 percent surge in both tourist numbers and revenue for the province, Zhou Naixiang, governor of Shandong, said while delivering the government work report to the congress on Monday.

Zibo, an old industrial city that barely featured on most people's list of must-visit places, attracted a huge influx of visitors — particularly young people — from around the country over a three-month period

Shandong is a province rich in culture and tourism. By integrating the development of culture and tourism, more cities in Shandong will achieve similar success."

Gao Honglei, member of the 13th Shandong Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference

last year thanks to its barbecue craze.

Driven by the tourism boom, the city's retail sales of consumer goods experienced a year-on-year increase

of 9.6 percent, with accommodation revenue growing by 28.1 percent and catering revenue increasing by 25.8 percent, the city government said.

"We have been considering how to effectively harness the impact of Zibo barbecue to further the city's development," said Su Zhenhua, a deputy and the head of the Zhangdian district government in Zibo.

"As the central urban area of Zibo, we are diversifying our business landscape, particularly by introducing trendy products and brands that appeal to young people, and organizing festival events to stimulate consumption," said Su.

Zibo aims to develop as a nighttime cultural and tourism consumption hub this year, with plans to host events such as music and barbecue festivals.

Inspired by Zibo barbecue and the booming popularity of Harbin's ice and snow tourism, Liu Guishu, a

deputy and the Party secretary of San'anzi village in Weifang, a city neighboring Zibo, said he plans to leverage social media to promote the village's culture and tourism.

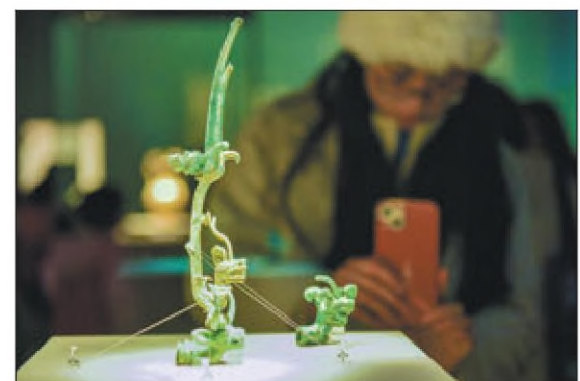
"We will establish a distribution center to bring together local specialty products, and use methods such as short videos and livestreaming to promote our products," said Liu.

Tourism focused on experience and local specialties is on the rise, said Gao Honglei, a member of the 13th Shandong Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

"Local residents' hospitality acts as a catalyst for the growing popularity of tourist destinations," Gao added.

"Shandong is a province rich in culture and tourism. By integrating the development of culture and tourism, more cities in Shandong will achieve similar success."

### Long history



Dragon-shaped bronze ornaments of a sacrificial altar unearthed at the Sanxingdui Ruins are displayed at Sichuan Museum in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Tuesday. Some 60 sets of dragon-related relics feature in an exhibition that will celebrate the upcoming Year of the Dragon. LIU ZHONGJUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## POLICY REVIEW

## Zones aim to integrate culture, tourism

Ministries pick 50 areas to become potential demonstration hubs

By YANG FEIYUE  
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On Dec 18, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development announced a plan to build national demonstration zones to further boost the integration of the cultural and tourism industries.

Fifty cities, city districts and counties from around the nation have been selected as potential zones. They include the Dongcheng and Chaoyang districts of Beijing; the Xincheng district of Hohhot, Inner Mongolia autonomous region; the Xuhui and Songjiang districts of Shanghai; and in Jiangsu province, the Xuanwu district of Nanjing and the Gusu district of Suzhou.

Construction has either commenced or will begin soon in those areas. Once work is complete in an area, inspectors will visit within three years to determine if it is suitable to become an official demonstration zone.

The three ministries called on provincial-level authorities to strengthen collaboration on the construction work of the demonstration zones, formulate and introduce supporting measures at the provincial level, enhance supervision and guidance, and regularly evaluate the construction results.

According to the notice, the prefecture-level governments in charge of those zones should implement related policies, provide financial support, guide the reasonable acquisition of resources, and come up with solutions to major problems encountered during construction.

Local governments in charge of the construction projects are also urged to establish and improve the work mechanism, implement various construction measures and make good use of financial support policies.

The ministries stressed that related governments should ensure those regions can play a leading role in the integration efforts and positively influence surrounding areas.

The demonstration zones will play a leading role in the deep and high-quality development of the integration of culture and tourism in China, said Song Yangyang, deputy director of the Institute of Creative Industries Technology at Renmin University of China.

"They will be characterized by rich cultural heritage, abundant tourism resources, the deep integration and complementary collaboration of industrial chains, and sound development mechanisms," Song said.

He added that the demonstration zones will significantly influence how work is done on future projects and drive support for government policies, industrial development and the innovative integration of various types of businesses.

"This will promote the flourishing development of new cultural and tourism formats, accelerate the deepening of supply-side structural reforms and drive industrial transformation and upgrading," he said.

According to the authorities, the 50 selected areas all have a solid foundation for industrial integration and have important, distinctive features that can further promote integrated development of the cultural and tourism industries in their areas.

For example, Wuyishan city in Fujian province, Yangshuo county in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and Dunhuang in Gansu province have unique advantages in traditional tourism for their abundant folk culture, revolutionary history or natural resources.

Those places are urged to promote their cultural products and services as part of their tourism development, leveraging tourism as a channel to make their cultures stand out more.

Meanwhile, areas that have already seen relatively large-scale development, including Qian'an city in Hebei province and the



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Chancheng and Nanhai districts in Foshan, Guangdong province, have been advised by authorities to promote the deep integration of the cultural and tourism industries using modern services and agriculture and advanced manufacturing, connecting upstream and downstream industrial chains to further improve the cultural and tourism product supply system.

Elsewhere, the Gusu district in Suzhou, the Qingyang and Pidu districts in Chengdu in Sichuan province, and Qujiang New District in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, have been called on to develop tourism performances, Chinese-style theme parks, cultural festivals and exhibition tourism.

Song said two cross-provincial zones have made the list.

One involves Shanghai's Qingpu district, Wujiang district in Suzhou and Jiashan county in Zhejiang province.

"(They) can leverage the solid accumulation of cultural heritage, tourism resources and customers from surrounding areas, and explore the coordinated development of cultural and tourism industries in the pan-Dianshan Lake area (at the boundary between Shanghai and Jiangsu)," Song said.

The other covers Pingjiang county in Hun-

an province, Xiushui county in Jiangxi province and Tongcheng county in Hubei province.

"Strategically planning cross-regional clusters for the high-quality development of cultural and tourism industries will facilitate the free flow of cultural and tourism resources across provincial regions, and enhance the collaborative and shared development levels of cultural and tourism industries," Song said.

In recent years, new integrated culture and tourism businesses have played an increasingly evident role in driving the economy, as Chinese travelers are growing more fond of cultural experiences for leisure, experts said.

According to the China Tourism Academy's recent forecast for this year, the number of domestic tourist visits will exceed 6 billion, and domestic tourism revenue will surpass 6 trillion yuan (\$837.9 billion).

The Chinese government has picked up on the trend and has unveiled a string of policies in support of cultural and tourism integration.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, the central government has attached great importance to cultural and tourism work.

In August 2019, the General Office of the

State Council, China's Cabinet, issued the "Opinions on further stimulating the potential of cultural and tourism consumption", which proposed the plan to build national demonstration zones for the integrated development of the cultural and tourism industries.

In September last year, the office went on to issue "Measures to unleash the potential of tourism consumption and promote the high-quality development of tourism" as a further means to meet the development goal.

"Frequent introduction of such policies in various regions ... is aimed at promoting the deep integration of culture and tourism, innovating the supply of tourism products, enhancing the quality of tourism products and promoting the recovery and accelerated development of the tourism industry," Wang Ping, a law professor with the College of Arts and Science at Beijing Union University, told China Tourism News.

"It also reflects the requirements of expanding domestic demand and deepening supply-side structural reform," Wang said.

He said deep integration of culture and tourism enhances the role culture plays in tourism and diversifies cultural development to meet travelers' needs.

## Policy Digest

## Public security officials tackle 113,000 crimes

Last year, China's public security authorities investigated 113,000 crimes related to food, drugs, the environment and intellectual property rights in collaboration with other government departments.

Their efforts have given people a better sense of fulfillment, happiness and security, the Ministry of Public Security said in a news release published Friday on its website.

Regarding public food safety, the ministry said authorities have severely cracked down on crimes related to the excessive use of food additives and of non-edible substances.

The ministry said it has also prioritized its fight against the production and sale of counterfeit and inferior drugs that target women, children and the elderly.

It has also stepped up the protection of IPR by cracking down on criminal acts in key areas that affect people's lives and health, including products for children, household appliances, automobile parts and construction materials.

And to meet people's needs for a beautiful, natural environment, the ministry said efforts have been made to target crimes related to the exploitation of nature, threats against endangered species and wildlife crimes.

## China still world's largest online retail market

China has been dubbed the world's largest online retail market for the 11th consecutive year, with its online retail sales exceeding 15 trillion yuan (\$2.09 trillion), up 11 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Figures released by the ministry on its website on Friday showed that online retail sales of physical goods accounted for 27.6 percent of total retail sales of consumer goods.

Chinese consumers showed a conspicuous inclination towards environmentally friendly, wholesome and smart products, with a notable preference for domestic brands, it said.

The country also witnessed a more diverse online service sector last year as online travel, entertainment and catering industries together contributed to 23.5 percent of the overall increase in online retail sales.

In addition, the ministry said that international cooperation in electronic commerce has expanded, with the sales volume of imported goods on major domestic e-commerce platforms exceeding 290 billion yuan (\$40.49 billion), thus providing more diverse choices for consumers.

## 337 ride-hailing providers now operating

China's online ride-hailing companies reached 337 by the end of December, two more than the number registered during the previous month, data from the Ministry of Transport showed on Friday.

By the end of last month, 2.79 million authorized ride-hailing vehicle certificates and 6.57 million driver licenses had been issued, according to the ministry.

Also last month, China saw some 894 million ride-hailing trips, 8.3 percent more than in November.

MO JINGXI

## Leisure destinations making moves to attract more travelers

By YANG FEIYUE

As domestic consumption demands are shifting toward leisure travel, as well as spiritual and cultural enjoyment, destinations nationwide are strengthening efforts to achieve integrated development of the cultural and tourism industries.

Tens of thousands of tea merchants and visitors gathered at a recent tea expo in Wuyishan, in Southeast China's Fujian province.

They came to enjoy the tea and the river and mountain views in the city, which has been shortlisted to become a national demonstration zone for the integrated development of the cultural and tourism industries.

"Tea and tourism are the dual engines of economic development in Wuyishan," said Wang Xiaojun, the head of its culture, sports and tourism bureau.

In recent years, Wuyishan has launched a

series of tea-related experiences for the public, such as gathering around a stove for brewing tea and picking tea at local plantations, Wang said.

In addition, tea-themed spaces and products have been created, including homestays, museums and food and beverages.

Last year, the city received 15.5 million visitors, up 9 percent compared to 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic. Revenue hit 21.6 billion yuan (\$3 billion), an 8 percent increase over 2019, according to local authorities.

Wuyishan aims to become a world-class tourist destination and a reception hall for Fujian, creating a model area for integrated culture and tourism development, Wang said.

This involves enhancing core scenic areas, emphasizing ecological experiences, upgrading resort areas, introducing new nighttime consumption activities and promoting the integration of culture and tourism

in villages and towns around Wuyishan National Park, Wang added.

In Yangshuo county, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, improving cultural and tourism experiences has enabled visitors to better enjoy its green mountains, clear waters and exquisite caves, which have been recognized by the World Tourism Organization as one of the world's best vacation spots.

"We've comprehensively carried out the 'tourism plus' strategy (integrating tourism and other sectors) and developed five major cultural and tourism industrial clusters," said Huang Xiaoxue, head of the county.

Luxury hotels, distinctive shopping areas, exquisite homestays, distinctive cultural performances and outdoor activities such as rock climbing, cycling and hang gliding have enhanced tourists' experiences, Huang said.

Last year, the county received 21 million traveler visits, up 47.8 percent year on year,

according to the county government.

Total tourism revenue reached 29 billion yuan, up 53.4 percent.

More efforts will be put into the integrated development of the culture and tourism industries, Huang said.

Many other tourist attractions have created cultural tourism projects and products that promote traditional Chinese culture and have proved popular among travelers.

Last year, Jianmenguan (Jianmen Pass) in Guangyuan, Sichuan province, set up a Tang Dynasty (618-907) poem recitation challenge.

People who participate must recite a famous poem about the site. Visitors who successfully recite the poem can receive a free ticket to the scenic spot, said Xia Zhipeng, brand manager at Jianmenguan.

By the end of December, more than 62,000 people had participated, with about 57,000 earning free tickets.

Travelers to the area have spoken highly

of the challenge and say it gives visitors an opportunity to learn about Jianmenguan's past, Xia said.

In Hainan province, the Nanwan Monkey Islet has joined hands with a local Tanka (nomadic boat dwellers) culture museum to attract traveling families.

Tours of the islet feature fun interactions with the monkey and exposure to Tanka culture, and its distinctive ecological resources such as the mountains, sea and landscapes have been very popular with children, said Xing Fuhai, an official in charge of the islet's marketing operations.

Xing said more efforts will be made to further optimize and enhance tourists' experiences, including developing new content.

Last year, Gansu province made moves to integrate culture and tourism, including developing projects related to health, education and intangible cultural experiences, said He Xiaozu, head of the provincial culture and tourism department.

More than 600 culture and tourism projects were established, and 14.7 billion yuan was invested in the sector, said He.

## CHINA

## Hebei medical team treats Nepali patients

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang  
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Zhang Wei is proud to have helped put together the 13th Chinese medical team that conducted minimally invasive surgeries at a cancer hospital in Nepal, contributing to the advancement of the country's healthcare services.

Zhang, who led the team of 17 medical professionals and is also head of the Urology Department at the Baoding-based Affiliated Hospital of Hebei University, specializes in minimally invasive surgeries on urological tumors.

Such surgeries are preferred over general operations because they cause less trauma to the body and less postoperative pain for the patient. In addition, patients can recover more quickly.

During their mission from September 2020 to June 2022 at the B.P. Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital in central-southern Nepal, Zhang and his team not only saved some local patients' lives, but also introduced advanced medical techniques and traditional Chinese medicine to Nepal.

The hospital was built with a grant from the Chinese government in December 1998. China began sending medical teams the following year.

"Despite being Nepal's most comprehensive cancer hospital, minimally invasive surgeries were not being conducted often enough due to inadequate equipment and limited awareness," Zhang said, adding that his primary focus at the hospital was on developing minimally invasive laparoscopic surgeries.

According to Zhang, based on the efforts of previous Chinese medical teams, he and his team, successfully performed multiple complex laparoscopic surgeries during their 21-month stay.

Among them was the successful removal of a massive pheochromocytoma (a type of tumor) through retroperitoneal laparoscopy — a high-risk procedure.

"The patient had been refused admission by several hospitals in Nepal due to the high risk of the surgery and its high degree of diffi-

culty," Zhang said.

Upon learning of the Chinese medical team's presence, the patient traveled over four hours to reach the hospital.

"Despite the daunting surgical challenges, our medical team was determined to tackle this difficult case, giving hope and health to the patient," Zhang said.

With his expertise in laparoscopy, the team managed to minimize the surgical risks and ultimately achieved success.

Hospital director Nirmal Lamichhane, who initially worried about the team performing the surgery due to its high mortality rate, was amazed at the successful outcome. "It was the first retroperitoneal laparoscopic resection of a massive pheochromocytoma at our hospital, and also the first in our country," Nirmal said.

Zhang recalled how grateful the patient's family members were. They presented the medical team with a commemorative banner to honor its efforts.

During their mission in Nepal, the team handled over 6,000 outpatient cases and participated in more than 600 surgeries.

"During the surgeries, we invited local doctors to participate so that they could observe and carry out similar surgeries with the new method after we left," Zhang said.

He added that with the hospital's equipment improving, its doctors have learned related techniques that can help them conduct minimally invasive surgeries.

"I think it is more helpful to teach people how to operate with improved methods," he said.

Hebei has a long history of dedicating its medical professionals to overseas efforts.

Last year marked the 60th anniversary of China's foreign medical aid program, and the 50th anniversary of the province's participation in it.

Over the past five decades, Hebei has dispatched 36 medical teams comprising 809 individuals to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nepal, treating over 6 million patients, according to a report by Hebei Daily.



From top: Zhang Wei treats a Nepali patient at the B.P. Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital in Nepal. Members of the 13th Chinese medical team conduct a minimally invasive surgery at the hospital in Nepal. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Li Juan checks a product in her company's showroom in Wuhan, Hubei province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Amputee in Wuhan discovers purpose

After struggling with her disability, Li Juan starts a prostheses company to give others like her a chance to live better lives

By LIU KUN in Wuhan  
and ZHENG CAIXIONG

When Li Juan returns home from a business trip, she is usually exhausted but happy that her products were well received by the disabled people she met.

She was in high spirits as she discussed the joy she derives from serving others with her company, Wuhan Agme Rehabilitation Equipment Co, which develops prosthetic limbs in Wuhan, Hubei province.

"For me, it is a happy thing to be able to help more and more disabled people," said Li, who is also disabled and uses a prosthetic leg.

"I walk a little slower and with more difficulty than others, but as long as I persist, I can succeed," she said.

The 45-year-old — nicknamed "Pin Jie", or hardworking sister, by her employees — has traveled to more than half of China over the course of 200 trips to introduce and sell her products.

The prosthetic limbs her company produces have been serving more disabled at home and abroad, Li said happily.

When she was 15 years old, she was involved in a traffic accident in Ezhou, Hubei, her hometown. Her injuries led to the amputation of her left leg at the hip.

"Besides lying in bed all day, I did not know how to survive at that time, and I even had thoughts of suicide," she said.

Back then, she refused to be fitted with a prosthesis. In the early 1990s, prosthetic technology was limited, and the discomfort it caused led her to decline the device.

It was the unexpected death of Li's mother that prompted her to pull herself together after lying in bed for a year and take on a maternal role for her younger brother and sister.

"I had to stand up and walk out of the gloom of sadness," she said.

Later, when a vocational school specializing in orthopedic prosthesis technology in Wuhan contacted Li and offered to assemble a prosthetic leg for her, she quickly accepted.

### New leg, new mission

To learn how to use a prosthesis as part of the body, Li needed to undergo intensive rehabilitation training. Her clothes were often soaked with sweat by the end of each session.

During the process, she inevitably stumbled from time to time, but extra precautions were taken to help her avoid falling.

After about a month of rehab, Li said she burst into tears when she was finally able to stand and walk on her own with her prosthesis.

As her device was being assembled, she learned there were a large number of disabled people in China who need prostheses, but the nation's assembly capabilities still lagged behind those of more developed countries.

It was then that she formed a plan to help others like her.

A few years later, Li met and fell in love with her husband, who had previously worked in the prosthetic assembly field. Their ideas coincided: successful prosthetic assembly would play a huge role in helping disabled people integrate with society.

In 2003, she established Wuhan Agme and focused on providing prosthetic assembly services and rehabilitation training.

Li created the company's motto, "Rehabilitation starts from the heart", advocating communication with sincerity with physically disabled patients to help them overcome their difficulties.

She recalled that at the time, the prosthesis industry in China relied on imported products, and most domestic enterprises could only earn assembly service fees. "We had to master core technology and produce our own products," she said. "Only by

excelling in technology can people with disabilities learn to walk more steadily."

In 2006, Wuhan Agme embarked on a path of independent research and development. The company's efforts led to some notable achievements.

Li said once the wear resistance of a small component such as a needle roller bearing begins to erode in a knee joint, it causes the joint to jam.

To find a suitable bearing, Li and her team conducted experiments on products from different brands both domestically and internationally before they found the most suitable one.

Disabled people with high amputations have extremely strict requirements for their prosthetic knee joints. They are the largest and most complex joints in the human body, and the prosthetic version is the most technologically advanced component.

In a pneumatic knee joint, for example, there are more than 150 internal parts.

### Making improvements

In 2006, Li decided to develop a pneumatic knee joint starting from scratch. She and her R&D team analyzed products on the market and created samples. After repeated testing, a prototype of the main structure was basically completed in 2009.

Li tested each prosthetic improvement on herself first and discussed her experiences with the technicians.

The R&D team repeatedly tested the more than 150 components of the joint one by one, going through thousands of trials.

Eventually, the weight of the knee joint was reduced from 1.5 kilograms to 1 kg, and the knee flexion angle was adjusted from 150 degrees to 125 degrees. This is close to the natural human knee joint flexion angle, making it comfortable for prosthesis users to sit and squat.

Similar imported joints were priced at over 80,000 yuan for assembly in the 1990s, but thanks to the successful research and development conducted by Wuhan Agme, the product now costs about 30,000 yuan (\$4,194) on the domestic market. Foreign products have been forced to lower their knee joint prices to around 60,000 yuan.

### Passion fuels success

Xiao Han, a technician at Wuhan Agme, said Li has a great passion for helping others.

He recalled that after she learned about an amputation patient's financial difficulties, she assembled a free prosthesis for him, covered his rehab training fees for a month and waived his food and accommodation expenses at the company's training center.

Li's company has provided free prostheses for more than 100 disabled people, he said.

Zhan Yonggang, deputy general manager of the company, said Li's zeal for her work has inspired him.

"She doesn't treat herself as a disabled person," he said. "She lives a more spirited life than people without disabilities."

Guo Ting, another company employee, said Li is a great person who is strong, outgoing and down-to-earth.

According to Li, Wuhan Agme has now served nearly 40,000 amputees and has provided clinical services to more than 200,000 bone injury patients.

Her products have been sold in countries such as Malaysia, Mexico and India, and the order volume is steadily increasing.

"Some people have now been using our products for over 10 years," Li said.

Some foreign manufacturers provide a three-year warranty, but Li set the warranty period for her prostheses to five years — evidence that the repair rate of her products is lower than the market average. Li said she hopes to produce the best prosthetic products domestically and even globally, enabling more disabled people to stand and walk well.

Both her husband and son have supported her efforts to expand her career and realize her dreams. Li's husband, who is 10 years her senior, has retired, and their son is in his second year at the Hubei University of Chinese Medicine.

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## Desert post office serves tree adopters from around the world

By XU ZHESHENG  
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A post office in the heart of the Tengger Desert, China's fourth-largest desert, has sent more than 20,000 postcards around the world in the past two years.

Since it opened to the public at the end of 2021, staff members at the desert post office in Alshaa League, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, have also planted around 10,000 oleaster trees, with more than 7,000 having been adopted by people from across the country, carrying countless heartwarming stories of their adopters.

The manager of the post office, a woman surnamed Gao, said that the post office is a "store that relieves worries". It is a lonely yet warm

place in the vast and uninhabited desert, a "tree hole" that absorbs various emotions and a station for sending blessings and hopes.

Years ago, she learned from an elderly herder that there used to be a post office in the area, but it had been abandoned for over 30 years.

In 2021, with the support of China Post, she and her team rebuilt it. The main building, small, sand-colored and made of wood, with a roof painted "postal green", stands out prominently from the surrounding sand dunes, along with its three mailboxes.

Gao said the post office started offering letter mailing services at the end of 2021. Using an online service, customers can write a letter and staff members can write out the content on paper on their behalf.

Customers can choose to send letters immediately or at any time in the next 10 years.

Each letter is stamped with the exclusive scenery stamp of the post office and includes a small bottle of sand from the Tengger Desert. Countless blessings have left the post office, bound for all corners of the world. The tree adoption project began in April 2022. After customers pay for adoptions, the team plants the trees and attaches tags that record the names of the adopters and the adoption dates.

In the next 10 years, adopters will receive annual photo updates of the trees' progress and can also check the growth of their adopted trees in real-time through a mini-program. They are also welcome to visit the area to see their adopted trees.

"In this fast-paced era, I hope time can slow down a bit. I want to write blessings in the form of letters and send them to my friends from the desolate desert," Wang Ruoyun, a young traveler who visited the post office in May last year, told Red Star News.

Gao said that she had not expected her post office to plant so many trees for others. She said people from all over the country have adopted trees for a variety of reasons: to commemorate a youthful love, to remember a deceased best friend or for a mother with cancer who wants the tree for her child.

In November, a young woman surnamed Sun adopted a tree as a birthday gift for a friend studying abroad. She said that after graduating, she found a job in China, while

her friend went to study in Germany. On her friend's birthday, Sun adopted a tree that symbolized their friendship. The postmark on a postcard recording the adoption was her friend's birthday.

Through the mini-program, Sun's friend has followed the tree's growth.

In May 2022, another woman, surnamed Song, adopted a tree as a birthday gift for her boyfriend. She has received two photos of the small tree and hopes it will grow along with their relationship. They plan to visit the tree together when they have the opportunity.

Song adopted another tree last year as a gift for a friend who died from an illness at the age of 24. She said she hopes the tree can accompany her friend for a longer time.

"Perhaps one day, none of us will be here, but this tree exists for her," she said. Song said the small tree is a spiritual symbol of the fact that growth often comes with pain. "To some extent, we resonate subtly with a small tree growing in the desert. Even if the environment is not ideal, we firmly want to take root," she said.

Gao's post office is one of nearly 700 post offices with special themes established by China Post around the country.

Unlike traditional post offices that handle daily mail, savings and express delivery services, the special post offices revolve around a specific theme that is reflected in the decoration and souvenirs they offer. Examples include the Panda Post Office in Chengdu, Sichuan province, the Cherry Blossom Post Office at Wuhan University, in Wuhan, Hubei province, and the Tian'anmen Square Post Office in Beijing.

## WORLDUS

## Cannabis-linked mental illness on rise among US youth

By BELINDA ROBINSON  
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Teenagers and young adults in the United States are at risk of developing a psychotic disorder or schizophrenia after using cannabis — according to doctors, researchers and a government agency — as thousands of cases among teenagers have been diagnosed.



“My wife and I saw firsthand how cannabis destroyed our daughter's life.”

Trent Mayberry, whose daughter Catherine died of an accidental drug overdose at age 24 that he says was the end result of marijuana use

The number of people diagnosed with a mental health or psychotic disorder after smoking cannabis was 50 percent higher in November than it was in November 2019, according to Trueta, a healthcare-analytics company.

But the drug remains popular nationwide, with around 52 million people admitting using it at some time in 2021, according to federal data.

An estimated 30 percent of high school seniors said they had used marijuana in the past year, according to figures from the National Institute on Drug Abuse in 2021.

The stigma associated with pot has significantly diminished, and while it is still illegal federally, it has been legalized for recreational use in 24 states and for medical use in 38.

Dr Deepak D'Souza, the Albert E. Kent Endowed Professor of Psychiatry at the Yale University School of Medicine and director of the Schizophrenia Neuropharmacology Research Group at Yale, told China Daily: “Cannabis is one environmental factor that confers risk for schizophrenia. It's likely that some complex interaction between cannabis exposure and other factors such as genetic risk for schizophrenia contribute to the risk.”

“A very high proportion of individuals who experience substance-induced psychosis will later go on to develop schizophrenia. This is particularly so for cannabis-induced psychosis.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warned that “people who use marijuana are more likely to develop temporary psychosis, not knowing what is real, hallucinations, and paranoia and long-lasting mental disorders, including schizophrenia, a type of mental illness where people might see or hear things that are not really there.”

If someone had just one psychotic episode after using cannabis, there was a 47 percent risk of them developing schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, according to a 2017 study published in the American Journal of Psychiatry. Those age 16 to 25 faced the highest risk.

Trent and Jane Mayberry from Minnesota saw the rapid decline of their daughter Catherine's mental health after she first began using marijuana in her teens.

During testimony before the state's Legislature in March 2023, Trent explained how his “perfect kid” who was a former honor student became addicted to cannabis and developed psychosis and schizophrenia over six years.

He believes that marijuana functioned as a gateway drug before she tried harder substances.

“Over a two-year period, Catherine began regular use of cannabis,” Trent told lawmakers. “She dropped out of college. Her personality changed and she became increasingly withdrawn from activities, university, friends and family.”

“My wife and I saw firsthand how cannabis destroyed our daughter's life.”

Catherine died at age 24 in October 2022 from an accidental overdose of meth mixed with fentanyl.

Marijuana, also nicknamed “weed, pot or dope”, is made up of the dried flowers, leaves, stems and seeds of the cannabis plant.

“The cannabis plant contains more than 100 compounds or cannabinoids,” the CDC said. “These compounds include tetrahydrocannabinol, (THC), which is impairing or mind-altering, as well as other active compounds, such as cannabidiol [which] is not impairing, meaning it does not cause a high.”

“The cannabis in the 1970s had a THC content of 4 percent,” D'Souza said. “The average THC content of cannabis on the street is currently 17 to 18 percent, but there are many forms that have up to 35 percent THC.”

The Drug Enforcement Administration said that in 2021, the THC content it found in seizures was 15 percent; it was 4 percent in 1995.

While it is believed that the majority of drug users won't develop psychosis after using cannabis, it can have a profound effect on some, a 2014 study published in The Medical Journal found.

Bryn Spejcher, 32, from Thousand Oaks, California, was convicted in December 2023 of involuntary manslaughter in the death of Chad O'Melia.

The pair had been dating for several weeks when Spejcher went to his apartment in 2018 and smoked marijuana in a bong, police said.

“Spejcher had an adverse reaction to the marijuana and suffered from what experts call Cannabis-Induced Psychotic Disorder, the Ventura County District Attorney's Office said in a statement. “During that psychotic episode, Spejcher stabbed O'Melia multiple times killing him. She also stabbed herself repeatedly.”

When police arrived the next morning, they found O'Melia in a pool of his own blood. Spejcher was screaming “hysterically with a knife still in her hands”.

She then violently stabbed herself in the neck. Police had to hit her several times with a baton and use a taser to subdue her.

Fears over an uptick in cannabis-induced disorders developed after the COVID-19 pandemic left many — especially children and teenagers — suffering from strained mental health, anxiety and addiction.

“The pandemic lent [itself] to triggering substance abuse,” Karen Cassidy, a clinical psychologist and managing director of the Anxiety Treatment Center of Greater Chicago, told China Daily.

Anxious teens use pot, hoping it will calm their nerves. But one of the adverse effects is that it can spike anxiety and paranoia.

In Colorado, following the legalization of recreational cannabis from 2012 to 2014, there was a ninefold increase in the number of mental health-related emergency department visits for schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders from cannabis use, a study by Hallett found.

Since 1970, under federal law, marijuana has been classified as a Schedule I drug, similar to LSD and heroin, which are illegal.

Despite concerns over its effects on teens, it may be reclassified as less harmful — a movement led by Democratic lawmakers.

The Food and Drug Administration and the National Institute on Drug Abuse both recently recommended that the DEA should reclassify marijuana as a less-dangerous substance — a Schedule III.

The federal scientists came to their conclusions after finding that marijuana “does not produce serious outcomes compared to drugs in Schedules I or II”.

If reclassified, it would be in the same category as ketamine and testosterone, both available by prescription.

The scientists also raised the health benefits of medical cannabis especially for those undergoing chemotherapy and experiencing pain and nausea.

President Joe Biden has also asked federal officials to look into reclassifying the drug.

## Trump, Biden declared winners of New Hampshire primaries



Donald Trump was declared the winner of New Hampshire's Republican primary on Tuesday, but Nikki Haley did better than expected. Trump held a 54.6 percent to 43.5 percent lead as of 10:10 pm ET, with 50 percent of the vote in. The former US president said he was “very honored” by the result. Haley said the primary battle was “far from over”. Although President Joe Biden wasn't on the ballot in the state's Democratic primary, he still was declared the winner by write-in votes. The Democratic National Committee had decided South Carolina would be the first official Democratic primary, on Feb 3, but New Hampshire still held its traditionally first primary contest on Tuesday.

## Texas to fight border-wire ruling

Governor says state won't 'back down' after Supreme Court orders removal of razor wire

By MAYZHOU in Houston  
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Texas Governor Greg Abbott says the state won't “back down” on setting up razor wire along the US-Mexico border despite the Supreme Court's ruling in favor of the Biden administration.

Posting two photos of uniformed National Guard soldiers standing in front of the wire along the Rio Grande looking toward Mexico, Abbott wrote on X.com, formerly Twitter, on Tuesday: “The Texas National Guard continues to hold the line in Eagle Pass. Texas will not back down from our efforts to secure the border in Biden's absence.”

The Republican governor also retweeted a 45-second video showing more than 10 National Guard soldiers setting up more wire in the rain. “More razor wire being installed in Eagle Pass by Texas National Guard soldiers,” read the text.

The Supreme Court, in a 5-4 ruling, ordered Texas on Monday to allow federal border agents access to the state's border with Mexico to remove the concertina wire.

Abbott was defiant on the ruling Monday, writing on X: “This is not over. Texas' razor wire is an effective deterrent to the illegal crossings Biden encourages. I will continue to defend Texas' constitutional authority to secure the border and prevent the Biden Admin from destroying our property.”

Chris Olivarez, spokesperson with the Texas Department of Public Safety-South Texas Region, wrote on X on Monday that Abbott's Operation Lone Star “will maintain its current posture in deterring illegal border crossings by utilizing effective border security measures — reinforced concertina wire and anti-climb barriers along the Rio Grande”.

US Representative Chip Roy, a Texas Republican, called on state

officials to ignore the high court ruling.

“This opinion is unconscionable and Texas should ignore it on behalf of the (Border Patrol) agents who will be put in a worse position by the opinion and the Biden administration's policies,” he posted on X.

Last October, Texas sued the federal government after Border Patrol agents cut some of the wire along the Rio Grande. The state said that the Department of Homeland Security destroyed the state's property and interfered in Texas' border-security efforts.

Abbott initiated the Operation Lone Star border program in 2021. So far, he has spent billions of dollars on erecting border wall, busing migrants to Democratic-run cities, arresting them under trespassing laws, and setting up the razor wire.

The White House praised the Supreme Court's order in a statement Tuesday, saying the decision enabled federal authorities to “address urgent humanitarian situations and enforce our laws”.

“Texas' political stunts, like placing razor wire near the border, simply

make it harder and more dangerous for frontline personnel to do their jobs. Ultimately, we need adequate resources and policy changes to address our broken immigration system,” the statement said, adding that Biden is “working to find a bipartisan agreement with Congress that includes additional resources and meaningful policy reforms”.

According to a Jan 12 court filing by the US Justice Department, the National Guard blocked federal border agents from accessing the Rio Grande after three migrants drowned and two others were struggling in the water, reported The Texas Tribune. The state disputed the federal agency's version of events, arguing in subsequent court filings that Mexican officials had the situation under control.

Abbott's post Monday on X about the ruling has generated more than 10,000 comments, with many in support.

On Reddit, where lengthy discussions are often held, some said the Texas governor is making a great point and getting the attention of the real crisis at the border.

## China's UN envoy: Israel's rejection of two-state solution 'unacceptable'

By MINLU ZHANG  
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China's top envoy to the United Nations said on Tuesday that Israel's rejection of a two-state solution and denial of a Palestinian “right to statehood” are “unacceptable”.

A two-state solution is the “only feasible way” to achieve peace between Palestine and Israel and it is also a “strict requirement” for implementing Security Council resolutions, said Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the UN.

“We are deeply concerned about the Israeli leader's remarks last week, rejecting the two-state solution and denying Palestine's right to statehood. These remarks are unacceptable,” he told a Security Council meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question on Tuesday.

Any discussion of postwar arrangements in Gaza that deviates from the two-state solution is “tantamount to building a house on quicksand”, he said.

China calls for intensifying diplomatic efforts, convening an international peace conference as soon as possible, initiating a meaningful multilateral process and reviving the political prospects of the two-state solution, said Zhang.

“The establishment of an independent state of Palestine must be an irreversible process, and we support, as a first step in that

“The establishment of an independent state of Palestine must be an irreversible process ...”

Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the United Nations

process, Palestine's full membership in the United Nations as soon as possible,” the ambassador said.

“There has long been an overwhelming consensus in the international community on the immediate realization of a cease-fire, and it is regrettable that the adoption of the relevant Security Council resolutions has been made difficult by the repeated vetoes of individual countries,” said Zhang.

The history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had long since shown the fundamental way out for peace; what was lacking was political will and determination, he said.

Zhang called on Israel to “immediately change course and cease its indiscriminate military attacks and destruction of Gaza”.

“All parties in the international community should focus their diplomatic efforts on promoting an immediate cease-fire,” he said.

While promoting the cease-fire in Gaza, every effort must be made

to prevent the spillover impact of the situation in Gaza on the Red Sea and the wider region, he said.

Zhang also called for the removal of all obstacles to expanding humanitarian assistance. “Not only did people in Gaza die from war bombings, but hunger and the accelerated spread of infectious diseases also claimed more lives, especially the lives of children,” he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Saturday that he “will not compromise on full Israeli control” over Gaza and that “this is contrary to a Palestinian state”.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday also said Israel's rejection of a two-state solution is “unacceptable”.

“Last week's clear and repeated rejection of the two-state solution at the highest levels of the Israeli government is unacceptable,” he said at the Security Council meeting.

“This refusal, and the denial of the right to statehood to the Palestinian people, would indefinitely prolong a conflict that has become a major threat to global peace and security. It would exacerbate polarization and embolden extremists everywhere,” Guterres said.

He said that the right of the Palestinian people to build their own fully independent state must be recognized by all. And any refusal to accept the two-state solution by any party must be firmly rejected, he said.

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## BUSINESS

## Regulatory ties critical to financial vigor

UK banking official lauds cooperation with China on range of rules for lenders

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
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China should intensify collaborative efforts with other economies in the realm of financial regulation and policy coordination in a bid to better guard against financial risks, bolster resilience and heighten stability in the global financial system, an expert said.

Sam Woods, deputy governor for prudential regulation at the Bank of England — the central bank of the United Kingdom — said cooperation between regulators is key for ensuring financial stability.

During an event at Peking University's National School of Development on Monday, Woods shared key lessons learned from the 2008 financial crisis, highlighting the importance of "close and regular cooperation between regulators".

He said international regulators, including Chinese regulators, have worked closely together to reform international standards, particularly around capital adequacy framework issues, to ensure lenders hold sufficient capital.

"This resulted in the so-called Basel III accord, which has been implemented globally," he said. "But the work is never done. We are currently getting together with colleagues in China and elsewhere all around the world, implementing an object to that framework."

Facing a major test last year with the failure of Silicon Valley Bank, some other US lenders and Credit Suisse, he said global regulators need to "learn the lessons and consider what changes should be made".

"In this context, I am looking forward to continuing to work closely with my counterparts in China," he said. "We can together shape the financial landscape that is resilient, sustainable and beneficial for global economic stability."

Woods said China is a crucial supervisory partner for the UK, as the former hosts a major presence from two of the UK's largest banks.

Looking ahead, he said there is great potential for further UK-China financial collaboration.

"China has continuing opportunities to diversify and strengthen its banking sector by supporting reciprocal market access to both countries' banking sectors, which will increase both market efficiency and financial innovation," he said. "And

deep connections between the UK and China's capital markets — alongside the adoption of higher standards for transparency in government — will increase the efficiency and liquidity of China's capital markets at a time when private investment is very much in demand."

Woods added that the two countries can bring together efforts to "green" the financial system, including the adoption of recognized standards for green finance.

With the UK's expertise in financial services and China's vast market and innovation, he believes UK-China cooperation can support the evolution of a financial system that is not only robust, but also adaptable to future challenges.

Zhou Yanli, a former vice-chairman of the China Insurance Regulatory Commission, said China has made considerable progress in terms of global financial regulatory cooperation, and the country's ongoing institutional financial opening-up will foster high-quality development in the sector. He made the remarks during an economic forum held on Friday by Renmin University of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies.

As of mid-January, China had signed 126 memoranda of understanding or cooperation agreements with financial regulatory authorities in 87 countries and regions, according to the National Financial Regulatory Administration.

To promote international cooperation, the NFRAs International Cooperation Department said it will make more efforts to refine regular or irregular bilateral regulatory consultation mechanisms, maintain open channels for daily regulatory communication, enhance cross-border regulatory coordination on specific events and matters, achieve comprehensive supervision of cross-border financial institutions and defuse cross-border risks.

More efforts will also be made to deepen cooperation under the framework of MOUs in the banking and insurance regulatory sectors, including increased international cooperation in technology finance, green finance, inclusive finance, pension finance and digital finance, the NFRAs International Cooperation Department said in a statement earlier this month.



Visitors check out an AI-powered large language model during an internet expo in Wuzhen, Zhejiang province, in November.  
YAO YINGKANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Chinese execs more upbeat on AI contributions

By FAN FEIFEI  
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About 80 percent of Chinese business leaders expect the pace of technological disruption to accelerate even further in 2024, while 92 percent regard fast-developing generative artificial intelligence as more of an opportunity than a threat, being generally more sanguine on the transformation than their foreign corporate peers, according to a new report from global consultancy Accenture.

The report indicated that company executives worldwide ranked technologies catapulted by advances in generative AI as the top factor affecting business environment transformation, and 77 percent of interviewed Chinese enterprises view generative AI as more beneficial to revenue growth than cost reductions.

Moreover, 80 percent of the surveyed Chinese business leaders expect revenue growth to speed up this year, higher than their global peers (68 percent). Despite their optimism, 62 percent of Chinese executives say they are not fully prepared to respond to the changes they will face in the business environment.

Business leaders worldwide view the adoption of emerging technologies such as generative AI, accelerated tech innovation, and changes in policies and regulations as the most noteworthy opportunities,

"We believe that the companies that will succeed in the next decade are those that embrace a strategy of continuously reinventing every part of their business using technology, data and AI..."

Jack Azagury, group chief executive of strategy & consulting at Accenture

the report added.

"We believe that the companies that will succeed in the next decade are those that embrace a strategy of continuously reinventing every part of their business using technology, data and AI, including harnessing the power of generative AI, and ensuring their people are at the center of their transformations," said Jack Azagury, group chief executive of strategy & consulting at Accenture.

The research surveyed more than 3,400 company executives — with 260 from China — covering 20 industries, between October and November 2023.

Generative AI refers to computer

algorithms trained with huge amounts of data capable of generating content such as images, text, audio and video. It is the key technology underpinning ChatGPT, an AI chatbot that has taken the world by storm and triggered a new AI wave.

Accenture said in its latest Technology Vision 2024 that AI and other disruptive technologies are becoming much more human-like and intuitive for people to use, and are ushering in a new era of unprecedented productivity and creativity.

It noted that about 40 percent of all working hours will be supported or augmented by language-based AI, and generative AI has the potential to enable productivity enhancements across 900 different types of jobs and create at least \$8 trillion in global economic value.

Industry experts said generative AI will speed up its integration with a wider range of sectors and evolve into a productivity tool this year, as major Chinese tech heavyweights — such as Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, Baidu Inc and Tencent Holdings Ltd — step up efforts to develop their own AI-powered large language models.

In an executive meeting on Monday, the State Council — China's Cabinet — rolled out a raft of policy measures to advance the deep integration of AI with manufacturing,

with a key focus on smart manufacturing, as part of a broader drive to foster new productivity boosters.

China's AI industry will make great strides in the next 10 to 15 years, with its market scale reaching 1.73 trillion yuan (\$241.3 billion) by 2035, accounting for 30.6 percent of the world's total, said market research firm CCID Consulting.

Robin Li, co-founder and CEO of Baidu, said in an earlier interview that he believes the emergence of generative AI and large language models presents a transformative potential of AI in various industries to help people and organizations achieve more, and have a positive impact on society.

Pan Helin, co-director of the digital economy and financial innovation research center at Zhejiang University's International Business School, said although generative AI technology boasts significant potential for applications in a wide range of sectors including culture, retail, healthcare and education, its real value comes from the consumer market.

"The process of training large AI models necessitates higher requirements for computing capacity, algorithms and quality of data," Pan said, adding that Chinese AI firms should boost investment in basic scientific research, including math, statistics and computer science, to gain a competitive edge in the global AI chatbot race.

## British Airways to double size of cabin crew in nation on soaring air travel demand

By ZHU WENQIAN  
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British Airways will double the size of its cabin crew in China with the largest international recruitment since the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK flag carrier said, as it bets on growing travel demand between China and Europe.

The carrier plans to bolster the number of Mandarin-speaking cabin crew members from two to four on each flight that connects cities on the Chinese mainland with London.

The company has finalized the list of candidates; the new employees are expected to complete six weeks of training in London and start work early this summer.

The airline has expanded the number of flight attendants at its bases in Beijing and Shanghai, each from 25 to 50. China is now the second-largest international base for British Airways after India.

"We are committed to China and would like to serve this really important market. China is growing, and we definitely want to be part of that," said Calum Laming, British Airways' chief customer officer, who visited Beijing recently to interview candidates

for the final round.

"We have already seen a strong leisure travel demand in summer 2023 between China and the UK. We are seeing great signs of recovery in business travel, too. We are looking at strong travel demand in the upcoming Chinese New Year period," Laming said.

Laming had worked as a flight attendant at the operations center in the early stages of his career, and said he genuinely believes in the value of his employees.

The newly recruited employees in China come from various sectors, such as aviation, hotels and retail, and comprise a mix of experienced as well as inexperienced staff.

British Airways said its global capacity has recovered to 90 percent of pre-pandemic levels, and the corresponding figure for China has rebounded to 65 percent.

The carrier is taking deliveries of new aircraft and retiring older models as it embraces increased travel demand.

The airline operates daily flights connecting London and Shanghai, while the flights that connect London and Beijing operate four times a week. Both routes offer first-class seats, while many other international routes have canceled first-class and only



A passenger airplane operated by British Airways taxis at London Heathrow Airport in the United Kingdom in March. CHRIS RATCLIFFE / BLOOMBERG

provide business class.

Meanwhile, major Hong Kong carriers Cathay Pacific Airways and Hong Kong Airlines said they will expand flight networks connecting Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland.

Both airlines recruited flight attendants from the Chinese

mainland in 2023 for the first time, as passenger demand is growing and they look to provide more personalized services for Chinese-speaking customers.

China's air travel market has recovered steadily since the country optimized its COVID-19 response measures.

In 2023, some 62 million air passenger trips were handled, up 146 percent year-on-year, rebounding to 93.9 percent of the pre-pandemic level seen in 2019, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

The International Air Transport Association, which released data on

62 million

number of air passenger trips China handled in 2023, up 146 percent year-on-year, said the Civil Aviation Administration of China

air travel performance in November, indicated that air travel demand topped 99 percent of the 2019 levels.

The Asia-Pacific region continued to report the strongest year-on-year growth of 63.8 percent, with all regions showing improvement compared to the prior year.

Growth was particularly strong in China, as it recovered from the COVID-19 travel restrictions, according to IATA, which represents some 300 airlines comprising 83 percent of global air traffic.

"We are moving ever closer to surpassing the 2019 peak year for air travel. Economic headwinds are not deterring people from taking to the skies. International travel remains 5.5 percent below pre-pandemic levels, but that gap is rapidly closing, and domestic markets have been above their pre-pandemic levels continuously," said Willie Walsh, director-general of IATA.

## BUSINESSFOCUS

## Chinese mini-dramas turn hot overseas

Modern soap operas set in short episode formats manage to keep audiences hooked

By LIU YUKUN  
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A poor female worker reluctantly agrees to an intimate relationship with a wealthy farm owner in Africa, but their initially forced interactions soon blossom into an unexpected romance.

This is just one example of a mini-drama getting ready to be streamed on a Chinese app, though its supervisor deemed it not dramatic enough and sought more twists and turns in each episode lasting one to three minutes.

This novel storytelling format, comprising about 60-80 episodes in one series, usually tends to offer melodramatic hooks at every turn to keep the audience engaged throughout.

For instance, in *Never Divorce a Secret Billionaire Heiress*, viewers can finish watching a complex plot involving incompatible marriages and fights for inheritance in under 10 minutes.

Such mini-dramas are becoming quite popular among viewers in the United States and Southeast Asia.

"Audiences today prefer a narrative style that is eye-catching and quick, with a compact plot and successive climaxes, as proved by the success of trendy mini-dramas like *The Double Life of My Billionaire Husband* in the US," said California-based bilingual freelance scriptwriter Yang Zhang. "Our project's producer wants to replicate the success, but in other markets that are yet untapped, like Africa."

The trailer of *The Double Life of My Billionaire Husband* on video streaming platform YouTube, under the official account of its producer ReelShort, has garnered over 7.94 million views so far.

In fact, a comment with the highest number of "likes" speaks for millions of fans — "Is it weird that the show is cheesy but I still like it?"

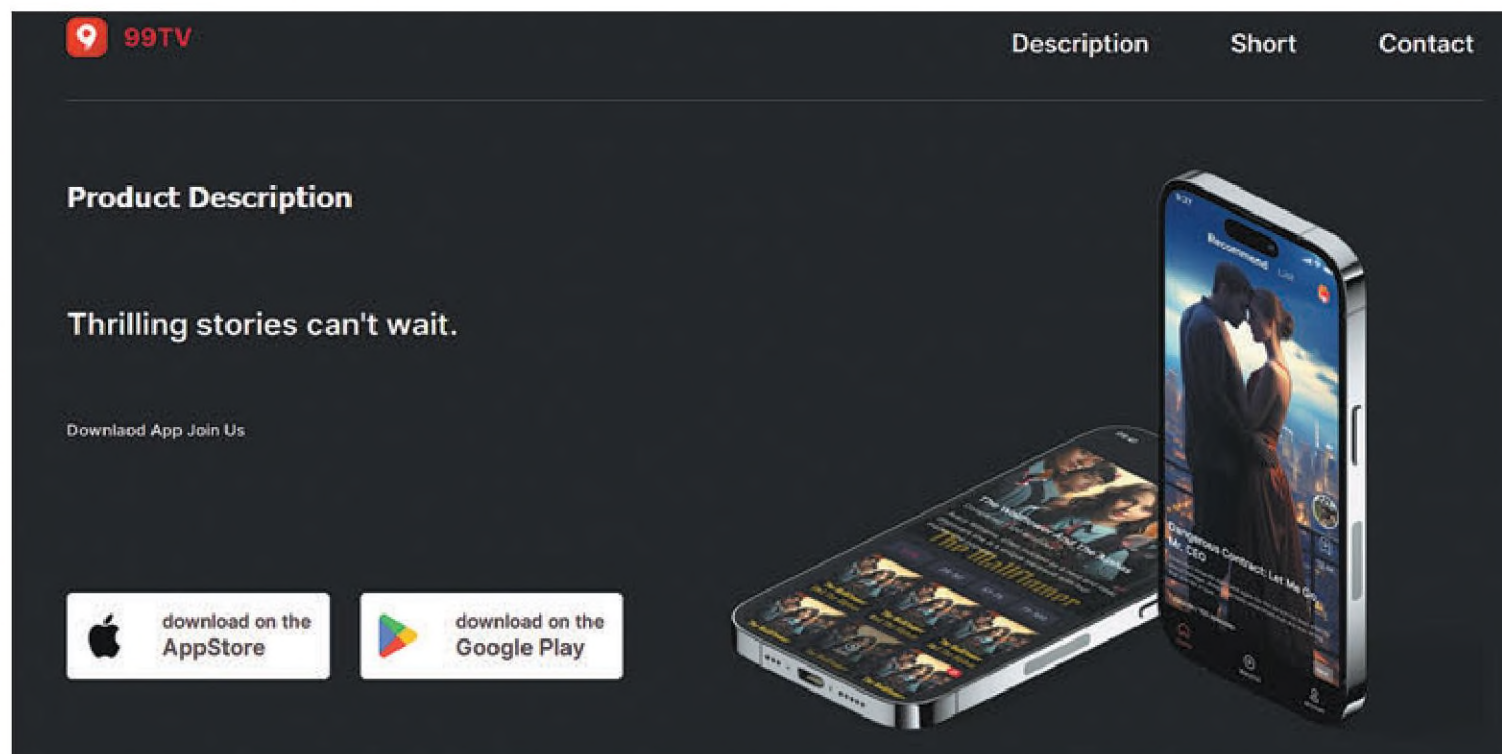
ReelShort, a video streaming app from California-based Crazy Maple Studio, is owned by Chinese digital content provider COL Group and was launched overseas, primarily in North America, in 2017.

The company initially uploaded Chinese mini-dramas with English subtitles directly onto overseas platforms, but failed to gain much traction.

ReelShort subsequently decided to use localized production, using native speakers in the United States for its cast and crew. From actors to settings, everything aims to align with local aesthetic preferences. The scripts are adapted from popular overseas web novels, with each episode lasting no more than 3 minutes.

This revamped strategy became a game-changer for ReelShort.

According to data analysis firm Sensor Tower, ReelShort saw around 2 million downloads each month from July to October.



A screenshot of mini-drama platform 99TV, which is part of Chinese company Jiuzhou Culture's efforts to target Southeast Asian markets. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Data analysis company Data.ai, previously known as App Annie, said ReelShort generated a revenue of \$4.83 million in September.

The company's data show that about 70 percent of ReelShort's users are women, with nearly half of those aged 45 and above.

On Nov 11, the app surpassed short-video platform TikTok to become the most popular entertainment app on Apple Inc's US app store.

The latest data from app analysis platform Appfigures show that ReelShort had an estimated 2 million downloads in November in the US, netting the company roughly \$5 million in revenue a month through subscriptions, in-app purchases and advertisements.

ReelShort's phenomenal success leverages the support of its parent company COL Group, which has successfully launched Kiss (an online novel application) and Chapters (interactive story games) overseas.

These ventures have, in turn, fueled ReelShort's demand for content, enabling the quick release of more heartwarming hit short dramas, drawing on COL's years of experience understanding locally preferred content.

Shenzhen-listed COL Group's share price surged to its highest level last year, reaching 35.98 yuan (\$5) per share on Nov 22.

**Production rush**

ReelShort is not the only one to have ventured overseas.

Apps like FlexTV, ShortTV, GoodShort, and ShortFlix have all entered the North American and Southeast Asian markets, sparking a mini-drama production rush.

Total downloads of these five apps hit a record high in September to over 3 million times, from roughly around 200,000 five months previously, according to Data.ai's analysis.

Industry insiders said these apps have been developed by various players in China's entertainment sector, such as domestic producers and distributors of mini-program dramas, full-length video streaming platforms, film and TV production companies, and online literature platforms.

The North American market is emerging as a battleground, while Southeast Asia and the Middle East are also attracting significant attention.

They said the industry is heating up, with each app fiercely vying for bilingual scriptwriters and directors overseas, acting as a bridge between Chinese backers and global audiences.

However, there has been a mismatch between supply and demand for such talent.

In a bid to maintain a high frequency of new releases and captivate viewers' attention, numerous platforms are scouting for scripts domestically and seeking overseas teams for a touch-up.

ReelShort once flooded lifestyle-

sharing platform Xiaohongshu with a call for freelance scriptwriters, offering up to \$10,000 per series. This attracted a plethora of enthusiasts eagerly waiting to jump into the fray.

"Such an offer is far below the average for a film or TV series. I would say there's big room for payment rise to mini-drama writers as a top-tier writer can easily earn over 1 million yuan per year," said Iris Huang, a Beijing-based film and TV series producer.

The overseas market may seem like a blue ocean, but entry barriers are not insignificant.

Some argue that venturing abroad for short dramas requires an understanding of a myriad of issues, such as the overseas market, user preferences, cultural differences and local expressions.

COL Group, for instance, has long been involved in overseas businesses, having tested the feasibility of telling romantic stories in various forms like online novels, videos and games.

Short dramas simply emerged as a natural byproduct of this ongoing exploration.

"The majority of overseas viewers of Chinese mini-dramas are women aged 20 to 50. Therefore, popular content tends to be more female-oriented. North American audiences enjoy romantic stories about werewolves, vampires and the mafia. In Southeast Asia, people love stories about family ethics,"

said Liu Jinlong, leader of Jiuzhou Culture's overseas business.

Jiuzhou Culture launched two mini-drama platforms catering to international audiences this year: 99TV and ShortTV, with the former targeting Southeast Asian markets and the latter mainly intended for the US, Canada and Australia.

The company now offers Chinese dramas with foreign language subtitles generated by the company's AIGC system, enabling mass production. It also involves overseas production, as seen in the overseas vertical short drama *Dangerous Contract: Let Me Go, Mr CEO*, filmed in Malaysia and featuring a Chinese director and foreign actors.

As of November, Jiuzhou Culture has produced over 600 mini-dramas for the overseas market. Among these, 80 percent are adaptations of domestic mini-dramas dubbed in English, while the rest are original works created, filmed, and produced by overseas teams.

To date, the company's overseas audience has exceeded 10 million.

Liu said he is upbeat about the market's prospects and the company will soon develop mini-dramas targeting Spanish and Arabic speakers.

Overseas productions with foreign cast and crew have higher costs and slower investment returns.

The cost usually comes to \$100,000 to \$150,000 for a 70-episode mini-drama, which is about six times more than a similar domestic production, Liu said.

"But we think it is worth the investment, because we get closer to our audience."

Liu said cultural expressions vary across different countries.

"For instance, the archetype of a domineering CEO is perceived as wealthy and handsome in both China and the US, each embodying a colossal business empire. However, in Africa, a farm owner might be regarded as a domineering CEO. It's crucial to incorporate elements that align with the local culture to boost viewership," he said.

"In addition, diverse cultural, legal, copyright, and regulatory requirements in different countries and regions can also impose constraints on the content," Liu said.

Localized production aims to create more culturally resonant mini-dramas and meet the immediate, fragmented entertainment demands of the audience in a cost-effective manner, said Zhang Yi, CEO and chief analyst at consultancy iiMedia Research.

"Soap operas with elements of love fantasies are not new. Yet, the Chinese apps' approach with a vertical screen and an intense climax every other minute has injected new vigor into the market," said Bai Yang, a Chinese mini-drama screenwriter based in California. "For content creators, the stories are similar, but the structure has adapted to better suit the audience's desire for quick and efficient storytelling."



## DOCUMENT

# China's Legal Framework and Measures for Counterterrorism

The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China  
January 2024

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## Preface

Terrorism is the common enemy of humanity, posing a grave threat to international peace and security, and representing a challenge to all countries and all of humanity. All members of the international community share the responsibility to fight it.

Over the decades, the United Nations has led the creation of relevant conventions and other instruments, coordinating member states in their joint efforts to combat terrorism, and bringing such efforts under the rule of law. In response to its call, many countries have actively fulfilled their international obligations by making and enforcing domestic counterterrorism laws and strengthening international cooperation against terrorism. Through unremitting efforts, the international community has gradually established a multitiered framework of legal instruments against terrorism, including international and regional conventions, multilateral and bilateral treaties and agreements, and domestic laws.

As a victim of terrorism, China has long faced its real threat, and has always attached great importance to law-based counterterrorism efforts. It has accumulated experience by concluding or joining international conventions and treaties and amending and improving criminal laws. In the face of new developments in international and domestic terrorism, China has first endeavored to gain a deeper understanding of law-based counterterrorism, summarize its underlying dynamics, and identify appropriate countermeasures. Drawing on foreign experience, China has formulated counterterrorism laws, improved the legal framework, and made consistent application of these laws. These have provided legal safeguards for China's ramped up efforts in combating terrorism.

China has found a path of law-based counterterrorism that conforms to its realities by establishing a sound legal framework, promoting strict, impartial, procedure-based law enforcement, and ensuring impartial administration of justice and effective protection of human rights. It has safeguarded national and public security, protected people's lives and property, and contributed to global and regional security and stability.

## I. An Improving Legal Framework for Counterterrorism

Headed by the UN, its specialized agencies, and some other international organizations, the international community has formulated 13 global counterterrorism conventions since the 1960s, demonstrating its position and attitude on counterterrorism.

To strengthen international cooperation and effectively prevent and combat terrorist activities, China has joined or ratified a number of conventions since the late 1970s, including the Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft, Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft, and Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules for International Carriage by Air. In light of its national conditions, and following constitutional principles, China has drawn on useful experience from the international community and accelerated its efforts to build a domestic counterterrorism legal framework since the 1990s.

Amending and improving the criminal laws.

Terrorism is viewed by the international community as a serious criminal offense, and is therefore a highlighted target of criminal laws in all countries.

In March 1997, China's National People's Congress (NPC) amended the Criminal Law, adding the crimes of forming, leading, or participating in a terrorist organization, and tightening sanctions for crimes of terrorism.

After the September 11 attacks in the United States in 2001, many countries took prompt and effective measures to combat terrorism. In December the same year, China's NPC Standing Committee adopted Amendment III to the Criminal Law, which consists of eight revisions and additions for improving and clarifying provisions on terrorist activities. One of the additions relates to the crime of financing terrorism. This was part of China's effort to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1373.

At the same time, to sanction money laun-

dering for terrorist activities, China prescribed terrorism as a predicate crime of money laundering. In June 2006, the NPC Standing Committee adopted Amendment VI to the Criminal Law, which further clarifies penalties on money laundering for terrorist activities. In response to new developments and issues in the crime of terrorism, in August 2015 the NPC Standing Committee adopted Amendment IX to the Criminal Law, adding to it the crimes of preparing for terrorist activities, advocating terrorism and extremism, inciting terrorism, and using extremism to undermine law enforcement, while also clarifying relevant charges and penalties.

In 2012 and 2018, the NPC and its Standing Committee amended the Criminal Procedure Law to add provisions on the investigation, prosecution, and trial procedures for crimes of terrorism. The Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate have independently or jointly formulated and issued a series of judicial interpretations to further standardize the application of law and prosecution procedures for combating crimes of terrorism.

Making a counterterrorism law.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, a series of horrendous terrorist attacks have occurred around the world. In response, many countries have made their own counterterrorism law, or amended existing laws. In October 2011, to strengthen counterterrorism, safeguard national security, maintain social stability, and protect people's lives and property, the NPC Standing Committee adopted the Decision on Issues Related to Strengthening Counterterrorism Work, which defines the concept of terrorism, the leading state counterterrorism body and its duties, the determination of terrorist organizations and individuals, the publication of lists of these organizations and individuals, and the principles for international cooperation. This laid a solid foundation for subsequent legislation.

Between 2011 and 2014, terrorist attacks hit multiple countries, signaling a resurgence of terrorism worldwide. Forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism, both within and outside China, carried out violent terrorist acts in Xinjiang, Beijing, Yunnan, and other places.

From April 2014, to summarize the experience against crimes of terrorism, improve the counterterrorism mechanism, and curb frequent and widespread acts of violence and terrorism, the leading state counterterrorism body led several other departments in conducting field investigations, research and argumentation, soliciting opinions and suggestions from all parties, and drafting a counterterrorism law. In October 2014, the NPC Standing Committee held the first deliberations on the draft law, published it in full to the public for suggestions, and made revisions. In February and December 2015, it deliberated on the draft law for the second and third rounds to improve it. On December 27, 2015, the NPC Standing Committee adopted the Counterterrorism Law. It is a comprehensive counterterrorism law that defines China's basic principles and stance on counterterrorism. By specifying provisions on the determination of terrorist organizations and individuals, security protection, intelligence information, investigation, response and handling, international cooperation, safeguard measures, and legal liability, it provides a strong legal guarantee for preventing and punishing terrorist activities. In April 2018, the NPC Standing Committee amended the law to further clarify the responsibilities of competent departments and facilitate effective counterterrorism work.

### Example 1 Draft Counterterrorism Law Open for Public Comment

Following the first deliberations on the draft counterterrorism law, the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee, in accordance with the Legislation Law, published the draft on the NPC website for public comment and distributed it to provincial-level administrative units, relevant central departments, some universities, and legal research institutions for suggestions. Based on the opinions and suggestions solicited, the NPC Standing Committee revised and improved the draft.

Improving other relevant laws.

China has made consistent efforts to upgrade the counterterrorism provisions of relevant laws to strengthen systematic coordination among different laws, close legal loopholes, improve areas of weakness, and form synergy in counterterrorism practice.

The Anti-Money Laundering Law, adopted in 2006, provides for the prevention and suppression of terrorist financing and related illegal and criminal activities. The National Security Law, adopted in 2015, provides for the fight against terrorism and extremism. The Cybersecurity Law, adopted in 2016, prohibits the use of the internet to advocate ter-

rorism and extremism. The National Defense Law, amended in 2020, provides for the lawful use of armed forces in combating terrorism. The Law on the People's Armed Police, amended in 2020, provides for the People's Armed Police Force to perform the tasks of preventing and responding to terrorist activities. The Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region enacted in 2020 contains provisions on combating crimes of terrorism in the region and defined the relevant penalties.

Improving relevant administrative regulations.

The Chinese government has continued to improve counterterrorism provisions of relevant administrative regulations to meet practical counterterrorism needs, strengthen coordination and cooperation among relevant administrative bodies, and define the responsibilities of all parties:

The Administrative Measures for Internet Information Services, adopted in 2000, ban the production, reproduction, publication and distribution of content that spreads terror. The Regulations on Religious Affairs, amended in 2017, stipulate that no organization or individual may use religion to carry out terrorist activities. Regulations on the Protection of Minors in Cyberspace adopted in 2023 ban the production, reproduction, publication and distribution of information online containing content of terrorism and extremism that will damage the physical and mental health of minors.

Making new local regulations.

After the Counterterrorism Law came into force in 2016, Xinjiang, Zhejiang, Hunan, Shanghai, Sichuan, Fujian, Beijing, and some other localities developed measures on the enforcement of the law within their respective administrative regions in light of local realities and in accordance with the local legislative authority conferred by the Constitution and the Legislation Law. Xinjiang formulated the Regulations of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Deradicalization, with detailed work measures and means to make the law more practicable. In addition, some localities added content on strengthening counterterrorism work when formulating local regulations on religious affairs and public security.

Formulating departmental and local government rules.

To better implement counterterrorism-related laws and regulations and improve counterterrorism work in respective sectors or localities, central departments and local governments have formulated counterterrorism rules that meet their specific needs in accordance with statutory authority and procedures:

In 2014, the People's Bank of China, Ministry of Public Security, and Ministry of State Security formulated the Administrative Measures for the Freezing of Assets Relating to Terrorist Activities, with provisions on the procedures and actions for freezing terrorism-related assets. In 2021, the Qinghai provincial government adopted the Administrative Measures of Qinghai Province for Railway Safety, with provisions on establishing a counterterrorism command and coordination mechanism and building the capacity to guard against possible terrorist attacks.

Relying on more than 40 years of experience, China has gradually formed a counterterrorism legal framework based on the Constitution. With the Counterterrorism Law as the centerpiece and the criminal laws and National Security Law playing major roles and other laws as supplements, it also covers administrative regulations, judicial interpretations, local regulations, and departmental and local government rules.

## II. Clear Provisions for the Determination and Punishment of Terrorist Activities

Chinese law has clear provisions for the determination and punishment of terrorist activities. It distinguishes between administrative violations and criminal acts based on the degree of harm they cause, and affixes different legal liabilities accordingly. The criteria for the determination of terrorism-related violations and penalties are stipulated in the Counterterrorism Law, and the criteria for the determination and punishment of terrorist crimes are stipulated in the Criminal Law.

The concepts of terrorism and terrorist activities are clearly defined. China's Counterterrorism Law provides concrete and precise definitions of terrorism, terrorist activities, and related concepts, consistent with the principles championed by the international conventions it has entered and concluded, and in agreement with the practices of other countries.

In the Counterterrorism Law, the concept of terrorism encompasses the means, ends and forms, and is defined as propositions or acts that by means of violence, sabotage or intimidation, create social panic, undermine public security, violate personal and property rights,

or coerce state agencies and international organizations, to realize political, ideological or other purposes. The Counterterrorism Law defines the nature of terrorist activities and their specific forms, including organizing, planning, preparing for, or conducting acts that cause serious social harm.

The Counterterrorism Law and the Regulations of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Deradicalization define the concept of extremism and specific forms of extremist activity, and highlight the link between extremist thought and terrorism.

The criteria for determining law-breaking terrorist activities are accurately defined. China's Criminal Law assigns criminal liability only for terrorist activities that inflict grave harm on society. Minor violations of the law that do not constitute crimes instead receive administrative penalties in accordance with the Counterterrorism Law and other relevant laws. The Counterterrorism Law lists terrorist activities that are punishable by administrative penalties issued by public security agencies, including advocating terrorism and extremism or inciting the commission of terrorist and extremist acts. Whether the violations are minor or not is subject to the judgment of judicial and law enforcement agencies, based on whether the activities involve the essential condition of crime. Judicial and law enforcement agencies take into account the motive of the offender, their role in the activities, and the harm caused to society.

### Example 2 Determination of Law-breaking Terrorist Activities

A suspect surnamed Wan posted on his social media account a video with scenes of bloodshed and violence. The video was forwarded numerous times and generated harmful social impact. It was determined that the video contained illegal elements advocating terrorism, and should be banned from dissemination. Based on the Counterterrorism Law, a public security agency in Sichuan Province determined that Wan's act constituted a violation of the law by spreading items advocating terrorism.

The criteria for determining criminal terrorist activities are accurately defined. The criteria are laid out in China's Criminal Law, judicial interpretations, and standards for filing and prosecuting cases. The Criminal Law has clear and specific provisions on the constitutive elements of terrorist crimes in terms of the object and the objective circumstances, and the subject and the subjective circumstances. It strictly distinguishes between crimes and non-crimes, between different crimes, and between punishment for a single crime and for multiple crimes.

Under the principle of legality, no one should be convicted of a terrorist crime for any reason if there are no explicit provisions in law. Judicial agencies have outlined the criteria for determining criminal terrorist activities in detail by issuing judicial interpretations and documents and setting standards for filing and prosecuting criminal cases. The Opinions on Certain Issues Concerning the Application of Law in Handling Criminal Cases Involving Terrorism and Extremism, jointly issued by the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, and other authorities in 2018, specify the quantitative criteria that constitute the crime of illegally possessing materials propagating terrorism or extremism.

### Example 3 Determination of Criminal Terrorist Activities

Between 2004 and 2010, a suspect surnamed Bai provided transfer, accommodation, and false identity certification for persons trying to leave China to conduct terrorist activities abroad, with full knowledge of their intentions. Bai's actions had serious consequences. The case was tried in a court in Henan Province, which ruled that Bai's actions constituted the crime of sponsoring terrorist activities, in accordance with the Criminal Law.

The punishment for law-breaking terrorist activities follows statutory principles. China's law enforcement agencies adhere to the principle of legality in applying administrative penalties in accordance with the Counterterrorism Law, Public Security Administrative Punishment Law, Law on Administrative Penalty, and other relevant laws.

Law enforcement agencies pursue the principle of proportionality to ensure that punishment is appropriate to the facts, nature and circumstances of the offense, and the degree of harm it caused to society.

Law enforcement agencies execute the principle against double punishment to ensure that no person can be subject to more than one administrative fine for the same offense. Should an offense violate several legal provisions that are punishable by multi-

ple fines, the highest of the fines applies.

Law enforcement agencies implement a system of benchmarks for administrative discretion, working out quantitative indexes on the scope, type and extent of discretion in acts of law enforcement and making the information available to the general public. Since 2018, public security agencies in Anhui, Zhejiang, Beijing and Heilongjiang have established and implemented administrative discretion benchmarks to regulate administrative law enforcement against terrorism.

### Example 4 Administrative Penalty for Law-breaking Terrorist Activities

A suspect surnamed Zhan posted videos containing scenes of violence and bloodshed on the internet. A public security agency in Fujian Province issued Zhan an administrative penalty in accordance with the Counterterrorism Law.

Discretionary power in the punishment of criminal terrorist activities is well regulated. In trials of criminal cases involving terrorist activities, people's courts follow the principle that punishment should be proportionate to the gravity of the crime and the criminal liability involved, and apply the Criminal Law to determine the appropriate punishment for offenders, taking into consideration the facts, nature and circumstances of the offense, and the harm it caused to society.

China's judiciary has undergone reform to improve and standardize the consistency of sentencing. It has formulated normative documents that provide a complete set of standards for the principles and conditions of exercising discretion and the correct exercise of measures governing applicable law, legal interpretations, and sentencing procedures. These normative documents include the Guiding Opinions of the Supreme People's Court on Effectively Regulating the Exercise of Discretion in Trials and Enforcement to Ensure the Consistent Application of Law, the Guiding Opinions of the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate on the Sentencing of Common Crimes (Trial), and the Opinions of the Supreme People's Court, Supreme People's Procuratorate, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of State Security, and Ministry of Justice on Issues Concerning the Standardization of Sentencing Procedures. In the adjudication of criminal cases involving terrorist activities, judicial agencies made consistent efforts to standardize the exercise of discretionary power, striking the right balance between leniency and severity while ensuring that offenses receive due punishment.

### Example 5 Punishment for Criminal Terrorist Activities

A defendant surnamed Liu was prosecuted for advocating terrorism. A court in Chongqing found Liu guilty. Taking account of the facts, nature and circumstances of the offense, and the degree of harm it caused to society, the court sentenced Liu to a suspended fixed-term imprisonment and a fine in accordance with the Criminal Law.

## III. Standardized Exercise of Power in Fighting Terrorism

Chinese law distinguishes between administrative and criminal offenses that constitute terrorist activity, and stipulates different procedures for their handling. Administrative penalty procedures apply in cases of unlawful terrorist activities, while criminal procedures apply in cases of criminal terrorist activities. The procedures have been regulated in accordance with the law, case management responsibility has been implemented, and external oversight has been strengthened to ensure the standardized and orderly exercise of power in handling terrorist cases.

Regulating the procedures. Chinese law prescribes the powers and responsibilities of law enforcement and judicial agencies in handling cases. Cases of unlawful terrorist activities are investigated and handled by public security agencies, while cases of criminal terrorist activities are investigated by public security agencies, examined and prosecuted by people's procuratorates, and tried by people's courts.

When handling terrorism cases, law enforcement and judicial agencies must exercise their statutory authority and powers to ensure the accurate and effective enforcement of the law. In managing cases, public security agencies should withdraw cases that should not have been filed, and people's procuratorates have the power to supervise the withdrawal.

When collecting and obtaining evidence, public security agencies should collect evidence both in favor of and against the suspect. Torture and other illegal means are prohibited in collecting evidence, and evidence obtained by illegal means should be excluded in accordance with the law.

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When approving arrests and examining cases for prosecution, people's procuratorates should not warrant an arrest or initiate prosecution if the required conditions are not met.

At the trial stage, people's courts should render a verdict of not guilty if the evidence is insufficient or the act does not constitute a crime.

— Implementing the responsibility for case management. To ensure strict law enforcement, judicial justice, and accountability of the competent authorities, China's law enforcement and judicial agencies have promoted reform of the responsibility system.

With effective trial management and supervision, people's courts have advanced substantive reform in trials, further clarifying their organizational authority and the duties of judges to unify the responsibility for conducting trials and rendering verdicts, and ensure the lawful, independent and impartial exercise of judicial power.

People's procuratorates have built a fair and efficient mechanism for exercising procuratorial power by improving the organization of case management, defining the internal division of authority, and strengthening the judicial responsibility system to ensure the accountability of those who handle cases and make decisions.

Public security agencies have established a case review and approval mechanism that defines the powers of those who handle, review, and approve cases. Information technology is now applied to track and trace the entire process, and to keep these activities within bounds.

With their responsibilities clarified, law enforcement and judicial agencies have put in place a strict accountability system, under which judicial officials who are found to have violated the law in case management will be held accountable and given due punishment; if their acts constitute a crime, they shall be prosecuted for their criminal responsibility. To fully regulate the exercise of power, the reform to standardize the consistency of sentencing has been introduced, a case handling quality assessment system and a performance evaluation and review mechanism have been initiated, case management and guidance have been reinforced, and training has been improved.

— Strengthening external oversight. The powers of law enforcement and judicial agencies are subject to external oversight from people's congresses, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and the public, as well as to statutory and internal oversight.

People's congresses, as bodies of state power, oversee the work of people's courts and people's procuratorates by hearing their work reports and conducting special inquiries. The CPPCC exercises democratic oversight over law enforcement and judicial agencies. People's courts, people's procuratorates, and public security agencies invite supervision from people's congresses and the CPPCC, while the public can supervise the work of these agencies in the capacity of people's assessors and people's supervisors and by attending hearings.

**Example 6 Public Scrutiny over People's Procuratorates in Case Management**

A suspect surnamed Zhang was investigated on suspicion of illegally possessing items advocating terrorism. When examining the case for prosecution, a procuratorate in Anhui Province conducted public hearings to extensively solicit opinions and invite scrutiny.

— Expanding channels of oversight. To prevent abuse of power in law enforcement and judicial matters, channels of oversight have been expanded and public scrutiny has been strengthened through various means, increasing the transparency of law enforcement and justice.

For greater openness, people's courts have established platforms for the timely release of information on judicial process, judgments, the execution of judgments, and trials. People's procuratorates have increased transparency by releasing information on their procuratorial activities and affairs and have used information technology to establish platforms for this purpose, including setting up electronic displays and inquiry devices and opening websites and webpages for inquiry. Public security agencies have made their policing and administrative penalty enforcement activities more open and accept scrutiny from citizens and the wider society over law enforcement processes and outcomes. Judicial administrative agencies have ensured transparency in prison affairs, released information on the conditions, procedures and results of law enforcement in prisons, regulated acts of law enforcement by prison officers, and made prison management more standardized and institutionalized under the rule of law.

**Example 7 Greater Transparency in Prison Affairs**

China's prison authority has issued a handbook on prison affairs disclosure to promote differentiated release of information to different groups on the basis of protecting privacy for convicts. General information is released to the public for their knowledge, more detailed information is shared with the family of convicts, and complete information is disclosed to law enforcement supervisory agencies.

**IV. Protection of Human Rights in Counterterrorism Practices**

China respects and protects human rights as an underlying principle in improving its legal framework and practices in the field of counterterrorism. It integrates the punishment of terrorist activities with the protection of human rights. In handling cases involving terrorist offenses and crimes, it gives equal weight to safeguarding the basic rights of citizens, preserving social order, and protecting the rights of victims and interested persons as well as suspects, defendants and convicts.

— Maintaining a safe environment and social order where human rights are guaranteed. Terrorism poses a significant threat to national and public security, and to people's lives and property. Strengthening counterterrorism measures to prevent and punish terrorist activities in strict accordance with the law is essential in safeguarding human rights. The government has succeeded in curbing the spread of terrorism, protecting citizens' rights to life, health and property, and maintaining social stability, while taking firm actions to protect the lawful rights and interests of citizens and organizations, and guard against discrimination based on geographical area, ethnic group, or religion.

**Example 8 Greater Sense of Public Security**

According to the results of the annual national survey on the sense of public security, the proportion of positive answers rose from 87.55 percent in 2012 to 98.62 percent in 2021, sustaining the high level and receiving widespread public acclaim.

— Protecting the rights of victims and interested persons. In responding to terrorist incidents, China prioritizes the personal safety of those who are subject to direct harm and threat, organizes relief and provides medical treatment for victims, and evacuates and relocates potential victims. Following initial response operations, relevant government departments take measures to help individuals and organizations resume normal life and work, restore social order, and relieve public concern in affected areas. These departments offer timely help, provide psychological and medical assistance to victims and their close relatives as appropriate, and guarantee the basic living needs of victims and their close relatives who have lost basic means of life.

**Example 9 Assistance for Victims of Terrorism**

Following a terrorist incident in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, relevant departments provided medical aid and psychological evaluation and intervention for victims and organized rehabilitation activities, including psychological counseling and physical exercises, for those impacted. These endeavors aimed to help the victims recover both physical and mental health.

— Protecting personal freedom and dignity. China's Constitution and laws specify that citizens' personal freedom and dignity shall not be violated.

When taking compulsory measures that restrain personal freedom, such as detention and arrest, agencies handling cases of terrorism strictly follow the criteria, procedures and time limits prescribed by the law. Public security agencies cannot make arrests without prior approval by people's procuratorates or decisions by people's courts. People's procuratorates have strengthened examination of the need for custody, proposed release or alternative compulsory measures when custody is deemed unnecessary, and precisely implemented the statutory criteria in approving any extension of custody for investigation.

Agencies handling cases of terrorism have abided by the provisions of the Constitution and the law that personal dignity shall not be violated. They have ensured that suspects and defendants are provided with necessary food and rest time and are safe from physical abuse and insults. Interrogations that utilize violence, threats or intimidation, obtaining of evidence through torture, threat, enticement, deceit and other illegal means, and forced self-incrimination are all prohibited. Confessions extorted by torture or other illegal means shall be excluded.

**Example 10 Lawful and Prudent Use of Criminal Compulsory Measures**

Separate investigations were conducted into five suspects from Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region for involvement in a terrorist organization. When examining their case for prosecution, local procuratorates, in accordance with the law, approved the arrest of one suspect who was accused of organizing crimes. The four other suspects were found not to have posed actual harm, and their arrests were rejected.

— Safeguarding the right to defense. Suspects and defendants of terrorist crimes are entitled to a defender from the first interrogation or the day of the enforcement of compulsory measures by investigation agencies. Those eligible for legal aid services are entitled to an appointed attorney as their defender. Judicial and judicial administrative agencies pilot programs for full coverage of attorneys' defense throughout the stage of examining criminal cases for prosecution, assign defense attorneys to suspects who have no defenders, and expand the scope of criminal legal aid.

To ensure that suspects' and defendants' right to defense is fully realized, judicial agencies have strengthened attorneys' rights to information, application, and petition during proceedings, and their rights to meet with suspects and defendants, consult casefiles, collect evidence, and take part in inquiry, cross-examination, debate and defense.

**Example 11 Protection of Defendants' Right to Defense**

During court sessions for a terrorism case in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, defense attorneys were assigned, in accordance with the law, to three defendants who were accused of organizing, leading and participating in terrorist organizations and had no defenders, with the aim of guaranteeing their right to defense.

— Ensuring the rights to information and participation. Prior to announcing any decisions surrounding administrative penalties for terrorist activities, administrative agencies have a duty to inform the accused of the specifics of punishment, the facts of violations, and the reasons for and basis of punishment, as well as their rights to statement, defense, and a hearing. The facts, explanations and evidence provided by the accused, once verified, must be admitted by administrative agencies.

During investigations of cases involving terrorist crimes, the family of the suspects and defendants must be notified of the enforcement of compulsory measures. In cases where this may hinder an investigation, notification must be issued immediately after the potential risk has passed.

During criminal proceedings involving terrorist crimes, suspects and defendants must be informed of the charges, the specifics of their case, and their rights to apply for an withdrawal, appear before the court, participate in court investigations and debates, and deliver a final statement.

— Protecting the right to legal relief. China's laws protect right of the accused to comprehensive and multichannel legal relief.

Those who have received administrative penalties for terrorism and who disagree with the decision have the right to apply for administrative reconsideration or to bring an administrative lawsuit and entrust attorneys with the legal proceedings.

Those found guilty of terrorist crimes, their authorized defenders, and close relatives have the right to appeal should they disagree with first instance judgments by local people's courts, and this right shall not be withheld under any pretext. Those convicted have the right to appeal against judgments and rulings that are already legally effective. Should an appeal comply with statutory conditions, people's courts and people's procuratorates must institute trial supervision procedures and remand the case for retrial by the original people's court.

Those whose rights and interests have been damaged through wrongful administrative penalties or criminal penalties have the right to claim state compensation as provided by law.

— Safeguarding the right to court proceedings in ethnic spoken and written languages. China's Constitution and laws grant citizens of all ethnic groups the right to use their own language in court proceedings.

Judicial agencies are required to provide interpreting and translation services in terrorism cases for any party to court proceedings who has little knowledge of the spoken and written languages commonly used in the locality.

In areas where people of one ethnic group live in compact communities or multiple ethnic groups live together, court hearings must be conducted in the spoken language commonly used in the locality, while judgments, notices and other documents shall be issued in the written language commonly used in the locality. In ethnic autonomous areas, people's courts and people's procuratorates shall handle cases in the commonly used local language and be reasonably equipped with personnel proficient in local ethnic spoken and written languages, while legal documents shall be written in the commonly used local language or languages as appropriate.

**Example 12 Protection of the Right to Court Proceedings in Ethnic Languages**

In a violent terrorism case in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the suspects, defendants, and victims and their immediate relatives were from multiple ethnic groups and used multiple ethnic languages. Throughout court proceedings, interpreters and translators were assigned to interpret for parties concerned during court sessions and translate legal documents, thereby guaranteeing the right to proceedings in ethnic spoken and written languages for those involved in the case.

— Ensuring the legitimate rights and interests of convicts. China's laws specify that convicts' personal dignity, personal safety, lawful properties, and the right to defense and appeal, and the right to submit complaints and accusations, along with other rights that have not been deprived or restricted by law, shall not be violated.

Enforcement agencies respect the personal dignity of those convicted of terrorism and defend their legitimate rights and interests. People's procuratorates exercise supervision over the execution of criminal punishments. Convicts who disagree with legally effective verdicts have the right to petition, and enforcement agencies must handle convicts'

complaints and accusations without delay or transfer these materials to the relevant agencies, and inform the complainants and accusers of the results.

During incarceration, convicts are entitled to correspondence and meetings with their relatives, attorneys and others. To ensure prisoners receive timely medical treatment, prisons are equipped with medical facilities to provide in-prison treatment, and prisoners are permitted to be transferred outside prison for medical treatment or be released on medical parole if necessary.

Following the principle of combining punishment and reform, with emphasis on the latter, prisons provide cultural, legal and technical education to increase offenders' knowledge, skills and employability, while special efforts are made to prevent offenders of terrorist crimes from reoffending.

In handling cases of commutation and parole, enforcement agencies and people's courts strictly follow statutory procedures and criteria. Enforcement agencies make recommendations to the people's courts, which can grant commutation or parole where eligible. People's procuratorates exercise supervision over these decisions.

**V. Effective Protection of People's Safety and National Security**

China carries out counterterrorism work in accordance with the law. By balancing security and stability with social development, it continues to increase its capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and eradicate its ideological foundation. China has thus heightened the people's sense of security, defended national security, and contributed to regional and global security and stability.

— Increasing capacity to prevent and combat terrorism. On an increasingly sound legal base, China continues to improve its security management systems in relevant fields, including transport, logistics, and hazardous goods. It actively promotes improved terrorism prevention standards in key sectors and localities, formulates or revises counterterrorism contingency plans, and strengthens drills accordingly, thereby improving prevention and control to maintain public security. By encouraging and supporting scientific research and technological innovation, developing and popularizing new technical devices, and applying them to training and actual work, China continues to increase its scientific and technological capacity to counter terrorism and effectively tackles the challenges posed by new technologies and business forms, including artificial intelligence, encrypted communication, and virtual currency.

Apart from specialized efforts, China also relies on the public in working to counter terrorism. It conducts extensive public education on campuses and in workplaces and residential communities, and has distributed counterterrorism booklets such as *A Citizen's Handbook on Counterterrorism* to the general public. It incentivizes people to report terrorism-related activities to the authorities, and continues to improve societal awareness of public security and the public's ability to respond to emergent incidents of violence and terrorism.

**Example 13 Building a System of Terrorism Prevention Standards**

China is engaged in establishing standards for the prevention of terrorism in key sectors, including transport, water, electricity, oil, gas, heating, nuclear facilities, nuclear technology, media facilities, hazardous chemicals, biosecurity, and national strategic reserves. To date, the Ministry of Public Security has released 37 terrorism prevention standards for the public security sector and local authorities have issued hundreds of standards. These standards serve as the basis for establishing personnel, physical and electronic protection systems, and facilitate the synchronous design, development and operation of corresponding equipment and facilities for key targets.

— Balancing security and stability with social development. Since 2014, China has continued to take tough action against violent terrorism and punish criminals who have plotted terrorist activities. It has foiled most terrorist schemes in the making, effectively safeguarding national security and social stability, and markedly improving people's sense of security.

Counterterrorism efforts are the anchor of security and stability. Security and stability enable development, which in turn further consolidates security and stability. In Xinjiang, a key focal point for China's counterterrorism efforts, urban residents' per capita disposable income increased from RMB19,019 in 2012 to RMB38,410 in 2022, while the per capita disposable income of rural residents rose from RMB6,876 to RMB16,550. By the end of 2020, all 3.06 million individuals living in rural areas below the poverty line had emerged from poverty, and poverty had been eradicated from all 3,666 villages and 35 counties that were previously impoverished. In 2023, Xinjiang received 265.44 million tourists, representing a year-on-year increase of 117 percent and setting a new record for the number of visiting tourists. Xinjiang's total income from tourism in 2023 was RMB296.7 billion, a growth of 227 percent on the previous year. The autonomous region is now a leading tourist destination, with tourism acting as a pillar industry that boosts employment opportunities and enriches the lives of local people.

— Eradicating the ideological foundation of terrorism. While striking hard at unlawful

and criminal terrorist activities, China attaches greater importance to the education and rehabilitation of victims of extremist teachings who have committed only minor offenses. For people falling under different levels of extremist influence, relevant government departments, women's associations and other social organizations, religious groups, schools, and families collaborate to offer targeted intervention measures, in order to protect them from further harmful impact.

Religious extremism is not religion. It distorts religious doctrines to spread violent and radical ideas and cause serious disruption to normal religious activities. Influenced and controlled by religious extremism, some people have engaged in, or have been instigated, coerced, or enticed to engage in terrorist activities.

Following the principles of protecting the lawful, banning the unlawful, containing extremism, resisting infiltration, and combating crimes, China protects citizens' freedom of religious belief, ensures the normal practice of religious activities, and makes consistent law-based efforts in deradicalization. It has succeeded in containing the influence and spread of religious extremism.

The public has developed a stronger awareness of the rule of law and realized the harm that religious extremism causes, while their abilities to distinguish between right and wrong, and to resist the penetration of religious extremism have greatly strengthened.

— Contributing to global and regional security and stability. By combating domestic terrorist activities, strengthening border and port of entry control, and stopping the cross-border movement of terrorists, China has effectively curbed the spread of terrorism. In accordance with its own laws and the international conventions it has entered or concluded, China actively cooperates in international counterterrorism on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. It is committed to the vision of a global community of shared future, supports the UN's leading and coordinating role in international cooperation on counterterrorism, abides by the UN Charter and other well-recognized international laws, and backs the counterterrorism resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council. It has joined 12 global counterterrorism conventions and actively fulfills its obligations in fighting terrorism.

China advocates regional cooperation to counter terrorism. Under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), it has facilitated the formulation of documents such as the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism and the SCO Member States Agreement on Border Defense Cooperation, and participated in judicial cooperation and joint counterterrorism exercises, playing an important role in maintaining international and regional security and stability. By establishing cooperation mechanisms with dozens of countries and between law-enforcement departments to combat terrorism in border areas, it has engaged in pragmatic exchanges and cooperation in intelligence, border control, and investigation and handling of cases, and cut off funds for terrorism.

**Conclusion**

Different paths can lead to the same end, and consensus can be reached despite varied concerns. Counterterrorism must be on the right side of the rule of law, a principle widely acknowledged by the international community. Due to different political systems, legal institutions, and cultural traditions, different countries are confronted with different forms and manifestations of terrorism, and are thus applying different legal practices in combating terrorism.

China's counterterrorism legal framework has improved over the past four decades, aligning China's rule of law essentials with international counterterrorism principles. The legal framework in place works well both in preventing and punishing terrorist activities, and in respecting and protecting human rights. It conforms to China's realities and international norms, and has yielded satisfactory and practical results.

Regrettably, some countries often disregard others' right to choose their own path of counterterrorism under the rule of law. These countries impose their own will upon others and pass judgment on them. They even interfere in others' internal affairs, and infringe on their national sovereignty under the pretext of defending the rule of law and human rights. These actions have severely hampered the global effort to fight against terrorism under the rule of law, weakened the foundations of cooperation, and reduced operational effectiveness.

Counterterrorism approaches by individual countries that champion the common values of humanity, comply with the norms and principles of the United Nations, and conform to their own national conditions and legal institutions, are all part of the global effort to combat terrorism under the rule of law. In fighting terrorism, the international community should support diverse law-based actions, reject double standards, and oppose the politicization of related issues.

Upholding the vision of a global community of shared future, China is willing to work closely with other countries to push forward counterterrorism cause as part of global governance. On the basis of equality and respect, China will engage in extensive exchanges, cooperation, and mutual learning to facilitate the global effort to counter terrorism.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Bully pulpit lawmakers in Washington bullying others in bid for decoupling

After decades of economic globalization, all the open economies in the world have become tightly woven in a web of global supply chains. Following market economy rules, countries specialize in what they are good at and collaborate and exchange with others. The international division of work has reached such an extent that most people take it for granted. That a product, such as a car includes parts from multiple countries, is no longer remarkable. Because that is how the global economy works.

But not everyone likes it. Despite the White House's repeated denial that it seeks the "decoupling" of the Chinese and US economies, some in the US Congress are working tirelessly to achieve that by trying to make sure that anything associated with China is defined as a "national security threat". With this excuse, they are continuously extending traditional US long-arm jurisdiction. In the latest instance, as far as Switzerland.

Last week, the House Homeland Security Committee and Select Committee on China, along with two subcommittees, sent a letter to the Swiss engineering company ABB, asking the latter to provide testimony and information to clarify its China connections. Their "concerns" were about the installation of ABB equipment by Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries Company (ZPMC) on US-bound ship-to-shore cranes.

A matter that cannot be more normal in the present-day international market has supposedly caused "significant concerns" on Capitol Hill. ZPMC is one of the world's largest port machinery manufacturers. More important in the eyes of the US' China hawks, it is a

State-owned company as the letter indicates.

At a time when China-bashing equals political correctness in Washington, it is no surprise the hawkish politicians in Washington catch the scent of their prey in the cranes, alleging "cybersecurity risks, foreign intelligence threats, and supply chain vulnerabilities". So they want to examine not only ABB's commercial ties with ZPMC, but also those with US defense, intelligence and national security agencies. But they aren't interested in whether their charges are substantiated or not. They have not waited for the requested reply, having already reached the conclusion: "Allowing ZPMC to install ABB equipment and technology in China onto cranes bound for the United States is unacceptable and must be remedied without any further delay."

ABB has highlighted the standardized, multinational nature of its products and services. Obviously that will not sway those US lawmakers trying to sever China's economic ties with other countries.

It is highly improbable that the US lawmakers will answer the three questions Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin raised the other day: Why does the US so obstinately accuse Chinese companies of threatening US national security without evidence? Why are such accusations always targeted at Chinese industry leaders? Why is the US coercing other countries to shut out Chinese enterprises when the latter clearly feel no threat?

In fact Wang answered those questions himself by noting that it is only Chinese exports of shirts and socks that don't "threaten" US national security, because "what the US politicians are doing is naked bullying".

## US only dirties its hands with its smears

Despite acknowledging the fact that Nauru seeking the full resumption of diplomatic relations with China is an independent decision made by a sovereign country, the US State Department has seized it as an opportunity to smear Beijing.

Shortly after Nauru announced on Jan 15 that it had severed "diplomatic relations" with Taiwan as of this day" and it would "no longer develop any official relations or official exchanges" with the island, the US State Department issued a statement saying the decision was a "disappointing one".

It then took the opportunity to allege that China "makes promises in exchange for diplomatic relations that ultimately remain unfulfilled". Washington also said that the US will continue to deepen and expand its engagement with Taiwan and support its "meaningful participation in the international community". It knows full well that this will be taken as a message of support to Lai Ching-te, the island's newly elected leader, who has previously made clear his pro-independence stance. But the US State Department disingenuously claimed that this engagement would be consistent with the US' one-China policy.

The US' ulterior motive is not so glibly disguised, as evidenced in the US House of Representatives' move to advance several bills concerning the Chinese island this month, with one of them, the "Taiwan Non-Discrimination Act of 2023", supporting Taiwan as a mem-

ber of the International Monetary Fund, a move aimed at expanding the international space for the island and a bid to put increased pressure on Beijing.

Lest there be any doubt about the matter, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning made clear that Taiwan has no legitimate reasons or rights to participate in international organizations such as the IMF, which are reserved for sovereign states. The bill attempts to manipulate the Taiwan question by promoting "one China, one Taiwan" or "two Chinas".

Mao Ning urged the US to recognize the high sensitivity of the Taiwan question, immediately cease interfering in China's internal affairs, stop sending wrong signals to pro-independence forces on the island, and refrain from harming China-US relations and the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait.

Since Lai's election win, he has adopted a more conciliatory position, saying that maintaining cross-strait peace and stability would be his mission. That this came after his "double minority win" in the recent elections indicates that he realizes the pro-independence agenda of the Democratic Progressive Party authorities lacks popular support. The US may find the island is more circumspect about its pro-independence antics.

Nauru's decision to resume diplomatic relations with Beijing is the correct choice that upholds the international order. The moves of the US, on the other hand, show its disregard for that order and its dishonesty in claiming to be the champion of its rules and values.

## Rallying call for concerted fight against terrorism

The white paper the State Council Information Office published on Tuesday offers a systemic review of the institutional progress the country has made in the fight against terrorism, and demonstrates the country's commitment to upholding the rule of law in its efforts to counter terrorism.

The document, China's Legal Framework and Measures for Counterterrorism, introduces in detail the legal framework for the fight against terrorism, the provisions for the determination and punishment of terrorist activities, as well as the measures that are taken to protect human rights in the process of effectively protecting people's lives and property and safeguarding national security.

By shining a light on its counterterrorism work, China has highlighted the straightforwardness of its undertakings, which is in contrast to some countries which seek to manipulate counterterrorism for geopolitical purposes. The white paper offers other countries the means to gain a better understanding of China's policies, laws and practices pertaining to counterterrorism. It is to be hoped that it can help promote closer international cooperation and exchanges in this crucial endeavor by building trust.

As a nation that has paid a heavy price for terrorist attacks, China's resolve to fight against terrorism and eradicate all terrorist roots in Chinese soil and its capacity to accomplish that objective

should never be underestimated.

The document can also be regarded as a powerful rebuttal of the double standard adopted by some countries in criticizing China's counterterrorism efforts under the pretext of defending the "rule of law" and "human rights".

Those Western politicians attacking China's counterterrorism cause, citing "human rights violations", are doing nothing but smearing the country for their own narrow political ends. They are selectively blind to the heavy loss of life in China as a result of terrorist attacks. As long as the terrorists can cause social unrest and chaos, or in other ways hinder or disturb China's development, they are regarded as friendly forces in the same trench with the China hawks in the West, and even be praised as "brave freedom fighters". This double standard has weakened the foundations for counterterrorism cooperation, severely hampering the global fight against terrorism.

China has established cooperation mechanisms with dozens of countries and law-enforcement departments to combat terrorism in border areas, and it has engaged in pragmatic exchanges and cooperation in intelligence, border control, and the investigation and handling of cases, and cut off funds for terrorism.

With the release of the white paper, China hopes that more countries will recognize its efforts and actively cooperate with it so that the scourge of terrorism can be eradicated.

Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## Steady high-quality development driving force for world economy

A recent International Finance Forum report shows the Chinese economy contributed 32 percent to global economic growth in 2023, making it the largest engine of the world economy. A study by the International Monetary Fund also indicates that China's economic growth has had a positive spillover effect on the rest of the world, with every 1 percentage point of its economic growth raising the output of other economies by an average of 0.3 percentage points.

As the world's second-largest economy, China's long-term improving economic fundamentals add much-needed stability to the world economy. China is the only country that boasts all the industrial categories listed in the United Nations' industrial classification, with its manufacturing value added

accounting for about 30 percent of the global total, ranking first in the world for 14 consecutive years.

China's demographic dividend is upgrading to a "talent dividend", and its total human resources, scientific and technological human resources, and R&D personnel all rank first in the world. China's total input in research and development and high-tech industries has maintained double-digit growth for many years, with the application of emerging technologies and the creation of new products and new formats of business accelerating. That facilitates the formation and growth of new drivers for China's development.

The steady growth momentum of China's economy highlights its resilience and capability for sustainable development. It can play a

key role in shaping the trajectory of global economic recovery.

China's total retail sales of consumer goods exceeded 37 trillion yuan (\$5.16 trillion) in 2023, and the contribution of final consumption expenditure to the country's economic growth reached 82.5 percent. China's middle-income population now exceeds 400 million, and it is expected to reach 800 million in the next decade.

Against the backdrop of mounting risks in the global economy and the rise of protectionism, China's commitment to opening its doors wider and its greater efforts to foster a market-oriented, law-based and internationalized business environment will create more space for other countries to share its new development opportunities.

—PEOPLE'S DAILY

## DPP the real agent of disinformation

The local Democratic Progressive Party authorities in Taiwan established a so-called Cognitive Warfare Research Center on Thursday, "dedicated to studying the threat of online disinformation to Taiwan's democracy and security".

That is nothing more than a "thief crying stop thief", as the DPP is a time-honored master at online campaigns aimed at manipulating public opinion. It has been learning from the United States, which has been honing its craft in such manipulations to create "false truths".

The DPP has long been resorting to disinformation campaigns misrepresenting Beijing's policies to

support its own rise to power on the island and its efforts to suppress opposition parties. The DPP has invested huge amounts of funds to build social networks on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) aimed at convincing residents on the island that they are under constant "threat" from the Chinese mainland. Beneficial policies from the mainland that support the well-being of Taiwan residents are also distorted as being "harmful" to Taiwan.

To keep their monopoly on information, the DPP also forced CTI News Channel, a local TV station, to cease broadcasting by not renewing its license.

Therefore one wonders why the

DPP as a master of such dark arts founded a research center to study them.

In the island's latest local leadership election, despite its candidate securing the most votes, the DPP lost its majority in the 113-seat legislative body, as its number of seats dropped from 62 to 51. That is a clear signal that despite its best efforts to influence public opinion in its favor with a torrent of disinformation, not everyone on the island can be convinced to ignore the evidence that friendly cross-strait ties as promoted by the mainland are beneficial to the island.

—ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Hong Kong 'talent drain' reports rebutted

**Editor's note:** Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin refuted reports of a brain drain from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region at a regular news conference in Beijing on Monday. The following are excerpts of his response to a question on these reports:

Some foreign media outlets have recently reported that global talent have become "reluctant" to work and live in Hong Kong, and that the SAR is experiencing a talent drain.

These reports and comments lack any factual basis. They do not respect the truth that the SAR remains a hub attracting global talent.

It is quite irresponsible for the media concerned to discredit Hong Kong in this way. The reality is that Hong Kong's strong appeal to global talent continues to grow and there is no so-called talent drain from Hong Kong.

According to the HKSAR government, from mid-2022 to mid-2023, the net inflow of Hong Kong residents amounted to 174,000. From January to November in 2023, the SAR government received more than 200,000 appli-

cations under various talent schemes. Among them, over 120,000 applications have been approved and 80,000 talent have arrived in Hong Kong, which far exceeds the annual target of admitting at least 35,000 talent.

Besides, the International Institute for Management Development in Lausanne, Switzerland, released the IMD World Talent Report 2023, which shows that Hong Kong ranks second in Asia in terms of talent competitiveness. These numbers and facts fully show that Hong Kong remains a popular destination for global talent.

Hong Kong has entered a new stage in which the region has restored order and is set to thrive. People there fully enjoy their lawful rights and freedom. This has created an unprecedented environment

and golden opportunities for both Chinese and foreign talent to live and thrive in Hong Kong.

We believe that under the "one country, two systems" framework, Hong Kong's unique advantage of enjoying the backing of the motherland and being open to the world will be further strengthened. Hong Kong will further expand the progress it is making in economic and social endeavors. The region's appeal to global talent will only grow.

The central government of China will as always support the Hong Kong SAR in attracting global talent, building new advantages and welcoming world talent from all sectors to share in Hong Kong's development opportunities and open up a brighter future for Hong Kong.

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## GLOBAL VIEWS



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SELÇUK COLAKOĞLU

## The middle way

Time is right to pursue greater Sino-Turkish Silk Road cooperation

The world has become deeply interconnected in the age of economic globalization. China declared its ambitious connectivity initiative to boost economic integration in Asia, Europe and Africa a decade ago. The Belt and Road Initiative has evolved and made concrete progress in the past decade. Türkiye also has its Silk Road connectivity initiative under the name of the Middle Corridor, aimed at building a logistic link between China and Europe through Türkiye, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. As the Middle Corridor is complementary with the overland Silk Road Economic Belt, Ankara has been eager to cooperate with Beijing after the Chinese initiative was proposed in 2013.

Over the past decade, the economic partnership between Türkiye and China has developed remarkably. According to Turk Stat data, the bilateral trade volume increased from \$28.3 billion in 2013 to \$44.6 billion in 2022. Chinese direct investment in Türkiye reached a historically high level and Chinese banks and financial institutions provided funds for Turkish mega infrastructure projects. According to International Monetary Fund data, China's FDI in Türkiye from 2015 to 2021 was \$6.3 billion, and Türkiye's FDI in China from 2015 to 2021 was \$1.8 billion.

But despite these economic developments, there has been little progress on region-wide Sino-Turkish Silk Road cooperation for a variety of reasons. One of the main reasons is that China-Europe trade is heavily dependent on the sea route through the Suez Canal because of very low operational costs and the necessary infrastructure. If there is overland connectivity, the Russian Northern Corridor from China to Europe for cargo transfer is more efficient and less costly than the Middle Corridor. A lack of infrastructure and multiple border crossings mean the Middle Corridor cannot compete with the Northern Corridor, which may be the shortest route between Europe and China through a single country, Russia. On the other hand, the Middle Corridor involves crossing many borders (Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Türkiye) and transiting one or two seas (the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea), depending on where the cargo is heading. As of 2019, about 95 percent of Europe-Asia overland transit in both directions went via the Northern Corridor, while the other 5 percent used the Middle Corridor and other routes according to the International Union of Railways.

The unexpected geopolitical challenges that have occurred over the past couple of years underline how diversification of the logistic routes is crucial to minimizing the risks of disruptions to the global supply chain. The Russia-Ukraine crisis has caused a decoupling process between Moscow and Western capitals. The cessation of most direct trade between Russia and European countries has also diminished the importance of the Northern Corridor. The new situation creates a window of opportunity to realize the Middle Corridor as a logistic hub from China to Europe despite its operational disadvantages against the Northern Corridor.

The outbreak of a new round of the Israel-Palestine conflict on Oct 7, 2023, has had a spillover effect on the region and created great challenges for the East-West logistic link from Asia to Europe. As the Houthi militant group in Yemen has been targeting Israeli port-bound ships in the Red Sea, the most important sea route through the Suez Canal has been under challenge and many shipping companies have begun to change their logistic routes to avoid the conflict zone. Undoubtedly, the decision of shipping companies to bypass the Red Sea route has raised insurance and fuel costs. Shipping via the Cape of Good Hope takes 10 to 14 days longer than through the Suez Canal with additional costs. With no sign of the Gaza conflict ending anytime soon and the joint air strikes by the United States and the United Kingdom against the Houthi military targets, it indicates that further escalations on the Red Sea and Eastern Mediterranean regions are highly likely. The security challenge to the main sea route between Asia and Europe is worsening, which might give another boost to the efficient use of the Middle Corridor.

Furthermore, if Azerbaijan and Armenia reach a final peace deal on their territorial issues, Armenia will likely integrate into the Middle Corridor. The resumption of direct air cargo transportation and opening of the land border for nationals of third countries between Armenia and Türkiye in 2023 are good signs for regional connectivity initiatives in the Southern Caucasus. After being blocked for three decades, Ankara and Yerevan are now preparing for the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border.

Ankara and Beijing are on the same page regarding a new connectivity initiative from South Asia to Europe, namely the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor, which was agreed upon by India,

the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and the European Union at the G20 New Delhi Summit in September 2023. The IMEC is mainly considered a move to counter the BRI. Ankara also reacted to the IMEC bypassing Türkiye entirely. Ankara proposed another connectivity initiative, namely the Iraq-Turkiye Development Road. The \$17 billion initiative aims at bolstering connectivity between Türkiye and Iraq through a rail and highway link from the Port of Basra to the southern Turkish border. Ankara also has the hope of attracting Chinese funds and investments to this connectivity project within the framework of Belt and Road cooperation.

Ankara and Beijing should take some joint steps to increase Belt and Road cooperation on the Middle Corridor. First, increasing logistic connectivity is the key. Building an integrated transportation system including railways, highways, and ports in Central Eurasia covering Central Asian and Caucasian countries is essential for the realization of the BRI.

Second, the Middle Corridor's freight usually lacks transparency, especially regarding the cost of its extended section from China to Europe. China, Türkiye, and other regional countries should fix the exact time of delivery and cost of freight through a multilateral mechanism.

Third, the China-Central Asia Summit, which was held for the first time in 2023, may extend to Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and Türkiye to discuss Belt and Road cooperation. The expanded China-Central Asia Summit can function as an institutional mechanism to realize full compatibility between the Middle Corridor and the BRI.

In conclusion, new geopolitical challenges have proved how new connectivity initiatives are vital to sustaining regional and global supply chains. The unexpected geopolitical risks make the Middle Corridor and BRI-related new connectivity projects more viable. Furthermore, Türkiye, Caucasian and Central Asian countries want to realize the Middle Corridor to reach Chinese and European markets easily. All these developments should prompt Ankara and Beijing to strengthen their Silk Road cooperation.

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GERT GROBLER

## Role model

Dynamic Africa-China cooperation sets a good example for expanding Global South cooperation

China's growing commitment to engagement with Africa has been demonstrated by Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to Egypt, Tunisia, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire, which marked the 34th consecutive year in which a Chinese foreign minister has made Africa the first official overseas destination for the year.

Based on joint statements made during his visits, his trip was highly constructive and injected further momentum into the traditional Africa-China friendship, solidarity and cooperation, as well as contributing to efforts to end the conflicts in the Middle East.

The essence of Africa-China cooperation is mutual benefit and common development. China's cooperation has never been and will never be mere talk. While bringing tangible benefits to the African and Chinese peoples, Africa and China cooperation has also created more favorable conditions for international cooperation. This must be seen in the context of today's increasing and complex challenges, and as a result, China and African countries are striving to strengthen unity and cooperation with other members of the Global South, with the view to jointly tackling challenges and pushing for a more equal, just and rational international order.

The Global South is home to over 6 billion people representing 85 percent of the world's population and nearly 39 percent of global GDP. They are generally characterized as poorer countries and suffering harsher living conditions than the countries of the Global North.

As a developing country, China is naturally a member and an increasing political and economic force in the Global South. Through thick and thin, China has consistently stood in solidarity with fellow developing countries and it continues to safeguard the shared interests of developing countries.

What is also of significance, according to the Brookings Institute in the US, is that trade within the Global South (so called South-South trade) recently surpassed North-North trade for the first time, and today 35 percent of global trade is accounted for by South-South trade, and just 25 percent by North-North trade. Furthermore, Global South trade tends to be "more diversified, better at inducing technology transfer, and more pro-developmental than trade between developing and high-income countries".

The achievements of China's social and economic transformation have inspired many countries in Africa to learn and borrow best practices from China. It is also a fact that the Global South countries are predominantly highly receptive to the Chinese development experience which serves as a model for many

developing countries.

The growing concrete cooperation between Africa and China in achieving their respective development goals is having an increasing beneficial impact on the building of a fair and reasonable international order, maintaining a peaceful and secure global environment as well as building an open and inclusive world economy. There is thus a strong convergence of interests between the two sides to collaborate on issues of common interest, whether at the bilateral, regional or multilateral level.

In fact, Africa and China have agreed to firmly oppose the vestiges of colonialism and hegemony in all forms, and to support each other in safeguarding core interests and upholding the legitimate demands of developing countries. Furthermore, they advocate dialogues to bridge differences and are cooperating to resolve international and regional issues, thereby safeguarding world peace and stability. This constructive approach augers well not only for Africa and China, but also the entire Global South.

The growing Global South dominance in global trade is not only a result of China's impressive economic achievements, but also a vindication of the massive potential of the African continent's economy.

With Africa's population expected to double by 2050, from its current 1.4 billion to 2.8 billion. Africa's growing and young consumer market may, among others, be the main driver of global demand for consumer, education, health, technological, and infrastructural products and services.

Despite many headwinds, trade between Africa and China jumped to a record level of \$282 billion last year, increasing 11.1 percent from a year earlier, as a result of Beijing's recent push to boost imports from Africa.

Chinese companies have growing confidence in the African market. More than 3,000 Chinese enterprises have invested in Africa, of which over 70 percent are private enterprises, the mainstay of Chinese investment in Africa in 2022. Given the accelerated progress with the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Chinese companies will find new opportunities as they explore and invest more in the African market and add fresh dynamism to high-quality cooperation between Africa and China. The AfCFTA will create a single, continent-wide market that unites 54 countries with a combined GDP of \$3.4 trillion. The World Bank recently described it as a "game changer".

China and many other countries from the Global South are fully aware of these positive dynamics and therefore are keen to prioritize the leveraging of the full develop-

ment potential of intra-African trade through the rapid implementation of the AfCFTA. Africa has therefore warmly welcomed China's role in actively participating in the development of the AfCFTA and providing continued support to the secretariat of the AfCFTA toward the full implementation of this important initiative which will boost global trade and also create economic opportunities for the Global South.

Africa has accepted and stands ready to work with China and other developing countries to jointly implement China's Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative, among others, which have enjoyed significant political buy-in around the world, an indication of increasing confidence in China's leadership in the Global South.

These initiatives are aimed at strengthening global economic development, practicing true multilateralism, increasing the representation and voice of the Global South in global governance and safeguarding the shared interests of developing countries in the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

A further development of major significance in the Global South is the role of the expanding BRICS partnership of emerging economies and developing countries. With its diverse strengths and wide perspectives, BRICS will continue to play a leading role in the creation of a multipolar world order in which the developing countries will have equal participation. BRICS is fast evolving into a champion of the needs and concerns of the peoples of Africa and the Global South.

The Africa-China partnership is a mutually beneficial endeavor with huge potential for further growth and there is no doubt that it will continue to evolve into a model of success for expanding Global South cooperation. When China-Africa cooperation thrives, Global South cooperation will also flourish.

Building on the solid foundation of a shared global political vision and accelerating economic cooperation toward an Africa-China community with a shared future, the strengthening of the Africa-China partnership also creates a strategic opportunity to cement a new stepped-up form of Global South collaboration which provides hope and inspiration for the developing world.

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MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

## Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

Z  
WEEKLY

## Paws and passion

Meowzart's innovative cat competition in China, led by Gen Z, fosters creativity and compassion, uniting communities to rescue and adopt feline friends, **Gui Qian** reports.

One of Meowzart's posters for this year's "Best Meow Alumni" competition, featuring cartoon figures of the top stray cat candidates from various universities. MEOWZART / FOR CHINA DAILY



A unique cat competition is happening right now, featuring stray cats from more than 280 universities across China. They're all competing for the title of "Best Meow Alumni" from Jan 21 to Feb 21.

This event is in its third year and is organized by Meowzart, one of China's largest animal welfare platforms for college students. Using a mini-program on the Chinese social media platform WeChat, people can view profiles of the cat candidates from each university. The profiles include pictures and detailed information about the cats, such as their age, breed, personalities, and even "highlight moments on social media".

On the Meowzart mini-program, there are profiles of over 18,312 cats from more than 340 university cat care communities.

It is hoped that the increased attention on these newfound feline celebrities will boost their chances of adoption. The sales revenue generated from merchandise featuring their adorable images will also contribute to supporting the operations of university stray cat care associations.

For example, Big Head, the "representative" of the Sea Cat TNR team at Shanghai Maritime University, was successfully adopted after participating in 2022's competition. Now, this year, Big Head's friend, Sea Cucumber, is a top contender, thanks to his undeniable cuteness.

Across China, young people are actively involved in rescuing and adopting stray cats in their own unique ways. Almost every university has student-led associations dedicated to protecting stray cats on campus. These organizations not only provide food for the cats but also assist in their spaying or neutering and facilitate their adoption.

Meng Yan, the founder of Meowzart, emphasizes that student communities play a significant role in the rescue of stray cats. However, these young people face numerous challenges.

As students, they often struggle with financial problems and lack the means to sustain their organizations beyond fundraising efforts. Their limited experience and resources also put them at a

disadvantage when dealing with schools and negotiating with those responsible for severe cases of cat abuse. Some students even face misunderstanding from others who perceive them as neglecting their studies.

Meng hopes that her platform can unite young cat enthusiasts and amplify their voices.

Since its establishment in 2021, Meowzart has been working to establish connections with university communities. By assisting them in raising cat food and encouraging the creation of cat-related works, the platform gradually build trust among its members.

The platform now provides guidance for students and operates a mini-program that allows student communities to easily share adoption information.

All of these initiatives encourage students to promote "star cats" on their campuses, create merchandise for charitable sales, and organize activities to fully unleash their potential for rescuing stray cats.

"I hope that young people, while focusing on animal welfare and their living environment, can also showcase the spirit of Generation Z and leverage their strengths and interests," Meng said.

Every year on May 21, Campus Cat Day is celebrated. Devoted members of university stray cat communities express their creativity by crafting various artworks inspired by these charming felines, which they then share on Meowzart. The platform will select the most outstanding pieces for recognition.

This year, students from over 200 universities across China and individuals from all walks of life created over 40,000 works in various artistic fields, including photography, video production, creative design, meme crafting, painting, writing, dance, and music. Nearly 4,000 works were chosen as finalists, resulting in 20 university societies being honored with the Best Society Award.

The winning pieces have been curated into the Meowzart metaverse, boasting 521 museums that are accessible to everyone. This virtual world, centered around and inspired by stray cats, even

features a post office and a police station, mirroring their real-world counterparts. For instance, the post office is situated at 197 Luban Road in Huangpu District, Shanghai.

With the help of Meowzart, student communities collaborate with professional veterinarians to develop educational materials

if suitable. Those cats that are friendly to humans may be kept until they are adopted, while those unsuitable for adoption will be returned to the wild.

"The TNR approach not only prevents the overpopulation of stray cats, but also reduces the risk of illness among them," wrote the students.

"One characteristic of Gen Zers is that they act out of genuine intention or love," said Meng. "In the compassionate endeavor of rescuing stray animals, love holds particular significance."

#### Adoption activists

While some Gen Zers use their creativity to raise awareness about stray cat problems, others focus on more hands-on adoption efforts, which are equally important but also labor intensive.

Tang Tianle, a 23-year-old from Shandong province and now living in Beijing, has participated in more than 20 such charity events as a volunteer. Her involvement began on a cold winter day two years ago when she rescued a small orange cat in front of her apartment building.

"The little kitty gives me so much comfort and companionship. Grateful for this bond, I've been keeping an eye on stray cats in my community ever since," Tang said. "So far, I've saved eight of them — three of which I've kept, three found new families, and two are still waiting for adoption."

Later, when she learned about face-to-face adoption activities that directly connect rescuers and potential adopters, she felt compelled to join and help.

Tang participated in events organized by Beijing Adoption Day, an animal welfare charity. Usually twice a month, they arrange for rescuers to bring their rescued dogs and cats to busy places like shopping malls, squares, and museums, where they showcase these animals, allowing potential adopters to interact with them and apply for adoption.

"Finding suitable adopters for stray animals is not easy. After adopters submit their applica-

tions, rescuers will carefully assess the information provided," Tang said. "They evaluate whether the applicants can offer a stable living environment for the animal and are prepared to assume the lifelong responsibility of caring for a dog or cat."

"Face-to-face interactions typically work well because they create opportunities for rescuers and adopters to communicate directly and establish emotional connections between adopters and animals," she added.

According to Tang, these activities usually last four to five hours, during which 50 to 60 volunteers, mostly young women under 30, take care of about 40 cats and 20 dogs. "We do a lot of heavy lifting, such as installing and moving cages, but we find it very rewarding to contribute our strength," she said.

Meng Fan, 27, from Cangzhou, Hebei province, has participated in her professional knowledge and skills in the adoption day activities.

With a background in broadcasting and hosting, and currently working as a program editor, Meng is well-versed in new media.

When she first volunteered in a face-to-face adoption event in June 2021, she engaged with the audience by providing live text broadcasts on Sina Weibo.

In subsequent activities, she expanded her efforts by livestreaming on more social media platforms, introducing information about each rescued animal and answering questions from the viewers.

"I need to keep talking for hours and livestream on almost all the popular social media platforms in China, including Sina Weibo, WeChat, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu, so that we can reach more potential adopters," she said.

Having volunteered for two years, Meng has met many endearing stray animals, witnessed touching stories, and received considerable positive feedback. "I'm always dedicated and pleased," she said. "What we've been doing for these lives is meaningful."

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Upper left: Meng Fan poses with her dog.  
Lower left: Tang Tianle works as a volunteer at a stray animal adoption activity. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Z WEEKLY

# Winter break wonders

Young students worldwide craft unique winter breaks, with each adventure shaping their perspectives and forging connections, **Li Xinran** reports.

When it comes to winter breaks, young students around the world spend this recharging time in their own way. "Gen Zers tend to have a wide variety of hobbies, and there are more subcultures compared to other generations. We also tend to express ourselves more and explore the world on our own terms," said 23-year-old Zhang Yuze.

Zhang is a graduate student at New York University, studying management and systems. He exemplifies this diversity with his unique winter break adventure — traveling to Europe during the monthlong break.

Accompanied by his girlfriend, Zhang explored eight cities in Italy and Spain, including Rome, Venice, and Madrid, all within 18 days.

"Our goal was to recharge ourselves. So instead of following a tight schedule, we made a rough plan and did most of the detailed planning along the way and adjusted it based on our conditions," he said.

Rome stood out as Zhang's favorite destination, captivating him with its living history and ancient architecture. "You're constantly surrounded by historical relics and ancient buildings. Even in front of our hotel, they're still doing archaeological excavation, adding a sense of living in history," he said.

Their visit to the Colosseum, where they secured spots on an English guided tour, provided more insights into the historical context. "For instance, our guide told us that some people's minds would wander off during the fights and they would draw on bricks to kill time," Zhang said. "We were able to see some of the doodles preserved in the Colosseum Museum, which was quite intriguing."

The couple celebrated New Year's Eve in Seville, Spain, witnessing a unique local tradition of grape-eating at midnight, which they learned from Xiaohongshu, a Chinese lifestyle-sharing platform, and also from their hotel's receptionist.

"Approaching midnight, local people would gather at the city square. Instead of doing countdowns, they would strike the clock 12 times. Legend says if you eat one grape per clock-strike, 12 grapes symbolize 12 months of good luck for the coming year," said Zhang. "It was a pity that local markets closed early that day and we couldn't buy grapes. Maybe next time."

Zhang had memorable experiences interacting with locals during his visits to Italy and Spain. "Visiting these two countries, I found that Spanish are more extroverted, energetic, and hospitable," he said. "For example, when we had trouble understanding the menu at a restaurant, the staff kindly explained it to us in English."

In contrast, he highlighted the romantic sentiment and fashionable taste of the Italians. "You can constantly spot flower shops on the streets. And whether it's a big city or a small town, almost every passerby's outfit is quite stylish. Even elder gentlemen would wear fashionable winter coats and leather shoes."

## More unbeaten paths

While Zhang explored the world firsthand, Li Zhiyu, a 20-year-old junior at The University of Sydney, Australia, spent her time off differently.

Australia's winter break is equivalent to the summer breaks in the US and UK in terms of length.

Although Li is pursuing a Bachelor of Liberal Arts and Sciences in film studies, she has to earn almost the same credits in



VACATION MODE



**Top and bottom:** Li Zhiyu participated in the Spartan Super in Abu Dhabi on Dec 10.

**Above:** Zhang Yuze posed for a photo in front of the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy on Jan 10.

**Right:** Zhang Yuxin posed for a photo at the countdown show of Hunan Satellite TV for the years 2023-2024 in Haikou, Hainan province, on Dec 31.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



terms of major courses and science courses.

"I'll have to take these math classes sooner or later. Three months vs three weeks? I'll take the latter," she said.

As Li finished her study quota for the winter break, she was able to dedicate more time to her favorite recreation, Spartan Race. It's a series of obstacle races of varying difficulties and durations, including the Spartan Sprint, the Spartan Super, the Spartan Beast, and the Spartan Ultra.

Li usually goes for the Spartan Ultra, which is over 50 kilometers long and has more than 60 obstacles. Or sometimes, she would choose the Spartan Beast, which is 21 kilometers and has more than 30 obstacles.

"It depends on what races are available at the event," she said.

Her fascination with Spartan Race began in December 2022 when she stumbled upon an event in Shenzhen, not far from her hometown, Foshan, in South China's Guangdong province.

"That sounds fun, why not?" she recalled.

Without much hesitation, she dedicated nearly six hours to complete her first Spar-

tan Beast, returning home covered in mud and bruises. "My mom asked me if I had been in a fight with someone," she recalled amusingly.

Having completed Spartan Races in various locations, including Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, and Fiji, Li values the diverse challenges posed by different landscapes.

"It's like cross-country with obstacles," she said. "I enjoyed the desert in Abu Dhabi, the horse farm in Fiji, and the steep slopes of Chongli in Hebei province."

Beyond physical fitness, Li also credits the sport for introducing her to like-minded friends and instilling a resilient mindset to face different challenges in life.

"I have become more extroverted and willing to break out of my comfort zone," she said. "Now whenever I run into a challenge in life, it seems trivial. Like during a race, I'll just tell myself as long as I keep moving, I'll reach the finish line."

Li has a rough outline in terms of her future plans. Just like her sports-driven mindset, she's always ready to tackle new challenges.

"I prefer to take things one step at a time," Li said. "I'll figure out what comes next after college and graduate school. However, I'm committed to participating in the Spartan Race as long as my schedule and budget allow."

## Unexpected plans

Li's philosophy aligns with Zhang Yuxin's approach to life — make plans but avoid overplanning.

Zhang Yuxin, a graduate student at Central Saint Martins, UK, is studying innovation management. Her winter break was filled with surprises, and she enjoyed every moment.

For instance, upon a friend and alumna's invite, she helped curate a Christmas pop-up store for the brand Momonary, which will be entering the upcoming London Fashion Week in February.

On New Year's Eve, she had a sudden change of plan and went to Haikou, South China's Hainan province, to attend the countdown show of Hunan Satellite TV for the years 2023-2024.

"Whenever an opportunity arises, seize it, even if it seems 'crazy' or out of your league at first glimpse," she said. "At this point in my life, I think the most important thing is to learn more about myself, explore the world, and connect with people around me. Make plans, but always be open to unexpected changes."

The trip to Haikou left a lasting impression on her. She was captivated by the city's fast development and also its diverse culture and endless possibilities.

"You can be laid-back and chill, or you can start your own projects or business," she said. "I think Chinese students who have studied abroad could easily adapt to the atmosphere here."

Despite her brief visit, the city significantly influenced her future plans. She intends to return to Haikou after completing her master's degree at CSM.

"In European countries, it seems like we would be job hunting. However, in China, our focus is more on building a career. In our home country, there are numerous opportunities where we can make a substantial impact," she said. "I hope there will be more policies to make it easier for students studying abroad to transition back to their home country and to explore more cities with potential, just like Haikou."

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## Z WEEKLY

## A duty to share

Through his educational cultural heritage centers dotted across the nation, longtime China hand Brian Linden is dedicating his life to sharing authentic China with visitors at home and abroad.

During the past four decades, I've traveled to 100 countries. Wherever I went, I attempted to share stories of China with people from around the world. But too often, their excitement focused on my being from Chicago, and the typical reaction would be: "Chicago, wow! Michael Jordan! Chicago Bulls!"

Then I would respond by asking them what they knew about China — had they heard of Mencius, Wang Yangming, Lu Xun, and Liang Sicheng? But they would ignore that and say: "Scottie Pippen! Dennis Rodman!" — both were players with the Chicago Bulls back then.

I quickly learned that many of my international friends and colleagues knew more about the Bulls than about China, which, to me, is an incredible country.

China has been my home off and on since 1984. I benefited from China's largesse when I received a scholarship to study in Beijing in the autumn of that year. I was one of the students with the most modest financial background and was given the scholarship because of this fact.

When I first got here, Chinese people embraced me like family, showing me great patience while I, as a foreigner with no Chinese language background, struggled to express myself. No matter how basic and incorrect my language skills were, there was always encouragement.

Chinese people always expressed curiosity about my international background, asking questions about cultural differences between China and the US and showing respect for traditions not their own. There was never a feeling of intolerance and chauvinism on their part while discussing the outside world.

They were also proud to share with me their rich history. For example, every visit to places like the Forbidden City, Summer Palace, and the Great Wall would include numerous strangers approaching me to help me more deeply understand the historical importance of what I was observing. They seriously wanted me to appreciate China's history and traditions. Their passion encouraged me to learn more about this country. That journey has never stopped, even to this day.

The world's lack of understanding of China is not anyone's fault. News about China is available in these places but only represents a small part of its real story. Stories about the



**Center:** Brian Linden (left top) in Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, with his wife, Jeanee, and two sons in 2006. **Counterclockwise from top left:** Linden at the Temple of Heaven in Beijing in 1985. Linden (left bottom) took a selfie with the Bai people at a local wedding in Dali, Yunnan, in 2022. Linden with local kids in Yan'an, Shaanxi, in 1987. Linden (front) in a rice field in Xizhou, Yunnan, with the Bai people and foreign guests of Xilinyuan. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

West, too, are available in China, and they, too, represent a small part of the realities of those countries. This is why I think people-to-people diplomacy is important.

While the concept of "diplomacy" is often viewed as the sole purview of governments — discreet interactions at official levels by which many people separate the world into friends and adversaries — I believe people-to-people diplomacy must complement official talks and build

the foundation of trust between nations.

This realization set my family and me off on a mission to create a platform for cultural exchange, an effort to add nuance and depth to the world's limited understanding of this country. In 2004, we sold our home in the US, gave up our jobs, and brought our two sons, ages 5 and 8 at the time, to China.

After 20 months spent in over 15 provinces and homeschooling our

two boys in rural guesthouses, we settled on an old courtyard in the small village of Xizhou, Dali Bai autonomous prefecture in Southwest China's Yunnan province.

When we arrived in Xizhou in 2007, the village took us under its wing. Many locals invited us to their homes for dinner. After only a few months, we were gaining weight! Our boys also became friends with local children and we started an English corner held every weekend.

We decided to repurpose our courtyard complex into the Linden Center, or Xilinyuan in Chinese — a name that combines the Xi of Xizhou and Lin of Linden — which is more than a hotel, but also a hospitality and education retreat, a base for storytelling with the outside world.

Every day, we host an average of 100-200 visitors during the off-season and 500 during the summer and holidays, and 40 percent of our

guests come from abroad. Our guests — both foreign and domestic — regularly participate in local weddings, housewarming parties, and, if appropriate, funerals. They also learn about China and Yunnan through our two free tours: a morning market tour of Xizhou, where guests are taken into our neighbors' homes, learning their crafts, such as rice noodle making, tie-dye, and woodblock printing, and an afternoon tour of the Yang Pinxiang complex, which focuses on the architectural traditions of the Bai ethnic group.

We have also reserved nearly half of our buildings for public use. Local children and adults can use our libraries and fitness center, and 90 percent of staff are local hires. We have developed our own lecture series, artist-in-residence programs, and education courses, which are all open to the local residents.

About 10 years ago, the Xizhou people started to call me "cunzhang", meaning the head of the village. This reflected their appreciation for our efforts to highlight their traditions. I am still called by this title every day in the village.

Now Xilinyuan has branches in multiple locations in China, including Shaxi and Shangrila, both in Yunnan, and Suzhou in East China's Jiangsu province.

My mission is to help the world better appreciate and respect the Chinese people and culture through rural development and heritage preservation projects, using these experiences to share the true stories of economic change and cultural continuity that make this country so dynamic and inclusive.

About 2,500 years ago, Confucius expressed what is now the DNA of China's interaction with the world: "What a joy to have friends coming from afar!"

Those wise words form the foundation of China's soft power and hold true for every visitor to this country. We, who experience this hospitality every day, must share these stories with everyone that we interact with, both within and outside of China.

*Written by Brian Linden, 61, born and raised in Chicago, US. He arrived in Beijing in 1984 and has spent over 25 of the last 40 years in China. In 2004, he and his wife, Jeanee, turned a historical site in Yunnan into a hotel and education center. The Lindens now have 10 bases around the country.*

## Welding prodigy ignites a glowing legacy

By MENG WENJIE and LIU KUN  
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Despite his young age, 27-year-old Sun Jianjun is a seasoned welder with nine years of experience.

In April 2015, as a high school student, Sun moved from his hometown of North China's Hebei province to Wuhan, the capital city of Central China's Hubei province. At the age of 18, he decided to pursue further studies at a welding training institution linked to an iron smelting company.

Starting as an apprentice, Sun faced challenges in mastering the fundamentals of welding. "With no prior experience, it took me almost a month to learn basic operating techniques," he recalled.

Welding also comes with challenges, especially when certain methods require welders to assume uncomfortable positions, such as squatting or standing directly under the weld, risking burns from molten iron. During his early days of acquiring a proficiency with welding, injuries were almost inevitable due to the high temperatures and the arc light which caused burns on Sun's neck, legs, and eyes.

"But with proper handling, the risk can be mitigated," he said.

Sun's hard work and intelligence led to rapid progress, and he soon mastered various welding techniques. From 2015 to 2017, he actively participated in competitions at municipal and provincial levels, honing his skills through rigorous training.

In October 2018, he contributed to a construction project in Bangladesh under the Belt and Road Initiative where he met great challenges.

The project had a substantial workload and significant technical demands. The relatively underdeveloped local infrastructure and frequent power interruptions during the local rainy season also slowed down the project's progress.

"It averaged over 10 power outages each day," Sun recalled.

To meet the project's deadline, Sun and his colleagues frequently worked overtime into the evening.

"The arc light during welding attracts numerous mosquitoes and insects that can get through our clothing," Sun said. "We had to wear full protection and wrap ourselves tightly, even in the tropical heat."

Over the course of this four-month project, Sun and his colleagues had little time for rest. Ultimately, they completed the work on schedule and ensured that



Sun Jianjun (left) instructs two apprentices on welding techniques. PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

all the products fulfilled the quality assurance and aesthetic criteria.

Despite the challenging conditions, Sun gained substantial experience. "I've never worked on a major project like this before, so my welding skills have greatly improved," he said.

After returning to China, Sun started engaging in nationwide

welding competitions, including the first National Skills Competition.

In the brief three-month training period before the competition, Sun had to spend over 12 hours every day in rigorous practice.

In the competition, Sun demonstrated his expertise by finishing three different sections within nine hours while adhering to strict criteria.

To assess the internal quality thoroughly, judges employed specialized non-destructive testing equipment that could uncover flaws not visible to the naked eye.

"These flaws in the weld are not apparent to the naked eye, but they can be detected using this specialized equipment, which evaluates a welder's proficiency in the welding process," explained Sun.

Appearance was also an important factor. The height and width of the weld had to meet specific parameters.

Even though welding might seem simple, Sun explained that it involves various fundamental theoretical knowledge, including electricity, mechanics, and materials science.

He achieved an impressive fourth place in the competition's welding section, earning the title of "National Technical Expert."

Sun's welding expertise was also acknowledged by his company. From 2019, he took on the role of mentoring and training apprentices. So far, Sun has had over 10 apprentices, most of whom were born after 1999.

Under his guidance, these young craftsmen have all achieved honors at or above the municipal level.

"The demanding nature of welding work is often perceived as unattractive by many young people," Sun said, expressing his concern. But he remains hopeful about engaging more youngsters in the industry.

He highlighted the importance of welding for the country's development, ranging from crafting everyday items to the construction of high-rise buildings, ships, automobiles, and airplanes.

"China is a manufacturing powerhouse, and welding is a significant part of the manufacturing industry. So, there is a substantial demand for young talent," he said, adding that the involvement of the younger generation is essential for driving progress in automation and digitization within the industry.

He mentioned that government initiatives, like supporting the National Skills Competition, can effectively encourage young talents to enter the field.

"There are similar skill competitions at different levels in various provinces and cities across the country, making sure that truly skilled young people can be recognized and appreciated," he said, emphasizing that one's academic background does not restrict the potential of those committed to their craft.