

The conciliator

Travels With Henry talks about the life and times of Dr Kissinger

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Rare primates on the rise in karst mountains

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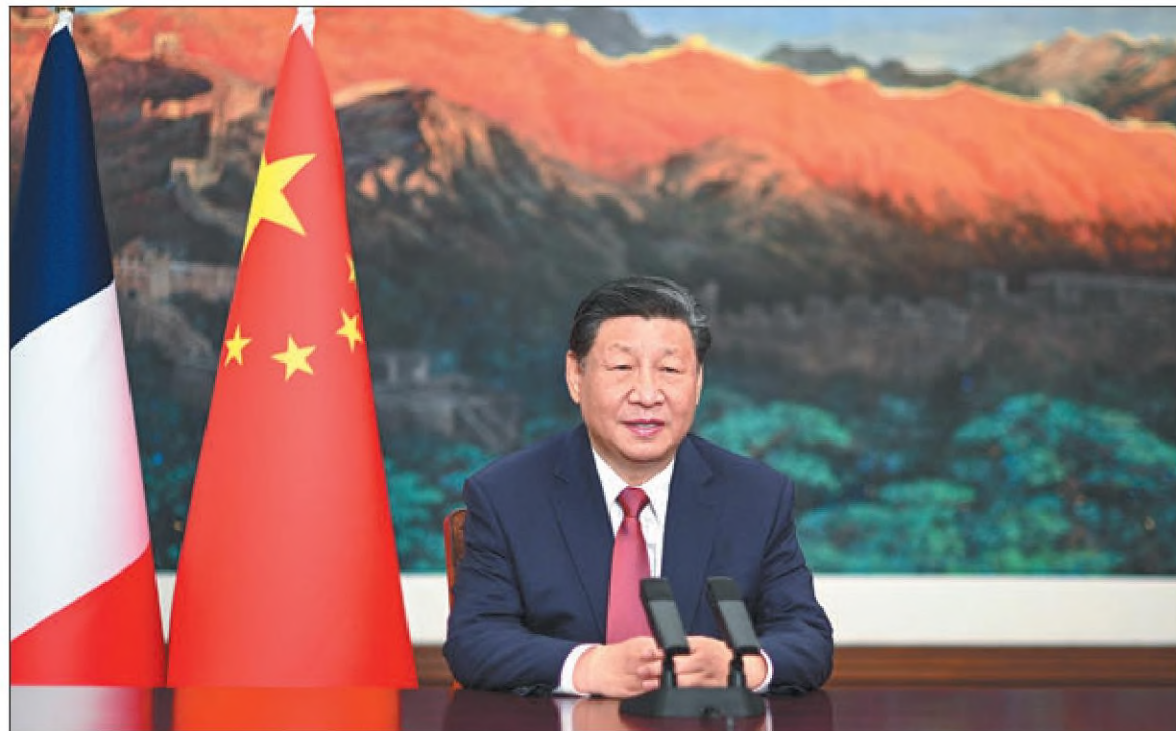


Year-on-year surge

Nation's investments in energy sector reach \$391 billion in 2023 BUSINESS, PAGE 10

# CHINA DAILY

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President Xi Jinping delivers a video address to a reception in Beijing on Thursday celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and France. LI XUJEREN / XINHUA

## Xi, Macron eye stronger ties

Leaders underline global implications of Sino-French relations on 60th anniversary

By ZHANG YUNBI zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

At a high-level reception marking the 60th anniversary of China-France diplomatic ties in downtown Beijing on Thursday, both President Xi Jinping and French President Emmanuel Macron delivered video speeches and voiced hopes on taking the relations to a greater height.

Xi said that looking ahead to the next 60 years, China and France will work together to create greater glories.

When asking both sides to unswervingly develop bilateral relations, Xi set a clear goal of "responding to the uncertainties of the world with the stability of China-France relations".

Among the members of the European Union, France is China's third-largest trading partner and third-largest source of actual investment. China is France's top trading partner in Asia and seventh-largest in the world.

Over the past 60 years, the annual bilateral trade volume has soared more than 800-fold to reach \$81.2 billion in 2022.

In terms of mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation, Xi said Beijing and Paris should deepen traditional cooperation and "actively tap the potential of cooperation in emerging areas" such as green industry and clean energy.

He emphasized the need to "keep making the cake bigger" and "use openness to pool the strength of cooperation and share development opportunities".

Regarding cooperation on the international stage, Xi said the two sides should jointly advocate an equal and orderly multipolar world and inclusive economic globalization that benefits all, and "make further China-France contributions to maintaining world peace and stability and addressing global challenges".

He referred to two major events on the agenda this year as "opportunities" — the China-France Year

of Culture and Tourism and the Paris Summer Olympic Games, voicing hopes on expanding cultural exchanges and fostering bonds between the two peoples.

In his video address, Macron said the Year of Culture and Tourism should be used as an opportunity for closer interaction between the two peoples, especially young people, in order to cement the foundations for the future of France-China relations.

The two countries today "have the responsibility to build on the ambitious goals established in 1964" and jointly build a partnership that "meets the needs of both peoples and contributes to world peace and stability", he said.

Paris is ready to work hand in hand with Beijing to "tackle global challenges and contribute to the resolution of international crises", he added.

When addressing the reception, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said China and France "are both major countries with a sense of global

responsibilities"; they both advocate multilateralism, and they should lead the steady long-term growth of China-EU ties.

Beijing will "offer more convenience" for foreign investors including those from France, and Paris is expected to shape a fair, just and predictable business environment for Chinese businesses, he added.

French Ambassador to China Bertrand Lortholary said Paris will work with Beijing to further realize the consensus reached by the two heads of state and carry forward the great momentum of bilateral ties.

In their video speeches, both presidents noted the fact that in 1964, Chairman Mao Zedong and General Charles de Gaulle pushed for the establishment of diplomatic ties.

Xi defined this as "a major event in the history of international relations", saying that the

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## President's letter inspires grateful Kenyan students

By MO JINGXI mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

Jamlick Mwangi Kariuki, a 26-year-old Kenyan, has always wanted to find a way to express appreciation for the great opportunities he has received through his special bond with China, which started in 2018.

Kariuki, who is from Webuye, a town in western Kenya, was one of the second group of 100 Kenyans who were sponsored to study engineering in China for four years. They went back after graduation to contribute to the African country's railway construction and maintenance.

Built with Chinese technology and to Chinese standards, the 480-kilometer Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, a flagship project of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, was the first railway constructed in Kenya since the nation's independence in 1963.

"After the completion of the railway line, it was discovered that we lacked the capacity and the expertise to operate and maintain it. So that's why there was this program to educate Kenyan engineers to be able to take care of the railway line," said Kariuki, who returned to Kenya after getting a bachelor's degree in civil engineering at Beijing Jiaotong University.

With the skills gained in China, Kariuki and his Kenyan co-workers were able to maintain the Mombasa-Nairobi railway as well as the country's much older meter-gauge railway lines, in order to provide safe and reliable service.

Now local people account for about 80 percent of all railway employees, holding jobs that include operations and maintenance work.

The job in Nairobi also brought Kariuki a decent salary, so he was able to purchase basically everything he needed, despite the relatively high prices of goods in the capital.

Kariuki decided to return to Beijing Jiaotong University last year for a master's degree in order to fulfill his dream of becoming a railway expert.

Feeling grateful for the opportunities they received, Kariuki and his Kenyan schoolmates and alumni at Beijing Jiaotong University came up with the idea to personally thank President Xi Jinping because, Kariuki said, "the Belt and Road Initiative is actually his initiative to make sure that we are connecting the world and for universal development".

So they wrote a letter to Xi in October last year to express their pleasure in coming to China to learn about railway operations and management, saying they hope to serve as a bridge of friendship between the two countries.

On Jan 17, Xi responded to them in what Kariuki described as a "very long and personalized letter". Xi said that he was glad to see that the Ken-

yans have bonded with China through this road to happiness, a reference to the railway.

Kariuki said their letter to Xi was to show appreciation and not necessarily meant to evoke a response, but to their surprise, Xi was able to take time out from his busy schedule to write back.

"It's really inspiring to me that the Chinese leader still has time to consider the international student community as a whole and care about us," he said.

Washington Aburiri, who is studying logistics at Beijing Jiaotong University for a master's degree, has witnessed how a close friend of his has benefited from the easier transportation enabled by the railway.

"Now my friend is doing a good business of importing goods from Guangzhou to Nairobi and then transporting them to Mombasa through the railway," said Aburiri, who is from Nairobi.

It's really inspiring to me that the Chinese leader still has time to consider the international student community as a whole and care about us."

Jamlick Mwangi Kariuki, Kenyan student at

Vicky Wangechi Wangari, who is from Nyahururu in central Kenya and is in her final year of graduate study at the university, said the message she wrote to Xi in the letter was "ten thousand thank yous".

The 25-year-old said she got an extra push from Xi's response because, as a young person, she sometimes feels that no one notices her efforts, even though she works hard. "Then somebody writes a reply and says you are going to continue the Kenya-China friendship and you can do this."

"Now when I wake up in the morning every day, I feel that I need to study hard not only for myself, but for the China-Kenya and China-Africa cooperation," she said.

The program that Kariuki and Wangari are involved with epitomizes China-Africa cooperation on talent cultivation, which has gathered momentum in recent years.

Kariuki said that besides the letter, they also sent the Chinese president a Nairobi-to-Mombasa railway ticket as a gift.

"The president told us that he had received the ticket. I hope that he will use the ticket to travel from Nairobi to Mombasa one day. I think it will be a good experience," he said.

## Stabilized, warmer ties would bode well for China, EU

WORLD WATCH By Ding Chun and Ji Haonan

renminbi, decreased 1.5 percent year-on-year, with exports dropping 4.6 percent year-on-year.

After years of sustained growth, China-EU trade seems to have encountered headwinds. At the same time, trade frictions between China and the EU are on the rise. If China-EU economic and trade relations are to return to a growth trajectory in 2024, they will need more impetus.

On the one hand, as the Chinese economy gradually overcomes its difficulties, and the EU economy slowly recovers amid challenges, the conditions for a warming of China-EU economic and trade relations have improved. Calls within the EU for decoupling from China have gradually diminished, which is favorable for the stability of China-EU economic and trade relations.

On the other hand, the EU's economic recovery is slow, and in the new year, it still faces many lingering issues, including how to withdraw in an orderly manner the tight monetary and relief policies adopted to address high inflation,

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## YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS CASH IN ON CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE BOOM

Numerous businesses benefit from digital transformations

By FAN FEIFEI fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

The parents of Liu Wenhai, 33, who works in the foreign trade business in Yiwu, China's small-commodities hub in Zhejiang province, established a hat factory in his hometown in Shandong province about 10 years ago.

During the past three years, orders at the factory, which is located in Rizhao, have fallen by two-thirds due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Li said that when business was at its worst, hats produced at the factory had to be sold on domestic e-commerce platforms by the catty (0.5 kilograms is equivalent to one catty).

in-depth

Looking to expand sales channels and reach more overseas consumers, Liu tried to sell hats through online retailers such as Alibaba Group's AliExpress, Amazon and eBay. However, only a small number have been ordered, and he faces high operational and logistical costs.

In October 2022, Liu received an invitation to register with Temu, a new cross-border e-commerce platform launched by Chinese online discounter PDD Holdings.

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## Train entertainment



A volunteer performs traditional Huangmei Opera for passengers on a high-speed train in Anhui province on Thursday. China is expected to see 9 billion passenger trips during the annual Spring Festival travel rush, which begins on Friday. ZHANG DUAN / XINHUA



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## PAGE TWO

## Online: Merchants expand global presence

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Unlike the traditional model that allows merchants to operate their own stores independently, Temu requires them to send their products to its domestic transit warehouses, while the platform is responsible for logistics, sales, operations, promotional activities, and after-sales services.

Liu said: "I just had to give this a try. To my surprise, inventory at our factory from about five or six years ago has all been cleared. I even transferred some orders to my uncle's factory because of insufficient production capacity at my parents' factory," he said.

"We usually design and produce more than a dozen new products in line with the latest overseas fashion trends, before deciding whether to increase production based on sales in the online store."

Baseball caps have gained popularity among overseas shoppers, particularly in the United States, and more than one million hats prepared by Liu and his team sold out on Temu before the Black Friday shopping carnival in November, he said.

Liu is among millions of young Chinese entrepreneurs whose parents run small or medium-sized factories that have survived operational difficulties by transforming themselves digitally.

Such operators are cashing in on the burgeoning cross-border e-commerce sector to secure new orders and boost their businesses. Experts said these cross-border online marketplaces have become an important new driving force for China's foreign trade amid downward economic pressures and external uncertainties.

Launched in the US in September 2022, Temu offers a wide selection of merchandise at competitive prices, including clothing, electronic products, jewelry, shoes, handbags, cosmetics and baby products at competitive prices. It now has a presence in more than 40 countries in North America, Europe, Asia and Oceania.

Industry insiders said Temu's business model removes middlemen from the equation, allowing Chinese suppliers to sell directly to overseas consumers and ship directly from China, instead of building a network of warehouses abroad.

Chen Lei, chairman and co-CEO of PDD Holdings, said the company hopes to use the supply chain capacities it has built up in recent years to create a new channel. This outlet will enable consumers from different countries and regions to buy products directly from factories, providing more flexible and personalized supply chains, and more cost-effective shopping experiences.

Temu's popularity among overseas shoppers has surged. Mobile app data analytics company Sensor Tower said Temu was downloaded more than 300 million times globally between September 2022 and November last year.

Data from research company Apptopia show that shoppers spend almost twice as long on Temu than on the apps of major rivals such as Amazon. On average, users spent 18 minutes a day on the Temu app in the second quarter of last year, compared with 10 minutes for Amazon and 11 minutes for AliExpress.

Li Mingtao, head of the research institute at the China International Electronic Commerce Center, said



WU HEPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

many Chinese foreign trade enterprises have gained an upper hand in production and quality control, but lack experience and capabilities in sales and operation, making it difficult for them to enter overseas markets.

"As a new form of foreign trade, China's fast-developing cross-border e-commerce platforms can help establish a direct and definitive connection between manufacturers and consumers by applying advanced digital technologies such as big data, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence," he said.

Li added that manufacturers can better learn about and grasp the needs of consumers via these platforms, adjust production quickly, and reduce inventory, all of which will be conducive to improving the global competitiveness of Chinese manufacturing enterprises.

#### Returning home

After obtaining a master's in finance in New Zealand in 2018, Gong Zhihan decided to return to China to take over his family's factory in Jinhua, Zhejiang province.

In 1999, Gong's parents founded a company that manufactures micro-fiber products, including cleaning

cloths, dishwashing mats, kitchen towels and bath towels. The company engaged in original equipment manufacturer, or OEM, production of cleaning products for brands sold in US supermarkets and on Amazon.

OEM refers to a company that designs a product, but then licenses it out to a manufacturer to produce.

"Orders from traditional foreign trade have dropped by nearly 30 percent since 2020, as some industrial manufacturing chains have transferred to Southeast Asia and there has been weak demand from developed countries," Gong said.

To improve the company's profitability and optimize production capacity, Gong began selling products via cross-border e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Walmart's online marketplace. In November 2022, he registered with Temu.

"Temu can help me identify the needs of consumers more accurately, and I have become more sensitive to global market trends. Our sales on the platform surged by as much as 40-fold between April and November," Gong added.

His company makes customized designs based on the preferences of consumers in different countries and

also obtains their feedback before launching new products. "We hope to build up self-owned brands on the platform to enhance users' engagement and boost the repurchasing rate for products," Gong said.

Other Chinese cross-border online marketplaces are accelerating their globalization push.

Fast-fashion retailer Shein announced a further expansion of its product categories by collaborating with selected global brands and third-party sellers to meet demand from consumers for a much wider variety of products and categories.

The company's customers can now buy products other than fashionable attire, including home appliances such as portable washing machines and smart home products, including remote-controlled lighting.

Founded in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and known for its low prices and large selection of fashionable clothing and accessories, Shein has gained traction among US shoppers. Data from the analysis platform App Intelligence show that the number of Shein downloads in the US in November surged by 26 percent year-on-year.

Meanwhile, in September, the

short-video app TikTok, owned by Chinese technology company ByteDance, launched its e-commerce service, TikTok Shop, in the US. The service enables users to find and buy directly products used in live-streaming broadcasts and short videos.

TikTok, which began rolling out its e-commerce service in 2021 in Indonesia, has entered more than 10 countries, including the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam.

China's cross-border e-commerce has seen robust growth in recent years, with the sector's import and export scale reaching 2.38 trillion yuan (\$332 billion) last year, up by 15.6 percent year-on-year, the General Administration of Customs said.

#### Driving force

Zhang Zhouping, a senior business-to-business and cross-border activities analyst at the Internet Economy Institute, a domestic consultancy, said, "China's cross-border e-commerce sector witnessed rapid growth during the pandemic to become an important driving force bolstering development of the nation's foreign trade."

Cross-border e-commerce is also

playing a vital role in encouraging traditional foreign trade enterprises to build new brands and open up more overseas markets, Zhang added.

Competition among cross-border e-commerce companies will focus on supply chain construction, he said, adding, "The core competitiveness of Temu and Shein lies in products with competitive prices and fast delivery, which are highly dependent on the establishment of the supply chain."

However, experts have raised concerns about sustainability of the low-price strategy adopted by these platforms to attract bargain hunters, saying it may squeeze the profit margins of small companies.

In view of the increasingly intensified competition among emerging Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms targeting price-sensitive consumers, US tech company Amazon said it would sharply reduce fees for merchants selling clothing priced below \$20.

From this month, Amazon reduced seller fees on clothing products priced below \$15 to 5 percent, while the rates on clothing priced from \$15 to \$20 dropped to 10 percent. The fees for both categories had previously been 17 percent.

Cindy Tai, vice-president of Amazon and head of Amazon Global Selling Asia, said that this year the company will step up efforts to help Chinese merchants build brands, simplify global operations, and optimize global supply chain services. It will also support these merchants to expand their presence globally and increase localization input.

Last month, the company said it would launch its first innovation center in Shenzhen, Guangdong. The center is expected to accelerate innovation among sellers for new product introduction, brand building, digital operations, green development, and new business models.

Data from Amazon show that the number of Chinese sellers with sales exceeding \$1 million on the online retailer's global sites rose by more than 25 percent year-on-year from October 2022 to September. The number of such sellers with sales of more than \$10 million rose by nearly 30 percent year-on-year.

Moreover, the quantity of merchandise sold by Chinese sellers to consumers and corporate buyers through Amazon's global sites rose by more than 20 percent year-on-year during this period.

Zhang Jianping, head of the center for regional economic cooperation at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said, "Cross-border e-commerce platforms connect some key links covering procurement, sales and logistics, to provide a new way for micro, small and medium-sized Chinese enterprises to expand their footprint abroad and create unprecedented new development opportunities."

These platforms are crucial in helping brands and manufacturers better grasp customer needs and quickly adjust product strategy and brand positioning, he added.

Cui Lili, director of Shanghai University of Finance and Economics' Institute of E-commerce, said Chinese enterprises should make full use of cross-border online platforms to meet demand from overseas markets promptly, learn more about laws, regulations and quality standards in other countries, and adjust supply chains to make products that meet local requirements.

## E-commerce, global recovery fuel demand for international air cargo services

By ZHU WENQIAN  
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Demand for international air cargo transportation is rising, fueled by booming e-commerce deliveries from China to Western markets and the continuing global economic recovery, industry players said.

During the Black Friday shopping carnival in November and the Christmas and New Year holidays, a series of Chinese-made products again became widely popular in overseas markets, further driving the growth of cross-border e-commerce and international airfreight.

China now has more than 100,000 business operators involved in cross-border e-commerce,

and total sales values have risen nearly 10-fold in the past five years, the Ministry of Commerce said.

From Dec 1 to Dec 27, China Southern Airlines' cargo business saw its total volumes of international outbound cargo and mail from Guangzhou, Guangdong province, exceed 30,000 metric tons, a 52 percent year-on-year rise. In particular, electronic products such as mobile phones, as well as cosmetics and toys, witnessed significant export growth, the airline said.

The carrier, which is based in Guangzhou, said it responded to peak demand for cross-border transportation at the end of last year by connecting the upstream and downstream areas of the

supply chain and customizing comprehensive logistics solutions for the entire chain based on customers' demands.

The airline added that during the peak period, it further strengthened management and controls, added more entry channels to transport products to warehouses, and improved logistics efficiency at airports.

In the first three quarters of last year, the import and export value of China's cross-border e-commerce sector reached 1.7 trillion yuan (\$236.8 billion), with the export value standing at 1.3 trillion yuan, up by 17.7 percent year-on-year, the Ministry of Commerce said.

Meanwhile, SF Airlines, China's largest air cargo carrier by fleet

and the aviation branch of the nation's leading courier enterprise SF Express, said it continued to expand its services last year. It also provided logistics services for numerous major cross-border e-commerce platforms such as Amazon, ByteDance and Temu.

SF said it launched several value-added services and upgraded logistics services, boosting steady growth in the volume of customer orders.

On Jan 1, a Boeing 767 cargo plane operated by SF and carrying goods such as liquid crystal display screens, clothing, and circuit boards, flew from Ezhou Huahu Airport in Hubei province to New Delhi, the Indian capital, marking the 1,000th international cargo flight operated from Huahu airport.

Built by SF and the local government, the airport began operations in July 2022. This cargo-focused hub, which has some passenger traffic, launched its first international cargo route in April.

Data released by the International Air Transport Association, or IATA, for global air cargo markets in November indicate the strongest year-on-year growth for about two years. This expansion was partly due to weakness in the same month the previous year, but also reflected a fourth consecutive month of strengthening demand for air cargo.

Global demand for such consignments measured in cargo ton-kilometers rose by 8.3 percent compared with November

2022. Demand for international operations grew by 8.1 percent, IATA said.

Capacity grew by 13.7 percent compared with November 2022. Most of this expansion was due to an increase in aircraft storage capacity as international passenger markets continued their post-COVID-19 recovery.

In particular, global cross-border trade recorded growth for the third consecutive month in October, reversing a decline. Air cargo yields continued to strengthen, in line with improving air cargo load factors in recent months, IATA said.

IATA director-general Willie Walsh said, "November air cargo demand was up 8.3 percent over 2022, the strongest year-on-year growth in almost two years."

## TOP NEWS

## Healthy Sino-Japanese ties urged

Premier calls on countries to boost cooperation in a range of fields

By CAO DESHENG  
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Premier Li Qiang called on Thursday for joint efforts from both China and Japan to uphold the principles of peace, friendship and cooperation in order to bring bilateral ties back on the track of healthy and stable development.

During a meeting in Beijing with a delegation of Japanese business leaders, comprising more than 200 executives from major Japanese companies, Li said China-Japan relations are currently at a crucial juncture.

Li said that China and Japan should translate the political consensus that "the two countries are cooperative partners, not a threat to each other" into specific policies and concrete actions.

He also urged the Japanese side to properly handle the historical issues and the Taiwan question.

The delegation, led by Chairman of the Japan Business Federation Tokura Masakazu, Chairman of Japan-China Economic Association Shindo Kosei and Chairman of the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Kobayashi Ken, is in Beijing on a four-day visit to China starting Tuesday.

The premier emphasized the need to strengthen economic and trade cooperation between China and Japan and jointly safeguard stable and unimpeded industrial and supply chains.

He said that the Chinese and Japanese economies are deeply integrated with each other, playing a crucial role as the "ballast" and "propeller" in bilateral relations.



Premier Li Qiang has a group photo taken on Thursday with a visiting Japanese business delegation in Beijing. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

China is willing to tap into cooperation potential with Japan, share development opportunities, and support companies from both countries in strengthening cooperation in the fields of technological innovation, digital economy, green development, healthcare and elderly care to achieve higher-level mutual benefit, the premier said.

Li expressed his hope that the Japanese business community will exert a positive influence on the countries' win-win cooperation.

He assured the Japanese business leaders that China will continue to uphold the policy of opening-up, further shorten the negative list for foreign investment and fully implement the removal of all the restrictions on foreign investment in the manufacturing sector.

While ensuring the national treatment for foreign-funded enterprises, Li said that China strives to build a world-class business environment that is market-oriented and governed by a sound legal framework.

China welcomes Japanese companies to continue investing in the country, he said. It is hoped that Japan will provide an open, fair and nondiscriminatory business environment for Chinese companies in the country, he added.

Sino-Japanese relations had become strained over the past few years. However, during a meeting in November in San Francisco in the United States, President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida reaffirmed jointly building a constructive and stable

China-Japan relationship that meets the demands of the new era.

Observers said that the delegation's visit to China has sent positive signals about both economic and political aspects in bilateral ties, indicating the desire of the Japanese business community to maintain dialogue and communication with China in order to seek opportunities for cooperation.

The leaders of the three Japanese business organizations told Li that they look forward to both countries building a constructive and stable Japan-China relationship based on mutual benefit.

They expressed their willingness to deepen exchanges and cooperation with China in multiple areas and jointly promote regional economic cooperation.

## Market regulations aim at 'long-term stability'

By SHI JING in Shanghai  
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While investors' confidence has been boosted as regulators put higher requirements on State-owned enterprises' market value management, market regulation should be further refined and improved to protect the interests of smaller investors, which is crucial to the long-term stability and healthy development of China's stock market, industry experts said.

Driven by the average 7.08 percent price spike of A-share SOEs on Thursday, the A-share market rebounded strongly with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index surging 3.03 percent to return to the 2900-point level. The Shenzhen Component Index also jumped 2 percent and the technology-focused ChiNext in Shenzhen closed 1.45 percent higher.

Trading was more active on Thursday. The combined trading value on the Shanghai and Shenzhen exchanges rose 17 percent from the previous trading day to approach 900 billion yuan (\$126 billion).

Thursday's rally came a day after the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council said that efforts will be made to study the inclusion of market value management in the performance appraisal of executives at listed SOEs, to get these executives to attach greater importance to companies' stock market performance.

The SOEs should use market-oriented means, such as increasing holdings and repurchases in a timely manner, to inject confidence, stabilize expectations and increase cash dividends to give better returns to investors, according to the SASAC.

Yang Delong, chief economist of First Seafont Fund, said that the SASAC's latest announcement serves as a major incentive for the A-share market, elevating market sentiment to a large extent.

Given the large market capitalization of listed SOEs, their bullish performance will serve as important upward momentum for indexes. Investors will have higher expectations for the future market performance of the SOEs, he said.

As more supportive policies have been introduced, the signs that the A-share market is bottoming out have become increasingly clearer, added Yang.

Xu Yugao, secretary of the board of China National Offshore Oil Corporation, said that the SASAC's new measure will guide listed SOEs to improve their market value management system, enhancing the companies' intrinsic value and market value at the same time.

Huang Wensheng, vice-president of China Petrochemical Corporation, said that it will maintain the continuity and stability of its dividend policy while developing its prime business. It will also improve the quality of information disclosure based on investors' needs.

China Communications Construction Company Limited introduced an equity incentive plan in 2023 as one way to better manage its market value, said the company's board secretary Zhou Changjiang. It will maintain a stable dividend rate and continue efforts such as repurchases to consolidate investors' confidence, he said.

Liu Xingguo, a senior researcher from the China Enterprise Confederation, said that the undergoing industrial upgrading of SOEs combined with their improved market value management will stabilize companies' share prices, which is conducive to the overall stability of the capital market.

While public companies' quality evaluation systems should be optimized by placing more emphasis on returns to investors, companies committing major violations of the law or providing no investment value should be eliminated at a faster pace to further consolidate and normalize the delisting mechanism, said Wang Jianjun, vice-chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission.

Chen Li, chief economist from Chuancai Securities, stressed that supervision should not be relaxed as it is the foundation of a secure and stable market. Only a regulated and transparent market environment can enhance investors' confidence while improving public companies' quality and investment value.

## Greater roles of China, EU in intl collaboration stressed

By WANG XIN in Shanghai  
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With the world seeing unprecedented changes and uncertainties in geopolitics and the economy, China and Europe can play greater roles in international cooperation, said Romano Prodi, a former president of the European Commission and two-time Italian prime minister.

Prodi, who is also a board member of the China Europe International Business School, discussed global geopolitics and multipolar diplomacy at a lecture given at the CEIBS Shanghai campus on Jan 18.

He pointed out that the global landscape of international politics, the economy and diplomacy has changed entirely from what it was 25 years ago — when he served as Italy's prime minister and president of the European Commission.

"In today's world, there is not only the power of the US, but also other emerging economies as a result of globalization. However, if we overemphasize ideological or value frameworks, we are less likely to reach agreements," said Prodi.

"International politics is like a

A fragmented Europe needs policies and regulations to attract investment. One window of opportunity lies in the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment."



Romano Prodi, former president of the European Commission

bridge. People pass through — cars, trucks, pedestrians. You don't have to drive the same, have the same ideology or even the same values. You just have to respect the traffic rules."

Prodi, who first visited China in 1983, is considered one of the fathers of the euro and is a staunch supporter of enlargement of the

European Union, with the number of its member states increasing to 25 during his tenure.

He noted that there are vast and long-term differences between Chinese and US foreign policies.

"China accounts for 19 percent of the world's population, with only 7 percent of the world's arable land, which requires a large amount of renewable energy and raw materials," he said, adding that China's foreign policy must be continuous and long-term as the primary task is to meet the needs of its people. "American foreign policy is, in general, dependent on the president or whoever is in power," he added.

Prodi also warned that with great changes in economic diplomacy and the increasing role of government in national economies, competition is now no longer solely between companies but also between states.

"The changes in the world are accompanied by the deep changes in economic and industrial policies, such as public subsidies, sanctions and the new competition in new strategic sectors like alternative energy, electrical cars and chips."

In such a context, both the EU and China, as two major economies in the world, are destined to play greater roles in multilateral coordination.

Prodi noted that there are challenges for Europe to find its position as a "mediator" in international relations.

"A fragmented Europe needs policies and regulations to attract investment. One window of opportunity lies in the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment."

He also highlighted China as one of the most important nations in international relations, calling for further cooperation based on common interests between China and Europe.

He said that China's role in global affairs is particularly important due to its links with other developing nations, such as those in Asia and Africa, and added that he considers the Belt and Road Initiative to be "a positive proposal".

"We need some sort of long-term approaches and projects in which we decide step by step to analyze problems, find solutions and close differences," said Prodi.

## Culture lessons



A Chinese actress demonstrates on Tuesday for a local spectator in Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia, how a traditional kongzhu, or diabolo, is operated. A cultural troupe from Central China's Henan province staged a stunning performance in the Ethiopian capital on Tuesday as part of the Chinese New Year celebrations. LIU FANGQIANG / XINHUA

## Relations: Nations urged to 'actively face the future'

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two great statesmen "opened the gate toward China-West contacts and cooperation, bringing hope to a world in the midst of the Cold War".

He praised China-France relations over the past 60 years as "always marching on the forefront of China's relations with Western countries", and he endorsed the "China-France spirit" of independence and self-reliance, mutual understanding, foresight and mutual benefit.

In face of the changes in the new era, China and France should honor their original aspiration for forging their relations, "actively face the future and dare to make a difference", Xi said.

## Stability: Strategic thinking especially important

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and how to reduce high government debt and deficits.

Amid tense geopolitical situations such as the Ukraine crisis and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Europe also needs to guard against the resurgence of an energy crisis. As for the bilateral economic and trade relations between China and the EU, the EU's "de-risking" policy continues to advance, and the implementation of tools such as the EU's Foreign Subsidy Regulations and Anti-Coercion Instrument may also pose obstacles to China-EU economic and trade relations.

In the political arena, whether bilateral mutual trust can be effectively rebuilt and strengthened remains to be tested. With the thawing of US-China relations in 2023 and the gradual resumption of offline dialogues in several bilateral mechanisms between China and the EU, European Union leaders, several European commissioners,

and leaders of major EU member states have visited China, making the internal and external foundation for political mutual trust between China and the EU more stable than in the previous period.

However, in 2024, the European Union will hold elections for the European Parliament and undergo a change in the leadership of EU institutions. There are also concerns about the stability of major country politics internally, as well as uncertainties such as the US presidential election externally, that will test the stability of policies regarding China.

In such a complex internal and external environment, it is especially important to have strategic thinking and steadfast beliefs among the main European leaders. Additionally, 2024 coincides with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France, and the close interaction between the two major countries may inject more

stability into China-EU relations.

In the coming year, whether the EU can bridge the increasingly prominent "new versus old Europe" contradictions, resolve North-South financial issues, and withstand the surge of internal populism and the strategic impulses in external relations will also affect the autonomy and stability of the EU's policies related to China.

In the field of people-to-people exchanges, it is worth looking forward to further progress in bilateral cooperation across multiple areas. With the receding of the pandemic, personnel exchanges and existing collaborations between China and Europe are gradually being restored. China has implemented a visa-free policy for the five major European countries and reduced visa fees for others for travel to China, providing convenience for cultural exchanges between China and Europe. The sixth meeting of the China-EU High-Level People-to-People Dialogue mechanism is also

expected to guide cultural exchanges between China and Europe. In 2024, cultural and tourism exchanges, such as the China-France Culture and Tourism Year, are equally eye-catching.

Furthermore, there are still many cooperation opportunities between China and the EU. In areas such as supply chain stability, climate change, digital economy and public health, China and Europe have already reached a consensus on cooperation, and the results in areas such as third-party market cooperation can be further expanded.

With the support of the China-EU High-Level Environment and Climate Dialogue and the High-Level Digital Dialogue, the China-EU green partnership and digital cooperation partnership can be further deepened. In the field of infrastructure construction, there is great potential for alignment between the Belt and Road Initiative and the EU's Global Gateway. To promote the continued

warming of China-EU relations and realize the potential for cooperation, the EU and China must move toward each other. Faced with the concerns of both sides, avoiding a value-driven approach and adhering to dialogue are more helpful in resolving obstacles. For Europe, which is facing economic recovery pressure and geopolitical shadows, it is not wise to generalize "de-risking" and unilaterally reduce its so-called "economic dependence" on China.

Building a stable and healthy bilateral relationship is strategically significant for both China and the EU, as well as for the world. From a political perspective, 2024 will undoubtedly be a year of turbulence, which will require concerted efforts from China and the EU to jointly address complex challenges.

Ding Chun is director of the Centre for European Studies and the Jean Monnet Chair at Fudan University. Ji Haonan is a research assistant at the Centre for European Studies. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

WORLD

Editor's note: Until his death on Nov 29 at the age of 100, Henry Kissinger, whose private memorial service was held on Thursday in New York, remained a fervent friend of China. Here we look at his life and legacy.

# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF DR K THE CONCILIATOR

As a young man, he was exposed to the ravages of tyranny and war, and he would later champion the cause of bringing two nations together



Henry Kissinger visits the Terracotta Warriors Museum in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, on June 29, 2013. ZHANG TIANZHU / FOR CHINA DAILY

By ZHAO XU in New York  
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In his book *Travels With Henry*, veteran US journalist Richard Valeriani describes a scene in which Henry Kissinger, national security adviser and later secretary of state to president Richard Nixon, "walked in on some elaborate State Department setup on the road." "He would invariably ask, 'Who are all these people?' And then he would point out with some disdain, 'I opened up China with five people,'" Valeriani wrote.

"He was a different man in China," wrote the international affairs reporter, who "jetted over half a million miles (804,000 kilometers)" with Kissinger, watching him "negotiating his way through Moscow, Peking (Beijing), Cairo, Jerusalem and many other world capitals."

Kissinger, who played a key role in laying the foundations for today's international geopolitical structure by building what he called "the world's most consequential bilateral relationship", died at his home in Connecticut on Nov 29. He was 100.

By helping to end more than two decades of hostility between the United States and China, Kissinger also succeeded in drastically changing the US' public perceptions of the world's most populous country at that time and in "(putting) before our people a vision transcending the travails of the Vietnam War and the ominous vistas of the Cold War", said Winston Lord, Kissinger's former top aide, one of those the secretary of state had in mind when he talked about "five people".

"Henry's demand for excellence could have a chilling effect on people who worked for him," said Lord, who at dawn on July 9, 1971, was sitting with Kissinger and two other US people on a Pakistani plane as it skirted the planet's second-tallest peak before entering Chinese airspace.

"Yet for those of us who lasted with him, Henry stretched their patience but also their perspective. He extended my horizon, and the sights were sublime, literally."

The secret visit, which catapulted Kissinger to international fame, would be followed by Nixon's groundbreaking visit to China in February 1972 and by "many consuming years of agony and ecstasy" in which Lord would watch Kissinger "whiffing ping-pong balls beneath golden rooftops arching to the heavens" and inform him during one of his rare bedridden stints that "your staff has voted for you to remain ill for another day so that they can get some rest".

"Henry was prone to occasional outbursts against his staff... he usually found a way to circle back with a sheepish gesture," Lord wrote in his foreword to the book *Kissinger on Kissinger*, which comprised a number of

riveting interviews Lord did with his mentor between 2015 and 2016. The Chinese translation of the book has recently hit shelves in China.

"Beneath his carapace lies a gentle soul," Lord said.

That gentle soul was once trampled by the heavy boots of Nazi soldiers. In 1938, five years after Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany, Kissinger, then 15, fled his hometown of Fuerth, northern Bavaria, with his Jewish parents and younger brother. He would wait for six years to set foot on German soil again, this time as a US Army intelligence officer. Years later, in a homecoming that was perhaps even more triumphant, Kissinger the national security adviser, after noticing that "visiting relatives" was on the official calendar, told his aides, "My relatives are soap."

"Maybe what my European origin has done for me is to help me understand that not all things are possible, and that nations can suffer tragedies if they do not act with wisdom and dedication and foresight," said Kissinger, who later said he regarded "the ability to project beyond the known" as a touchstone of his policymaking.

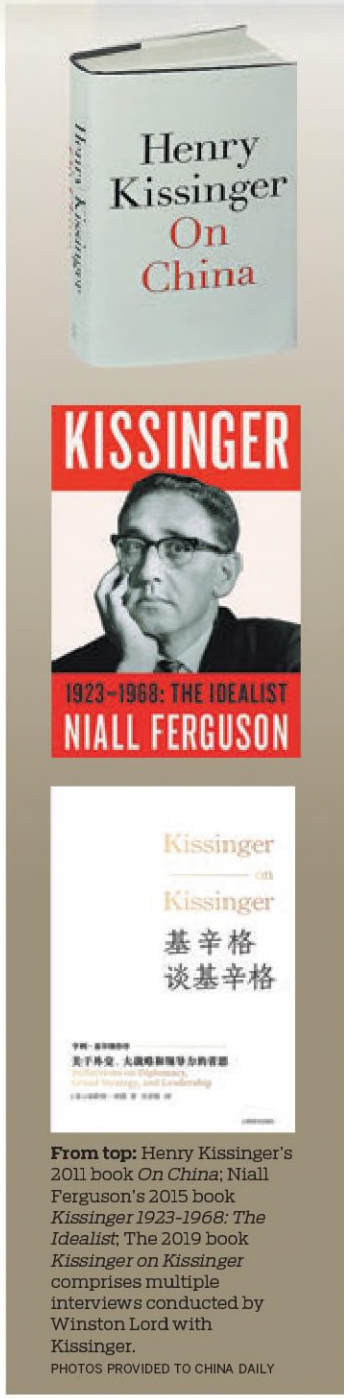
For Lord, the traumatic experience was sobering enough to allow Kissinger to stay cool-headed in the rhetoric-fueled years of the Cold War. "Kissinger is a mix of an American immigrant's sense of optimism with a European sense of tragedy. He understood that America is very fortunate to have got two oceans, friendly borders and abundant resources, but he was aware of the limits of what she can achieve. Knowing that history would rein in the expectations of any country, he tended to be more muted about our possibilities."

In Germany in 1945 Sergeant Kissinger had "one of the most horrifying experiences" of his life when his division stumbled upon a concentration camp at Ahlem, northwestern Germany.

"That is humanity in the 20th century," Kissinger lamented in an article, after being told by one of his fellow soldiers that he had to kick emaciated bodies to determine who was alive and who was dead. "People reach such a stupor of suffering that life and death, animation or immobility can't be differentiated anymore," Kissinger wrote.

The writing was cited in the 2015 book *Kissinger 1923-1968: The Idealist* by Niall Ferguson, who recounted in the preface "my introduction to the diplomacy of Henry Kissinger", after he said he had turned down a proposal by the former diplomat for him to pen his biography.

"What a pity! I received your letter just as I was hunting for your telephone number to tell you of the discovery of files I thought had been lost: 145 boxes which had been placed in a repository in Connecticut by a groundskeeper



From top: Henry Kissinger's 2011 book *On China*; Niall Ferguson's 2015 book *Kissinger 1923-1968: The Idealist*; The 2019 book *Kissinger on Kissinger* comprises multiple interviews conducted by Winston Lord with Kissinger. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

who has since died. These contain all my files."

A few weeks later Ferguson was in Kent, Connecticut, "turning pages" and immersing himself in Kissinger's previously closed private papers, personal correspondence and academic writings from Harvard, where he stayed between 1947 and 1971, as a student and later as a professor.

"One of the first things that struck me is that he didn't seem to have the right bibliography for a realist thinker," said Ferguson, who would assert in his book that "the idea of Kissinger as the ruthless arch-realist is based on a profound misunderstanding".

One of Kissinger's writings the author had in mind was his undergraduate thesis *The Meaning Of History*. Its 383 pages not only offered a taste of the intellectual brilliance that would later allow Kissinger to engage some of the world's brightest minds, but is also the longest-ever thesis written by a Harvard senior. Indeed it prompted the college to come up with "the Kissinger rule" limiting all such endeavors from its undergraduate students to about one-third of that length.

'Noblest goal'

"Peace is therefore the noblest goal of human endeavor, the affirmation of the ultimacy of man's moral personality," Kissinger wrote in *The Meaning of History*, referring to his study of Immanuel Kant, the man "who has influenced me the most".

In his 1795 essay *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, now considered a classical source of modern idealism in international relations, the German philosopher takes up the question of whether perpetual peace is the preserve of men in their graves.

Answering in the negative, Kant elaborates on the conditions necessary for the establishment of perpetual peace among nations, arguing that statesmen have a moral obligation to seek those conditions. For Kissinger, who entered the political realm as a nuclear strategist and consultant to president John F. Kennedy, the answer could also be a catastrophic yes, "invited by our shortsightedness".

A day after Kissinger became US secretary of state he told the United Nations General Assembly on Sept 24, 1973: "Two centuries ago the philosopher Kant predicted that perpetual peace would come eventually. ... What seemed utopian then looms as tomorrow's reality."

Ferguson said: "Although Kissinger ceased to be much concerned with philosophy, almost all his writings after 1950 are essentially historical, he kept referring to Kant. By doing so he was trying to signal to the world that he was not a realist, but the world didn't want to listen."

People had tended to see Kissinger as a contemporary equivalent to the Austrian statesman Klemens von Metternich or the

German unifier Count Otto von Bismarck, Ferguson said, both power manipulators in a hotly contended 19th-century Europe that Kissinger had studied, because "it was a kind of easy story to tell".

One of the latter instances when Kissinger referred obliquely to the Kantian idea in relation to the nuclear age was when he talked to Lord in a series of interviews that formed the 2019 book *Kissinger on Kissinger: Reflections on Diplomacy, Grand Strategy and Leadership*.

"In the American public discussion the issue is often put this way: you have the choice between coexistence and detente or ... but then the question is ... or what?" said Kissinger, a major initiator of the detente policy toward the Soviet Union during the 1970s, detente being a French word meaning relaxation. "The nuclear equilibrium in a way condemns you to some kind of coexistence."

Promoting greater dialogue with the Soviet Union, this core element of the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy was carried out in tandem with US opening to China — "mutually facilitating efforts that preserved American influence after the debacle of Vietnam", Lord said.

"We agreed from the beginning that we should open to China," recalled Kissinger, who had been tapped by Nixon after having, as principal foreign policy adviser to Nixon's main Republican rival Nelson Rockefeller, "spent 15 years of my life trying to keep him from becoming president".

Strategic vision aside, the two trusted one another, evident during Kissinger's 1971 secret visit to China. "We never went off in July 1971 being told by Nixon, 'Now be very careful,'" Kissinger recalled. "When we went off, we were told, 'Get this done!'"

And he did it, partly by feigning stomach-ache on the last leg of a publicly announced trip that included Vietnam, Thailand, India and Pakistan. While Kissinger was supposedly recuperating in a hill station, the Pakistanis, who had been acting as a major channel of communication between the Americans and the Chinese, ferreted him and his four-man group to an airport in Islamabad in the wee hours of July 9.

Of the 49 hours Kissinger stayed in Beijing, 17 were spent in conversation with China's Premier Zhou Enlai, with whom he drafted the Shanghai Communiqué, later finalized by the two during Nixon's 1972 visit. "Fifty years later it's still being invoked as one of the foundations of our relationship, while most communiqués disappear within weeks," Lord said.

Depicting Zhou as "equally at home in philosophical sweeps, historical analysis, tactical probing and light repartee", Kissinger clearly saw in this combination an alter

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## WORLD



The historic meeting between US president Richard Nixon (fourth from right) and Chairman Mao Zedong (third from left) on Feb 21, 1972. They are flanked by, from left, Premier Zhou Enlai, interpreter Tang Wensheng, Kissinger, Winston Lord and Wang Hairong. PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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ego of himself. And he detailed their meetings in the 2011 book *On China*, written "to explain the conceptual way the Chinese think about problems of peace and war and international order, and its relationship to the more pragmatic, case-by-case American approach", to quote its preface.

"The Chinese don't think of negotiations as solving individual problems," Kissinger said. "They think that every solution is an admission ticket for another problem. They think in terms of processes. ... Hence Chinese diplomats consider continuity of relationships an important task and perhaps more important than formal documents. In this context, hospitality becomes an aspect of strategy."

Here comes what Lord considers Kissinger's biggest asset as a diplomat: his adaptability to the history and culture of his interlocutor. In *On China*, Kissinger, once described by his US army mentor Fritz Kraemer as "musically attuned to history", expounded the thoughts of Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese military strategist canonized by his work *The Art of War*.

"Western strategists test their maxims by victories in battles; Sun Tzu tests by victories where battles have become unnecessary," Kissinger said, conceding that although negotiation is what keeps the threat of war "potential", it is often viewed with suspicion because of its inbuilt "admission of finite power".

Another place where Kissinger had tried to grasp the essence of what he dubbed Chinese realpolitik was in the board game go, or *weiqi*. In the game, invented in China more than 4,000 years ago, two protagonists try to defeat each other by encirclement, which Kissinger believes historically has been "the greatest strategic fear" for China, with its vast periphery.

"Chess produces single-mindedness, *weiqi* generates strategic flexibility," said Kissinger, who shared the view with Nixon that moving to China was "not to collude against the Soviet Union but to give us a balancing position to use for constructive ends, to give each Communist power a stake in better relations with us". In other words, "maximum diplomatic flexibility", as Kissinger called it.

In May 1972, three months after Nixon's historic trip to China, the US president met his Soviet counterpart Leonid Brezhnev in Moscow, where two arms control agreements were signed. This was followed by the Berlin Agreement, put into force in June that year. Finally, on Jan 27, 1973, the Paris Peace Accords were signed, officially ending direct US involvement in the Vietnam War, which had cost the lives of more than 58,000 US soldiers. In the previous decade, the US, with the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), had fought the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), backed by the Soviet Union and China, in an effort to contain what it saw as the threat of spreading communism.

The meeting between Nixon and Chairman Mao Zedong took place in the early afternoon of Feb 21, 1972, the first day after Nixon and his entourage arrived in Beijing and about seven months after Kissinger's secret trip that resulted in a Chinese invitation for Nixon. The president brought with him Kissinger, who in turn brought Lord.

Observing that Mao "would almost invariably begin a conversation with a question" before proceeding to answer it "by means of a Socratic dialogue", Kissinger was initially somewhat baffled by his "elliptical comments" and "abstruse language". But he was quick to declare the man "Sun Tzu's student" who thought strategically and pragmatically, with full recognition of "the need for priorities".

"Mao suggested that each side develop a clear concept of its national interest and cooperate out of its own necessity," recalled Kissinger, who throughout his diplomatic career "tried consistently to think in long-range terms and in the national interests, but in the national interests related to the national interests of other countries".

"A sustainable outcome must be one that both sides have an interest in maintaining," he said.

Mao's tireless stressing of contradiction and disequilibrium as "a law of nature" had also struck a chord with Kissinger, whose 1954 doctoral dissertation *Peace, Legitimacy and Equilibrium* is widely seen as foreshadowing his activities on the international stage.

In the dissertation, published three years later as *A World Restored: Metemich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812-1822*, Kissinger came up with two core concepts of his thinking as a political theorist: legitimacy and equilibrium, which he argued are inextricably linked to one another.

#### Legitimacy, equilibrium

"The outcome of their (the great powers') interlocking ambitions and inhibitions would be equilibrium," he wrote. "Legitimacy as used here should not be confused with justice. ... An international order accepted by all of the major powers is 'legitimate' whereas an international order not accepted by one or more of the great powers is 'revolutionary' and hence dangerous."

Such assertions have long fueled the charge that Kissinger was a power manipulator and a proponent of realpolitik for whom "equilibrium ... is order. It amounts to justice," to quote the French political scientist Stanley Hoffman.

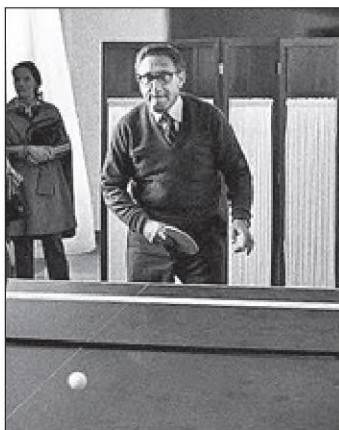
"An amalgam of humanist concerns and realist calculations" was how Wu Xinbo, director at the Center for American Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, put it. "Like most humanists, Kissinger is preoccupied with the question of war and peace. But instead of steeping himself in pure idealism, he charted a course through the tempestuous waters of international politics, where survival requires a mindfulness of the relative military and psychological strength of each party, as well as an understanding of their historical and domestic realities. When he emerged, he emerged with realistic answers."

In 1972 Nixon's China visit proved a huge success with the US public, whose pain induced by the Vietnam War was "eased and put into perspective by the dramatic opening to one-quarter of the world's population", Lord said.

Superman outfit-donning Kissinger blasted onto a June 1974 edition of *Newsweek's* Super K. The previous year, after calling *Time's* managing editor in person to try unsuccessfully to pull himself off its cover, Kissinger appeared alongside Nixon in the magazine's Jan 1, 1973, issue of co-men of the year.

The relationship is characterized by "wariness and co-dependence", said Walter Isaacson, a former *Time* editor, in his 1992 book *Kissinger: A Biography*. Nixon, restive at the potential publicity Kissinger might generate for himself, had been "merciless in toying with him on the issue (of who would go to China)" in the days before the secret visit, Isaacson said.

In his 2016 interview with Lord, Kissinger conceded that "the final decision was always the president's", paying ultimate tribute to Nixon, who had never failed to back his tactical move as Kissinger bestrode the world stage dealing with everyone from Israel's Golda Meir to Egypt's Anwar Sadat and Syria's Hafez al-Assad.



Top: Kissinger plays table tennis during a break from negotiating the text of the Shanghai Communiqué during his October 1971 visit to Beijing. PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY. Above: Kissinger waves a table tennis bat at the reception of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries on March 18, 2001. XINHUA

"One more Middle East swing like this and I'll be aged," Kissinger told Zhou Enlai during a later meeting, referring to his mediating efforts undertaken upon the outbreak on Oct 6, 1973, of the Yom Kippur War, fought between Israel and a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria.

"The shuttle diplomacy", as it was called, went on for about a year, during which Valeriani, the veteran journalist who was never sitting too far behind Kissinger on the plane, watched as Kissinger "grew in girth as well as in stature, eating when he was nervous, nervous when he was negotiating and negotiating all the time".

The apparent weight gain meant that Kissinger's hiking on the Fragrant Mountains of Beijing during his October 1975 visit "was all downhill", Valeriani said. On the same visit Kissinger, who brought with him his second wife Nancy Maginnes, also met Mao for the fifth and final time. The chairman, aging and in poor health, looked up at Maginnes and down at Kissinger with an exaggerated gesture, playing the comic as he noted the big difference in their heights.

During their first meeting in 1972, Mao impressed Kissinger as having "the quality of being at the center of wherever he stood", to use the latter's words. Despite the physical condition that rendered Mao's speech slurred, making him reliant on a translator, the Chinese leader would pull it off again.

"It's always extraordinary to me how much

Mao is on top of things," Kissinger, who some believe had tried to cultivate in himself the same aura he saw in world leaders including Mao, later marveled. "For example, he knew the entire content of the talk I had had the previous night with Teng (Deng Xiaoping) in great detail. There's no way they could have done this orally. He had to have read it. So, you know, he's still very much there."

In the ensuing years many more times Kissinger would meet Deng, who, not long after Mao died, assumed the country's leadership and oversaw the establishment of formal US-China diplomatic ties in 1979. He would return again and again to exchange views with successive generations of Chinese leaders willing to seek his counsel. He traveled to China more than 100 times, the last trip in July, during which he was received by President Xi Jinping.

During a visit in 2013, Kissinger sat down to talk with students at the Center for American Studies of Fudan University in an event that Wu hosted. When a student joked that his name sounded like "kiss-girl", the 90-year-old answered by saying that "power is an aphrodisiac", a saying of Napoleon Bonaparte that Kissinger had earlier popularized through paraphrasing.

Commenting on the fact that at the height of his power, Kissinger was often seen with beautiful women including Hollywood stars and socialites, Lord, who attended Kissinger's 1974 wedding with Maginnes, said that the former long-time aide to the New York governor Nelson Rockefeller was "really the only person he liked (in those days)".

"It was all publicity and part of building a mystique," Lord said, recalling Kissinger "taking an attractive journalist to dinner in a Paris restaurant", right after one of his secret talks with Le Duc Thos, his North Vietnamese counterpart with whom he negotiated the Paris Accords.

Both men were awarded the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize, and two Nobel committee members resigned in protest on the grounds that Kissinger had ordered the bombing of Hanoi during the cease-fire negotiations. While Le Duc Thos declined the award, Kissinger offered to return it after Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), the capital of South Vietnam at the time, was captured by North Vietnamese forces on April 30, 1975.

Lord, alluding to the intense controversy surrounding his mentor, "a complex, flawed personality", said, citing the Canadian poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen: "There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in."

"Kissinger had a picture of a gorilla in his office, with a caption directed to his staff that roughly went: 'If I want your views on something, I'll beat them out of you.'"

Lord said that in his speechwriting days for Kissinger he was routinely pushed by the latter to revise his writing to the sixth draft. Once, to test whether Kissinger had read his submissions carefully, Lord inserted in the middle of his report on Cambodia a sentence consisting of the titles of several Kissinger books. The boss, a prolific writer of heavy and intellectually hefty tomes, duly spotted it.

According to Ferguson, Kissinger stopped talking to him for three months after reading the draft of his 2015 biography, which covered Kissinger's years up to the eve of his appointment by Nixon as his national security adviser in January 1969.

"He felt that the book was too revealing," Ferguson said.

In July 1972, after the US chess grandmaster Bobby Fischer threatened to walk out on the symbolic world championship chess match with the titleholder Boris Spassky of the Soviet Union, Kissinger rang Fischer to

persuade him to go. Kissinger, "a serious chess player in his youth", according to Ferguson, would open the conversation by saying that "this is the worst chess player in the world calling the best one".

About that time, he refused to play chess with the Soviet ambassador to the US Anatoly Dobrynin, who called him "the only person who had learned to eat caviar with chopsticks", because "that would reveal too much about my personality and psychology", Ferguson quoted Kissinger as saying.

In his book, Ferguson, who sees "a pattern of empathy" in his subject, tells how the young man, in defeated Germany as a US army intelligence officer with power over enemy civilians, refused simply to stand together with his parents "on the vengeful side", as Kissinger put it.

"To me there is not only right or wrong but many shades in between," Kissinger wrote to his parents in July 1948. "Real dilemmas are difficulties of the soul, provoking agonies, which you in your world of black and white can't even begin to comprehend."

This was despite his strong attachment to his parents, especially his mother, whom he forbade to cry upon his inauguration as the first Jewish US secretary of state on Sept 23, 1973, and whom he thanked, on her 90th birthday, for "everything I have achieved".

"Kissinger's single greatest achievement, I would say, was holding this country together in the wake of the Watergate scandal," said Lord, who was US ambassador to China from 1985 to 1989. "Almost single-handedly and by the sheer force of his personality he helped to maintain American posture and to ensure the continuity of its foreign policy."

#### Balance of power

Yet Kissinger, who met every prominent US and international leader after he stepped down as secretary of state in December 1976, was never invited back to office. His apparent exile, according to Wu of the Center for American Studies, was in large part because of strong opposition from neoconservatives who prefer US geopolitical primacy to the balance of power that Kissinger championed.

"Kissinger had decided that a balance of power favorable to the US would best serve its interests," said Wu.

"Chess is about the decisive battle, *weiqi* is about the protracted campaign," Kissinger wrote in *On China*. "The chess player aims for total victory, the *weiqi* player seeks relative advantage."

A balance of power "is incompatible with the assertion of absolute values", he said, and "the United States must temper its missionary spirit with a concept of duty to the world".

"When the Sino-US rapprochement started, neither of us had any illusion of changing the basic convictions of the other. It was precisely the absence of any such illusion that facilitated our dialogue. ... The most significant contribution of the leaders of the time was their willingness to raise their sights beyond the immediate issues of the day. In a way, they were fortunate their long isolation from each other meant that there were no short-term day-to-day issues between them."

Kissinger envisioned the US and China generating "a sense of common purpose" in the form of the "coevolution of two societies progressing on parallel, though not identical, tracks".

"A Cold War between the two countries would arrest progress for a generation on both sides of the Pacific. ... The United States and China owe it to their people and to global well-being to make the attempt (to avoid it)."

"In the end, history lauds not conflicts of societies but their reconciliations."



From left: Kissinger with top aide Winston Lord (second from left) on their way to Paris for peace talks to end the Vietnam War in January 1973; Kissinger with his biographer Niall Ferguson; Wu Xinbo, director of the Center for American Studies at Fudan University, talks with Kissinger. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## WORLDUS



The US Postal Service (USPS) unveils its Year of the Dragon Forever stamp to celebrate the Lunar New Year at the International District/Chinatown Community Center in Seattle on Thursday. LINDA DENG / CHINA DAILY

## In Seattle, a roar of approval for Year of Dragon stamp by USPS

By LINDA DENG in Seattle  
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Jason Sean joined the long line of people eagerly waiting Thursday to buy a commemorative Year of the Dragon stamp issued by the US Postal Service (USPS).

He was among the hundreds who filled the International District/Chinatown Community Center in Seattle for the first day of issue ceremony for the stamp. Sean said purchasing the stamps has become part of a family tradition to celebrate the Lunar New Year.

"For many Asian Americans, the Lunar New Year celebrates a chance to leave behind the troubles of the past year and invite prosperity and good luck moving forward," said Connie So, a professor at the University of Washington.

"This Year of the Dragon stamp ceremony recognizes the importance of the diversity and cultural significance Asian Americans bring to the United States and provides Seattle an opportunity to promote the significance of

the Lunar New Year," So added.

The Census Bureau's annual American Community Survey shows Seattle's Asian population reached an estimated 135,300 people in 2022, an increase of around 13,000 from 2021.

For more than three decades, the Postal Service has issued stamps highlighting the Lunar New Year, and it has been some of the most successful stamp releases in the long history of the Postal Service, said Eduardo H. Ruiz Jr, USPS vice-president of retail and delivery operations for the Postal Service's Westpac area, who served as the dedicating official.

"The Postal Service has one of the most diverse workplaces in the United States, and its customer base is as diverse as the country itself. This stamp is a great example that reflects our nation's rich, multicultural heritage and traditions," he added.

Beginning in 2020, in observance of the Lunar New Year holiday, the Postal Service introduced its third Lunar New Year series. This year's is the fifth Forever stamp in the series, which will continue through 2031

with stamps for the Year of the Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig.

"I think we're really unleashing the power of the everyday and the power of the small," said Joël Barraquiel Tan, executive director of the Wing Luke Museum. "Everybody uses stamps, or most everybody still uses stamps nowadays. And to have it reflect the tradition of Lunar New Year is pretty incredible; (that) an object as small as this ... carries such huge intention, such big impact, is pretty amazing."

USPS Art Director Antonio Alcalá designed the stamp, with original art by Camille Chew. It features a colorful, three-dimensional mask depicting a dragon, which is a contemporary take on the long tradition of paper-cut folk art crafts created by Chew. Gold and red colors each represent prosperity in the coming year and good fortune.

The Year of the Dragon stamp is on sale now at post offices across the country and on USPS.com. In total, 22 million of the new stamps have been printed.

## Partnership stressed to combat climate change

Washington, Beijing should build trust to address impact on health, experts say

By RENA LI in Los Angeles  
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As the world's two largest emitters of greenhouse gases, the United States and China need to build trust to address climate change and its impact on public health despite geopolitical tensions, experts said.

Highlighting the importance of partnerships and collaboration, Deborah Seligsohn, a professor in the Political Science Department at Villanova University, said both nations have enormous healthcare and research capacities to deal with climate challenges.

"There's still technical questions where scientific cooperation is needed. We should come up with solutions that can help the rest of the world," Seligsohn said at a forum at The Carter Center in Atlanta.

Seligsohn stressed the potential for collaboration between the US and China in developing efficient systems to address issues such as leakage from old coal mines, waste management and methane capture as part of their joint efforts to tackle climate change.

"The incredible achievement that China has made in improving air quality, along with regulatory changes in 2020 and the dynamics of global shipping, has a huge impact to confront the overall warming trend," she said.

2023 shattered climate records, accompanied by extreme weather, as reported by the World Meteorological Organization. The agency's global climate report said 2023 is poised to become the warmest year on record. A study published in Nature Cli-

mate Change found that 58 percent of infectious diseases worldwide have been worsened by climatic hazards, concluding that the answer is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"Infectious diseases even for non-infectious ailments spreading through climate change is striking," said Jeffrey Koplan, a principal investigator of the International Association of National Public Health Institutes, and former director (1998-2002) of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

As a 26-year veteran of the CDC, Koplan said the health alliances of people and scientists from the US and China have maintained a high level of cooperation over the years.

He recalled spending the first couple of hours every other Wednesday morning engaged in discussions with colleagues at Fudan University in China, even when there was no funding for the program.

### Fostering positive aspects

"I think the most important thing is to keep those networks of people together," he told the conference. "The friendships and partnerships among scientists that have been maintained should persist in fostering positive aspects."

The narrative of health alliances between the two countries unfolded with the initiation of the US-China Working Group on enhancing climate action.

In October, California Governor Gavin Newsom joined the "Great Wall Climate Dialogue" in Beijing along with his Chinese counterparts. They discussed ways to

accelerate climate action at the subnational level.

Specifically, the leaders shared strategies for clean energy deployment, electrifying transportation and tackling climate change while growing the economy.

The US and China renewed dialogue on the climate in November ahead of COP28 — the United Nations Conference on Climate Change — to collaborate on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting the adoption of renewable energy sources.

The new agreement revealed before a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden in California on Nov 15 marked a positive turn in their collaborative journey.

"That is the actual major victory of COP28," Seligsohn said. "And that's where I have huge optimism because both countries have put in place many of the tools necessary to move faster than the current pace."

Seligsohn noted, however, that there still were people within the US government questioning the progressive approach, such as California's collaboration with China. Despite the internal debates, "it's really important to endorse the most effective programs and get us back on track together."

She said there also are "tons of people" within the scientific community expressing "genuine desires to work together," despite the "negative impact" on the collaboration stemming from political tensions.

"I think the key thing for the US government getting back to engage in this is to provide scientists with a sense of protection, mitigating the vulnerability they felt over the past few years," she added.

## Alabama uses nitrogen gas in execution

By AI HEPING in New York  
aiheping@chinadailyusa.com

Alabama on Thursday evening carried out the first execution of an inmate in the United States using nitrogen gas.

Kenneth Eugene Smith, 58, who was convicted in a murder for hire in 1988, was executed at 8:25 pm CT at the Holman Correctional Facility in Atmore, according to The Associated Press.

Smith was strapped to a gurney and made to breathe nitrogen gas through a mask apparatus, depriving him of oxygen.

The execution took about 22 minutes, and Smith appeared conscious for several minutes, the AP's reporter wrote.

"For at least two minutes, he appeared to shake and writhe on the gurney, sometimes pulling against the restraints," AP reported. "That was followed by several minutes of heavy breathing, until breathing was no longer perceptible."

The state had said that the nitrogen gas would cause unconsciousness within seconds and death within minutes. A state attorney earlier told the US 11th Circuit Court of Appeals that nitrogen hypoxia would be "the most painless and humane method of execution known to man".

Smith's witnesses were reported to be his wife, two sons, attorney and a friend. Smith previously had survived one planned execution. In November 2022, Alabama officials aborted his execution by lethal injection after struggling for hours to insert an intravenous line's needle into his body.

Smith was one of three men convicted in the murder of a woman whose husband, a pastor, had recruited them to kill her. Smith confessed to his role in the crime after the slaying, and court records show that he was paid about \$1,000 for killing her.

The execution was to be the first attempt to use a new method since the 1982 introduction of lethal injection, now the most common capital punishment method in the US.

CNN reported that little was known about the set method of execution because the state's published protocol bears redactions that experts say shield key details from public scrutiny. The state indicated the redactions were made to maintain security.

Smith's lawyers lodged a petition to the US Supreme Court on Thursday morning to block the execution, after the court denied his appeal application on Wednesday without comment.

The Supreme Court on Thursday evening declined to halt the execution.

Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who along with two other liberal justices dissented in the decision, wrote: "Having failed to kill Smith on his first attempt, Alabama has selected him as its 'guinea pig' to test a method of execution never attempted before. The world is watching."

Smith's attorneys had asked the court to consider the new method violates the constitutional ban on cruel and unusual punishment and deserved more legal scrutiny before it was used on a person.

The lawyers argued that Alabama's plan for Smith's execution, including what they describe as a "one-size-fits-all mask", would create a substantial

risk that he would "be left in a persistent vegetative state, experience a stroke, or asphyxiate on his own vomit." They identified alternative methods that they said would reduce the risk, including nitrogen hypoxia using a hood or closed chamber, as well as a firing squad.

Alabama approved the use of nitrogen hypoxia for executions in 2018 because the primary method, lethal injection, has become increasingly difficult due to a shortage of the necessary drugs.

Two other states, Oklahoma and Mississippi also have approved the use of nitrogen hypoxia.

Though poisonous gases such as hydrogen cyanide have been used in executions in past decades, it was to be the first time an execution was performed anywhere using an inert gas to suffocate someone, capital punishment experts said.

Opponents of capital punishment, including United Nations human rights experts, have said the method amounts to experimenting on humans and could merely injure him without killing him or lead to a torturous death.

"It's a sad, awful day for everyone, no matter what your perspective is," the Reverend Jeff Hood, Smith's spiritual adviser, said in an interview before heading into the prison. "But I think that this is particularly horrific in that we're going to be conducting a human experiment for the first time. We're going to be legally suffocating someone."

Heng Weili in New York contributed to this story.



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# GLOBAL LENS



Tengpa Anye (left) plays the drum as his students perform a lion dance at a primary school in Xobando town of Lhorong county in Qamdo city, Xizang autonomous region, on Jan 19. SUN FEI / XINHUA



## In step with tradition

Inheritor of lion dance art passes on spirit of ethnic unity in Xizang autonomous region

**L**horong county, with an average elevation of about 3,700 meters, was once an important stop along the ancient Tea Horse Road and a significant channel for Tibetan-Han exchanges. Locals in Xobando town injected elements of Tibetan folk dances into the Han lion dance introduced to the town in the early years and created a new performing art — the Xobando lion dance.

Tengpa Anye, 69, who began to learn the lion dance from his father at 13, is an inheritor of the Xobando lion dance art. In the past, Tengpa had to make lion dance props by himself because he could not afford the ready-made ones. Nowadays, thanks to improved living conditions and support from the local authorities, Tengpa and his students can use professionally prepared props and enjoy opportunities to appear at major performance events.

No longer an agile performer due to his age, Tengpa is devoted to training younger Xobando lion dancers. He has been teaching lion dance at a primary school in Xobando since 2015.

The Xobando lion dance bears witness to the history of exchanges and integration among diverse ethnic groups in Xizang. "By teaching the lion dance, we are passing on the spirit of ethnic unity," Tengpa said.



**From top:** Tengpa Anye plays the drum to accompany a lion dance at a primary school in Lhorong county, Xizang autonomous region, on Jan 19. TENZIN NYIDA / XINHUA Tengpa Anye (right) cleans a lion dance prop in Lhorong county on Jan 19. SUN FEI / XINHUA

**From top:** Tengpa Anye (left) practices lion dance moves with his grandson in Lhorong county, Xizang autonomous region, on Jan 19. SUN FEI / XINHUA Children play with a lion dance prop at a primary school in Lhorong county on Jan 19. TENZIN NYIDA / XINHUA

XINHUA



Tengpa Anye (right) teaches students to perform a lion dance at a primary school in Lhorong county, Xizang autonomous region, on Jan 19. TENZIN NYIDA / XINHUA

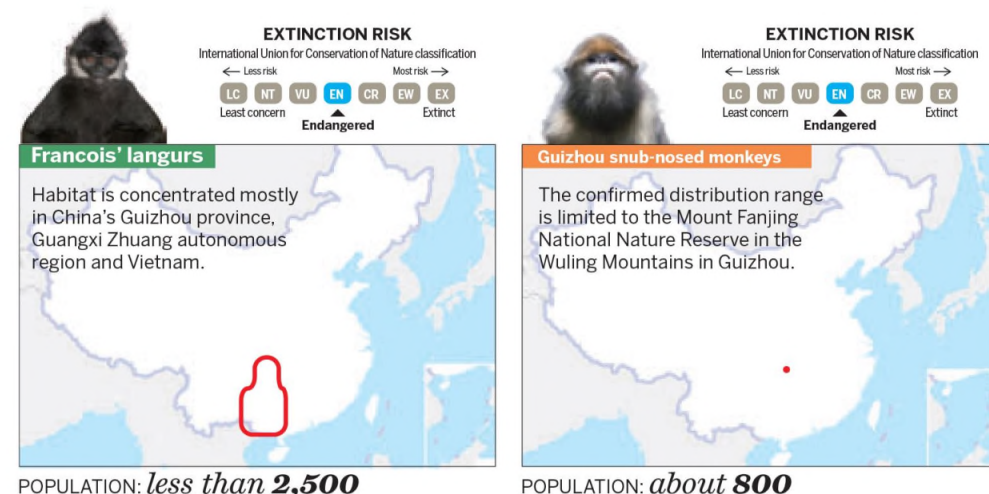


Trainees of Tengpa Anye perform a lion dance at a primary school in Lhorong county, Xizang autonomous region, on Jan 19. TENZIN NYIDA / XINHUA

Editor's note: As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.

# Rare primates on the rise in karst mountains

Guizhou province and Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region are home to some of the world's rarest species



With slender bodies, Francois' langurs, or leaf monkeys, are agile and acrobatic. Their dark, furry forms look like shadows as they climb up and down gray karst formations and leap between the trees that overhang steep ledges.

A tail longer than their torso gives them exceptional balance.

Long limbs and muscular fingers are their best insurance against a deadly slip down the side of their mountain homes.

**WEIGHT**  
Males: 6.5-7.8 kg,  
Females: 5.5-7.9 kg

**LIFESPAN**  
Francois' langurs have been recorded living up to 25 years.

60 cm

Females also have a distinctive white patch of fur close to their genitals.

### FROM GOLD TO BLACK

Infant Francois' langurs are born a conspicuous golden-orange color. Their bright coats, which darken to black as they mature, make it easier for adults to keep a close eye on the juveniles as they learn to navigate the hazardous steep karst forests they call home.



### GUIZHOU SNUB-NOSED MONKEYS

Its head, neck, and ends of its limbs are black, except for a golden brow.

**Why the color of their fur?**

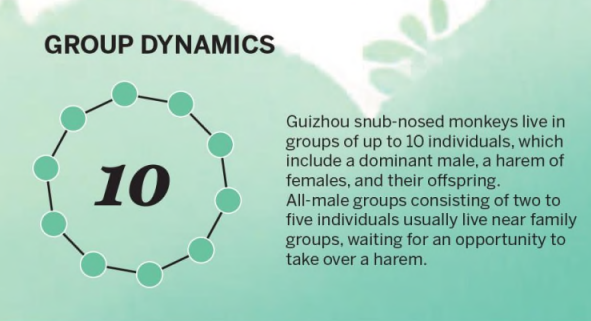
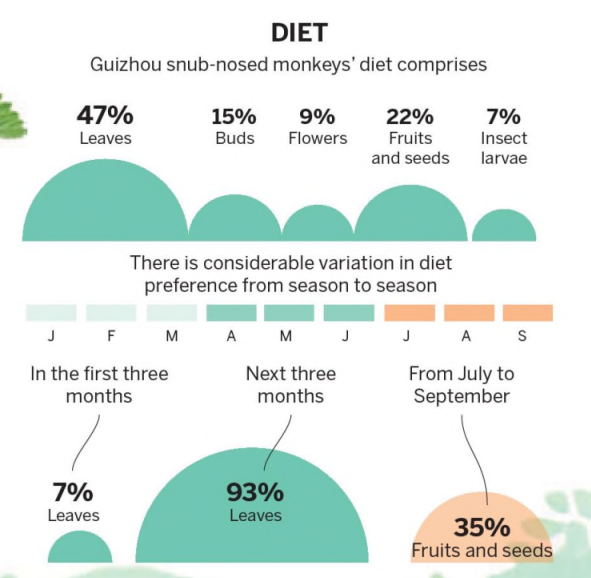
Sichuan snub-nosed monkeys (Yellow hair) → PARENTAL ANCESTORS → Yunnan and Myanmar snub-nosed monkeys (Black hair)

Guizhou snub-nosed monkeys (Major contributor) → Guizhou snub-nosed monkeys (Minor contributor)

Adults are covered with long, fine hair, generally grading from brown on its upper body to gray on its lower body, with a white patch between its shoulder blades.

They stand 64-73 cm tall.

Males are almost twice as heavy as females (15 kg and 8 kg respectively).



### Forest rangers safeguard 'special child of the Earth'

By YAN DONGJIE and YANG JUN

There are only about 800 Guizhou golden monkeys in the world, making them even rarer than giant pandas. They are a national first-class protected wild animal in China and are classified as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

China is home to three species of rare golden monkeys, and of them the Guizhou golden monkey has the smallest population. They can only be found in the Fanjing Mountain National Nature Reserve in the northeastern part of Guizhou province, earning them the nickname "the special, and only child of the Earth".

There are still many unanswered questions about the Guizhou golden monkey, or Guizhou snub-nosed monkey. To gain a better understanding of this precious animal, the Fanjing Mountain Administration's forest rangers have been conducting regular patrols. The administration has also been improving its monitoring systems, providing valuable data on the population, distribution, habitat, and threats to the monkeys, which serves as a scientific reference for conservation efforts.

Fanjing Mountain is home to over 7,100 species of wild plants and animals. The nature reserve was established in 1978 and designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1986. Covering an area of over 77,500 hectares, it was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2018.

Li Guobin, 55, is one of the hundreds of forest rangers on Fanjing Mountain who has been protecting it for 15 years. He can identify different animals by their feces and distinguish various plants.

Li said that the forest rangers patrol the mountain for 25 days each month, searching for traces of wildlife activity and documenting the distribution of rare plants.

"Even in winter, nothing changes. The temperature mostly stays below freezing, and when it rains, the ground becomes slippery," he said. Li usually brings a bottle of strong liquor to keep warm. "I feel extremely proud that I can help protect our country's rare animals and plants."

Dong Wandai, 36, has been working at a monitoring station in the reserve for ten years. "Our main task is to monitor the activities of the Guizhou golden monkeys and the surrounding environmental changes. We also conduct field patrols in their habitats to ensure their safety," he said.

Li Haibo from the administration's science and education department explained that to better protect and observe the Guizhou golden monkeys, the administration has set up four video surveillance systems in the reserve.

They have also installed 48 sets of visible light and infrared thermal-imaging monitoring systems and established monitoring stations in the core area where the golden monkeys are active. The administration has installed 420 infrared cameras in total and deployed six drones.

"Since 2016, we have been using infrared cameras to monitor the golden monkeys and, for the first time, discovered their nocturnal activities, proving the phenomenon of nonhuman primates being active at night," Li Haibo said.

**DIET**  
Half of a Francois' langur's diet consists of young and mature leaves.

Mulberry leaves, Bauhinia leaves, Ligustrum sinense Lour

Certain fruits, and the occasional insect, serve as infrequent—but no less nutritious—snacks.

**GROUP DYNAMICS**

Groups of Francois' langurs have a single male whose primary responsibilities include mating with the female members of his group and protecting this harem, and their offspring, from threats.

7 members being the average for groups living in China

# BUSINESS

## Adisseo to start building Quanzhou plant in H1

By ZHONG NAN  
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Adisseo Group, a French animal nutrition provider and subsidiary of China's State-owned Sinochem Holdings Corp Ltd, will begin construction of a powder methionine plant in Quanzhou, East China's Fujian province, in the first half, its top executive said.

The company will invest 4.9 billion yuan (\$681.2 million) in the venture.

Methionine is an essential amino acid found in meat, fish and dairy products. Amino acids are the building blocks used to make proteins.

The plant will have an annual production capacity of 150,000 metric tons, with the factory—located at the Sinochem Quanzhou Petrochemical Park in Quanzhou—expected to officially begin operations in 2027.

The project will benefit from strong supply chain synergies, and will save on capital and operating costs, further consolidating the sustainable development of the integrated upstream and downstream value chain, said Hao Zhigang, board chairman and CEO of the Shanghai-listed company.

Adisseo is one of the few global manufacturers capable of producing both liquid and solid methionine simultaneously. Methionine plays a significant role in improving animal feed efficiency.

Adisseo has already built a manufacturing base in Nanjing, East China's Jiangsu province, to produce up to 350,000 tons of liquid methionine a year for both Chinese and global markets. About half of its production in 2023 was exported.

In addition to being the world's largest producer of animal feed, China is one of the largest markets for meat across the globe.

The country consumes the most pork, poultry and mutton, and its consumption of beef and veal is second only to the United States, according to a report released by the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences last year.

Hao said various macro factors that currently contribute to the continuous growth of the global methionine market remain largely unchanged, including population

growth, a continuous decrease in per capita arable land and an increasing awareness of environmental sustainability.

"This is particularly true for the Chinese and Asia-Pacific methionine markets. As a result, low-cost competition, economies of scale, and diversified asset allocation strategies have become essential prerequisites for companies aiming to achieve success," he said.

China's market demand for low-fat products such as chicken and seafood is expected to continue growing in the years ahead.

Eyeing rapid urbanization and rising disposable incomes in China, Adisseo will put a specialty feed additive factory into operation in Nanjing early next year, investing 370 million yuan.

Benefiting from the tangible growth of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a pivotal institutional framework for regional economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region, Adisseo also exports its products manufactured in China to various countries. These include Thailand, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, South Africa, Brazil and Argentina.

As this year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and France, Hao said their mutually beneficial collaboration will continue to create business opportunities on both sides.

Adisseo was acquired by China National Bluestar (Group) Co Ltd, a subsidiary of Sinochem Holdings Corp Ltd, in 2006. It was the largest acquisition of a French company by a Chinese enterprise at the time.

With more than 2,650 employees, Adisseo provides products and services to over 4,200 customers in over 110 countries and regions through its global distribution network.

The company is expecting double-digit revenue growth in China in 2023, led by its accelerated liquid methionine penetration in the Chinese market.

Fan Shenggen, a professor at the Academy of Global Food Economics and Policy of China Agricultural University, said that the nation's expanding middle-income population, coupled with its rising urbanization rate and other contributing factors, instill optimism among multinational corporations due to prospects of increased food consumption in the country.



Visitors tour the exhibition stand of SAP during the 6th China International Import Expo in Shanghai on Nov 6. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## SAP eyes big growth in China

Cloud transformation, sustainable development to be in focus this year

By CHENG YU and MA SI

SAP SE sees growth opportunities from cloud transformation, global operations, and sustainable development in the Chinese market this year, and will increase investments in strategically emerging areas like commercial AI, a top executive of the German software company said on Thursday.

Huang Chenhong, global executive vice-president of SAP and president of SAP Greater China, said the company gained "stable momentum" in the Chinese market last year.

"We have been impressed to see that Chinese enterprises have increasingly strong needs in cloud transformation, global operations and sustainable development in the new year," Huang said.

This will help drive a new chapter for the German firm, which specializes in enterprise application software and related services like cloud computing, he said.

"SAP will continue to leverage leading digital technologies and rich industry practices to help Chinese customers move toward high-quality development to become new-type Chinese enterprises," he added.

Huang said new-type Chinese enterprises are expected to make profound use of data, industrial links and green development.

The German company earlier this week announced a strong financial performance for 2023. The company's cloud revenue grew 23 percent year-on-year, with the growth momentum expected to sustain this year.

Huang said the number of SAP customers in China had risen significantly since it set foot here over 30 years ago. Its customers include some leading Fortune 500 multinational companies and a number of small and medium-sized firms with specialized expertise.

In the fourth quarter of last year, a slew of companies, including down jackets manufacturer Bosideng, heavy machinery maker Zoomlion and semiconductor firm Advanced Semiconductor Engineering signed new orders with SAP.

SAP's cloud solution enables customers to achieve a rapid conversion of their existing SAP enterprise resource planning environments to a modern, cloud-based architecture with low total cost and high flexibility, Huang said.

As more Chinese companies go global, they will be in greater need of building global management

systems and integrating into the global ecosystem.

"The company is in a good position to help Chinese businesses in compliance, talent, supply chains, marketing and sustainable development for an efficient and compliant digital base," he added.

China has committed to the dual carbon goals of peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060.

From 2013 to 2023, China's energy intensity has decreased by 26.4 percent, one of the fastest such reductions in the world.

Huang said these goals actively affect the global economy and environment, and that SAP is willing to contribute to the green transformation of Chinese companies through digitalization.

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## Nation's energy sector sees surge in investment, reaching \$391b

By ZHENG XIN  
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Investments in China's energy sector surged last year on the back of the government's commitment to fortify the country's energy infrastructure and embrace diverse energy formats.

Total investment in key energy projects under construction or those newly initiated rose to 2.8 trillion yuan (\$391 billion) last year, the National Energy Administration said during a news conference in Beijing on Thursday.

Investments in new energy surged more than 34 percent year-on-year, said Zhang Xing, spokesperson of the administration.

Completed investments in solar power generation exceeded 670 billion yuan last year, while wind power investments surpassed 380 billion yuan, he said.

Provinces, including Liaoning and Gansu and the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, witnessed accelerated investments in onshore wind power projects last year, while a concentrated release

of investments was noticed in large-scale offshore wind power projects in Guangdong and Shandong provinces, he said.

The remarkable surge in investments in China's renewable energy sector, particularly in solar and wind, underscores the country's strategic focus on diversifying its energy portfolio and reducing reliance on traditional sources, said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

China's global leadership in renewable energy is evident not only in the scale of investments but also in the widespread adoption of innovative technologies and practices, he said.

According to a report from the International Renewable Energy Agency, global wind and photovoltaic power generation costs have decreased by over 60 percent and 80 percent over the past decade, respectively, largely attributed to Chinese innovation, manufacturing and engineering.

According to the administration,

a cluster of projects integrating power sources, grids, loads and storage has been advancing in China's northwestern regions, while investments in electrochemical energy storage and green electricity-to-hydrogen projects are also witnessing a rapid surge in investment, underscoring China's commitment to fostering innovative and integrated solutions.

China has undeniably become an indispensable force in the worldwide advancement of clean energy in recent years, it said.

In terms of investments, Chinese enterprises have extended their reach across major countries and regions, investing in wind power, photovoltaic generation and hydropower, leveraging their expertise and know-how, said Pan Huimin, deputy head of the administration's international cooperation department.

So far, Chinese wind and solar products worth over \$33.4 billion and \$245.3 billion, respectively, have been exported to more than 200 countries and regions, she said.

interest rate of 1.8 percent on Thursday. The move aims to keep liquidity in the banking system reasonable and ample, the People's Bank of China said. The operation led to a net injection of 366 billion yuan into the market.

XINHUA

## Airbus services center comes onstream

By ZHU WENQIAN  
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Airbus has put into operation its life cycle services center in Chengdu, Sichuan province, as the European aircraft manufacturer remains bullish about the growth potential of China's aviation market.

The center is expected to provide solutions to manage the entire life cycle of an aircraft.

Airbus said Chengdu has a comprehensive aviation ecosystem.

As a one-stop shop, the center is the first of its kind for Airbus globally to cover a full range of activities.

The center has become operational at a time when China and France are celebrating the 60th anniversary of establishing mutual diplomatic relations.

The center provides services such as parking, storage, maintenance, upgrades, conversions, dismantling and recycling of various aircraft types, as well as the controlled distribution of used parts from dismantling, the plane maker said.

Located beside Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport, the center can accommodate 125 aircraft. The site will progressively ramp up operations between now and 2025, directly employing up to 150 people.

"We are happy to support the Chinese market, which is so important for us. China has introduced various visa-free policies to attract overseas visitors, which is expected to further boost air traffic growth," said Philippe Mhun, executive vice-president of Airbus.

China is expected to become the largest commercial aircraft services market globally by 2042, exceeding North America and Europe, tripling such services value to \$54 billion, Airbus had projected earlier.

The forecast sees 2,320 aircraft



European aircraft manufacturer Airbus' life cycle services center is put into operation in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Jan 24. LIU KUN / XINHUA

will retire between now and 2042 in China, with more than 100 aircraft retiring annually as a result of continuous fleet modernization. This will create growing market opportunities to reuse, repair and recycle older aircraft and contribute to a circular economy, Airbus said.

"The latest investment shows Airbus' recognition of China's investment environment and the attractiveness of China's huge civil aircraft market," said Zou Jianjun, a professor at the Civil Aviation Management Institute of China.

The center unites under one roof a JV between Airbus, Tarmac Aerospace and the local government of Chengdu. Tarmac Aerospace will provide expertise in aircraft storage, dismantling and recycling for the project.

Airbus company Satair will acquire aging aircraft then trade and distribute the used parts to complete the full scope of life cycle services. Specifically, 75 percent of the air-

craft stored at the center are expected to fly again after storage and upgrade by the JV. The remaining aircraft will be dismantled, recovering around 90 percent of the aircraft's original weight.

"The center echoes our purpose to pioneer sustainable aerospace and shows our approach to environmental responsibility across the entire aircraft life cycle. It is a great example of Chinese-European cooperation in the development of the circular economy for the aviation industry," said Cristina Aguilar, senior vice-president of customer services at Airbus.

The center is certified by both the European Union Aviation Safety Agency and the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

Meanwhile, the International Air Transport Association, which released data on air travel performance in November, indicated that air travel demand topped 99 percent of 2019 pre-pandemic levels.

### Briefly

#### Chongqing, Chengdu key ports on trade route

Chongqing and Sichuan province's Chengdu together handled over 5,300 China-Europe Railway Express trips in 2023, said Yuxinou (Chongqing) Logistics Co Ltd. More than 430,000 twenty-foot equivalent units of cargo were transported

via China-Europe freight trains to and from these two cities last year.

#### PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 466 billion yuan (\$65.6 billion) of seven-day reverse repos at an

# BUSINESSFOCUS

## Local brands up global ken for innovative growth

Xiaomi, Haier, BYD among best known Chinese names abroad

BEIJING — Chinese brands enjoyed increasing recognition from overseas consumers in 2023 as the former pursued market expansion alongside high-quality growth backed by innovation and localization.

This year, the reputations of Chinese companies "going global" have been bolstered by improvements to product research and development, winning the admiration of foreign consumers by providing products tailored to their needs, said Kantar BrandZ Chinese Global Brand Builders 2023 report.

The report, jointly compiled by international market research firm Kantar and IT giant Google, surveyed consumers from 11 foreign markets on their opinions about Chinese brands. It revealed that at least 70 percent of interviewees were willing to consider more than 90 percent of the 234 Chinese brands participating in the research.

Among the top 50 Chinese global brands named in the report were smartphone maker Xiaomi, home appliance giant Haier and electric vehicle brand BYD. Xinhua News Agency spoke with representatives from the three companies' branding and marketing departments to reveal the stories behind their successful globalization drive.

### Innovation

Technology and innovation have served as growth engines powering Chinese brands going global, said Doreen Wang, CEO of Kantar Greater China and global chair of Kantar BrandZ.

Chinese firms have put these considerations on the front burner amid their brand-building processes as they seek to improve brand competitiveness and consumer experience.

"Xiaomi's long-term mission has always been adhering to innovation for everyone in international markets," said Jim Xue, vice-president of brand and marketing at Xiaomi International. The company ranked second among the 2023 Top 50 Chinese Global Brand Builders revealed in the aforementioned report.

Since the start of 2023, a series of technological achievements have demonstrated Xiaomi's efforts and commitment to innovation. At Mobile World Congress 2023, Xiaomi showcased the company's first wireless augmented reality (AR) glasses to utilize distributed computing.

Connecting data from a smartphone to AR glasses with Xiaomi-developed high-speed interconnected modalities, the product is among the first to achieve "retina-level" displays, while also being designed for a more user-friendly experience with a lighter weight and more refined and innovative hand tracking.

In the field of advanced robotics,



Visitors check out Xiaomi's quadruped robot CyberDog during the Mobile World Congress 2023 in Barcelona, Spain, in March. MENG DINGBO / XINHUA

cutting-edge products, including the bio-inspired quadruped robot CyberDog 2 launched in August last year, have also reinforced Xiaomi's brand image as a leading consumer electronics and smart manufacturing company in the international market.

"In recognition of our efforts and commitment to innovation, the company was ranked among Boston Consulting Group's '50 Most Innovative Companies of 2023' this May," Xue said.

"BYD has put brand building in an important position in the development of the company, and leveraged technologies and qualities to empower products and therefore enhance brand influence," Brian Luo, BYD's assistant general manager of branding and public relations, told Xinhua.

Relying on its innovative capabilities in electric vehicle manufacturing, BYD has also made pathbreaking achievements in overseas markets in the past 10 years.

The company has promoted new energy buses and taxis in international markets under its strategy of developing the electrification of urban public transportation, Luo said. So far, the company's electrification strategy has been implemented in more



BYD presents its e-platform 3.0 for electric vehicles at Japan Mobility Show 2023 in Tokyo in October. ZHANG XIAOYU / XINHUA

than 400 cities in over 70 countries and regions, he added.

As the company powers ahead in the globalization process, it has grown its presence worldwide with robust sales performances and endorsements.

The company's passenger EVs have entered 59 countries and regions, including Japan, Germany and Australia. By November, it had exported more than 200,000 new energy passenger cars to

markets outside China.

Widely recognized by overseas consumers, a popular model of BYD — Atto 3 — has won international awards including the United Kingdom's Best Electric Car 2023 and Brazil's 2023 Best Car to Buy, Luo said.

### Localization

Building upon the innovation competitiveness that Chinese brands have extensively developed,

the companies have also launched several products and services to serve the needs of different consumers to deepen globalization and strive for higher growth.

Home appliance brand Haier extended its global influence by orienting toward the strategy of localization, which involves research and development, manufacturing and marketing in local markets.

The company has opened 35 industrial parks and 138 manufacturing centers worldwide, reaching more than 200 countries and regions, said Wang Meiyun, chief brand officer at Haier Group.

To serve the different needs of consumers, the company has launched more market-tailored products overseas, Wang said.

For example, it introduced washing machines with larger capacity for culturally specific clothing in the Middle East, and dryers with sterilizing functionality to cater to local weather conditions and special needs in the United Kingdom.

Xiaomi has also adapted product features for specific markets or consumers, enabled by the strategic partnerships it has forged with major corporations worldwide. For example, it launched the smartwatch Xiaomi Watch 2 Pro in Sep-

tember, featuring Wear OS by Google to serve international consumers.

Its partnership with Germany's Leica in enhancing the camera capabilities of Xiaomi smartphones has helped the company to cater to the needs of photographers.

Extending the collaboration to generate a stronger connection with its users, the company has also launched online educational photography courses taught by professional instructors at Leica to help participants draw inspiration from masters and better hone their skills.

"Only through consumer recognition and by injecting our brand power into the hearts of our consumers can we seek to take our premium brand image to greater heights and enhance our competitiveness in global markets," Xue added.

"As the development of Chinese brands matures, competition among them will be more and more intense," Wang said.

She added that apart from innovation and global expansion, the brands will need to make breakthroughs in digitalization and diversification in order to realize stable and high-quality growth.

XINHUA

## Chinese firms top Japan on worldwide influence list

By WANG ZHUOQIONG

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A total of 48 Chinese firms have made the world's top 500 most powerful brands, surpassing Japan for the first time and securing third place globally, according to the 20th edition of the 2023 World's 500 Most Influential Brands, compiled by World Brand Lab.

Microsoft, Apple and Amazon secured the top three honors in the latest rankings. The United States boasts the highest representation, followed by France, China, Japan and the United Kingdom.

The rankings, released in New York last month, said that the US dominates 193 brands in the top 500, with the ascendancy of Chinese brands standing out, including names such as State Grid Corp of China, Tencent, Haier, Huawei, China Resources, China Life, Moutai, Wuliangye, China Southern Power Grid, Tsingtao Brewery, Sinochem and Hengli.

The evaluation standards for making the cut are based on global

influence, measured by a brand's ability to develop markets and generate profits.

Following three key indicators of brand influence — namely market share, brand loyalty and global leadership — World Brand Lab tracked more than 8,000 leading firms around the globe to grace the world's 500 most influential brands list. The list includes enterprises from 32 countries and regions in 2023.

An empirical study by World Brand Lab and SuperFinance revealed the various pressures faced by multinational brands amid ongoing globalization.

The study suggests a need for brand expansion strategies to pivot toward diverse localization as well as prioritization given to candidates' environmental, social and governance performance.

The 2023 list spans 47 industries, with food and beverages/catering leading the way with 35 appearances, followed by autos at 32 brands. A graying planet is presenting more opportunities for growth in pharmaceutical as well

as health and wellness brands.

There are a total of 25 newcomers on the latest list. Of them, six are Chinese debuts, including Poly, Tik-Tok, China Huadian, Tongwei Solar, China National Aviation Fuel and Baideng.

The 500 brands have been in business for an average of 98.57 years, a slight increase from the previous list's 98.22 years. A total of 225 brands, constituting over 40 percent of the ranked enterprises, have reached the venerable age of 100 years or more of having a market presence.

The oldest brand, Saint-Gobain from France, is 358 years old, followed closely by Aviva and Moutai, both with histories exceeding 300 years.

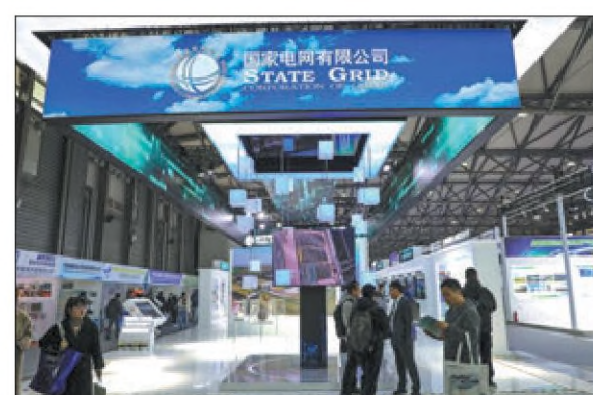
Among the 48 Chinese brands, Moutai, Tsingtao, Wuliangye and Bank of China have surpassed the century mark. In the F&B sector, 30 of the 35 brands exceeded 100 years of history of hanging out their shingles.

John Deighton, professor emeritus at Harvard Business School,

while attending the World Executive Summit and the World's 500 Most Influential Brands release event in Hong Kong on Dec 19, suggested that brands should use creators and influencers for more effective and widespread branding. He cited examples dating back to 2008, like Coca-Cola on Facebook and Ford's use of creators for its Fiesta model launch. Given China's lead in creative marketing over the US, this branding approach is likely more appealing to Asian marketers, he said.

Haisen Ding, CEO of the World Executive Group and the World Brand Lab, said leveraging AI is crucial for continuous global brand footprint monitoring among companies.

Sara Kim, professor of marketing at the University of Hong Kong, said localization for motivated brands, which includes a dedicated crisis management team for geopolitical risks, adherence to local regulations, unique product lines based on local preferences, and a focus on ESG standards, is critical for firms



The booth of State Grid Corp of China attracts visitors during a power facility expo in Shanghai in November. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

with more global aspirations.

Jing Xu, a professor of marketing at Peking University, said that a brand's purpose must remain clear despite the real world's growing complexity. Genuine sustainable development, as seen in many exemplary and growing brands, involves incorporating goals that benefit humanity and the world into their mission.

The World Brand Lab's year-end

report indicates that over the past decade, global brand strategies faced escalating pressures amid declining consumer trust. Economic, political, social and technological factors hindered globalization, leading to an era of diverse localization.

Companies are thus adapting organizational structures to integrate brands with local communities, industries, cultures and customs.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## The Philippines should not let US use it as a lightning conductor in its storm making

The eighth meeting of the China-Philippines Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea, held last week in Shanghai, marks the latest efforts by Beijing and Manila to better manage and control their maritime disputes. It also sends an unmistakable message to the outside world that the two are seeking to resolve their disputes through bilateral channels.

Since last year, the Philippines has repeatedly stoked tensions in the South China with its exacerbating of frictions, as a result of its provocative moves in relation to Ren'ai Reef and Huangyan Island in particular. These moves have worsened bilateral ties and offset regional efforts to build peace and stability in the waters.

Hence, agreements reached in the meeting on improving the sea-related communication mechanism and handling maritime emergencies, especially the situation on Ren'ai Reef, are helpful for ratcheting down tensions and paving the way for resolving the disputes through negotiations.

During the consultation, the two countries also reiterated that the South China Sea disputes do not define the entirety of their relationship and emphasized the importance of communication and dialogue in maintaining maritime peace and stability. This indicates the two sides are trying to stabilize bilateral ties by focusing on the larger picture.

Before the maritime disputes resurfaced again, China and the Philippines enjoyed several years of growing and robust cooperation, in which large amounts

of Chinese investments poured into the Philippines, and bilateral trade prospered. Not to mention that the warmth in bilateral ties also helped stabilize the situation in the South China Sea.

Hence, it is good to see both Beijing and Manila seem to be keen on resuming bilateral consultation and keeping the channels of communication open. This positive development can help ensure responsible conflict management and control. In this regard, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr's latest remarks that his country's commitment to the one-China policy has not changed and will not change were also helpful to cultivate a good atmosphere for the continuous easing of tensions.

Such a trend of conciliation is not only crucial to prevent China-Philippines ties from plummeting further but also contributes to building peace and stability in the South China Sea. But for the trend to be maintained, the Philippines needs to guard against Washington hijacking its policy toward China.

It is known to all that the United States has been using the Philippines as a chess piece, or even a bridgehead, in its containment policy against China. In fact, the US instigation has largely contributed to last year's maritime flare-ups.

Manila should have been reminded by developments elsewhere in the world over the past 23 months that it is a habitual practice of the US to push others to the forefront of its storm making, so they can act as lightning rods. Manila should continue to work with Beijing to resolve their maritime disputes through bilateral consultations.

## Reality check for DPP authorities on Taiwan

As Taiwan braces for a third term of pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party authorities, so too will it face the political reality of a shrinking "diplomatic" recognition.

Lai Ching-te, who just won the island's local leadership election to become its next leader, has made no secret of his "Taiwan independence" stance. As deputy leader of the island's current authorities headed by Tsai Ing-wen, Lai openly said he was a "pragmatic worker for Taiwan independence".

As Tsai's successor, Lai has pledged to preserve the "status quo" across the Taiwan Strait. But he at once showcased that persistent attempt to expand the island's so-called international space. For all the hope he would become more pragmatic on cross-strait ties post-inauguration, there is little doubt he hopes to take advantage of the international "community of democracies" to seek a "diplomatic breakthrough" in pursuit of his cause.

But as the "diplomatic" setback surrounding the loss of Nauru indicates, that path forward may prove bumpy and cost the island dearly. Should Lai and his DPP colleagues ignore the lessons from Nauru and refuse to change course, worse might be on its way. Barely two days after Lai celebrated his election win, on Jan 15, the government of Nauru declared it would cut off "diplomatic relations" with Taipei. The second day, the country's parliament passed the resolution to restore full diplomatic relations with Beijing.

On Wednesday, the foreign ministers of China and Nauru signed a joint communique on restoring

diplomatic relationship. Ambassadorial level diplomatic ties were restored the very same day, with the Chinese Foreign Ministry counting Nauru as the 183rd country establishing diplomatic relations with Beijing.

"China and Nauru restoring diplomatic relations again demonstrated to the world that adhering to the one-China principle is an irresistible trend of history," Foreign Minister Wang Yi said. "No matter how conditions on the island change... the international consensus supporting China to preserve its national sovereignty and territorial integrity will not change, the historical process of Taiwan's inevitable return, and China's inevitable reunification will not change."

Wang also called for the "extremely small number of countries", 12 now without Nauru, to follow Nauru's example. "Diplomatic relations" with Taiwan are not only against those nations' interests as well as UN Resolution 2758, but constitute damage to Chinese national sovereignty, and therefore "will be corrected sooner or later," he said.

The DPP-led Taiwan's international partnerships are set to dwindle still further in number. Reuters quoted Tuvalu's finance minister as saying his country would review "diplomatic relationship" with Taiwan after its upcoming national election.

Rather than expanding the space for Taiwan's presence on the international stage, the DPP has merely put the spotlight on its efforts to undermine the postwar order and international law and add another eruptive factor to an already volatile world.

## Shame on those weaponizing human rights

The mudslinging at China's "human rights record" in the quinquennial review by the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva on Tuesday exposes the extent to which the United States-led clique is willing to weaponize human rights.

The silence some of the about 40 developed countries keep over the ongoing human rights violations in the Gaza Strip only serves to show the double standard they employ in criticizing what they allege are China's "human rights violations" in Xinjiang, Xizang and Hong Kong.

Some tried to attribute the more than 120 countries that spoke highly of China's efforts to uphold human rights in the three regions to a successful public relations effort by Beijing. That only serves to show the way in which the US-led clique politicizes human rights as part of its arsenal, with their championing of subjective human rights being used as a means to put pressure on and even overthrow foreign governments.

As for the so-called human rights issues related to Xinjiang, Xizang and Hong Kong, had the "prescriptions" for these regions put forward by these developed countries been faithfully adopted by the Chinese government, the consequences would have resulted in a nightmare, not just for the three regions themselves but also the rest of the world.

Xinjiang would have become a hotbed for terror-

ism and extremism thanks to the "Holy War" the de facto US pawns have been tirelessly trying to start in it. Xizang would have reverted to a feudal society to maintain its "purity". Hong Kong would have become a springboard for anti-China forces worldwide to cause trouble, winding the clock back to a quasi-colonial age for Hong Kong residents. And all of them would have been severed from their motherland.

Respect for a country's sovereignty and territorial integrity is the foundation of modern international order and a prerequisite for international relations. The baseless attacks on China's human rights record in the regions by the members of the US-led clique were intended to smear the country's human rights efforts with the aim of retaining the "moral high ground" for their championing of "universal values".

The 100-some "performers" staging "protests" outside of the UN human rights headquarters belied the moral superiority claimed by these China-bashing countries as they are all agents of groups on the US payroll. Shame on these human rights lecturers and champions pretending to be blind to or endorsing the human rights crises their gang leader has caused, directly and indirectly, worldwide. By surrendering themselves to be a tool in its hands, they have demonstrated how little worth they place on mutual learning and the advancement of the global human rights cause.

Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## RRR cut helps bolster virtuous cycle of confidence and vitality

China will cut the reserve requirement ratio by 0.5 percentage points from Feb 5, and the country lowered the interest rate of rediscount for loans to the agricultural sector and small enterprises by 0.25 percentage points from Thursday.

China's efforts to stabilize economic growth expectations are at a critical juncture and greater efforts should be made to sustain the economic recovery. Statistics show that in December, the decline in China's consumer price index and producer price index had both narrowed, and the growth rate of exports has picked up for two consecutive months. At the same time, the growth rate of social financing, broad money supply and loans has remained at about 10 percent, higher than the nominal economic growth rate. However, the country's economic recovery still faces uphill challenges and the authorities need to roll out a combination of policies in a show of its determination to

stabilize the economy, the market, and the expectations.

The RRR cut will enhance confidence, expand aggregate demand, and create conditions for the implementation of policy measures taken to keep the economy operating within a reasonable range. The cut will provide liquidity to the market of about 1 trillion yuan (\$140 billion), which will provide strong support for the growth of money supply and credit. At the same time, lowering the interest rate of rediscount for loans to the agricultural sector and small enterprises by 0.25 percentage points will guide financial institutions to expand lending to projects related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers, and reduce financing costs for related businesses, which will stimulate their credit demand and investment and better promote a virtuous economic and financial cycle.

The RRR cut will also help optimize the liquidity structure of the banking system and reduce the cost

of funds for banks. The country has been promoting the steady decline in social comprehensive financing costs, but this effort has been constrained by the narrowing net interest margin of banks, so it is necessary to reduce the cost of bank liabilities. The central bank's latest move can release more long-term and stable low-cost funds for banks, and create favorable conditions for promoting the reduction of corporate financing and consumer credit costs, further benefiting the real economy.

Compared with quantitative easing in other economies, China's statutory RRR is about 7 percent even after the latest cut, meaning there is still room for more cuts. The RRR cut at the beginning of the year reflects the forward-looking approach of the monetary authorities, and as a series of policies to stabilize growth, employment and prices take effect, positive factors will further accumulate to sustain China's economic recovery.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

## Super Tuesday make or break for Nikki Haley

Nikki Haley has congratulated Donald Trump on his victory in the Republican primary in New Hampshire and stated that she would continue to run for the nomination.

The New Hampshire primary is rather important, as it is regarded as something of a barometer of party support within the Republican Party. In the past five presidential elections, whoever secured the Republican nomination in the state eventually became the Republican presidential candidate. Since it was Haley's home state, with only about 21 percent of its population being evangelicals, it was believed to have

been an opportunity to take some of the steam out of Trump's campaign.

But even with "home advantage" Haley still lost. After New Hampshire, 15 states will simultaneously hold primaries on March 5, "Super Tuesday". Haley will need to do well if she is to continue.

But she faces an uphill struggle considering Trump has a support rate of 66.1 percent, according to a recent poll.

There are reports suggesting that many Democratic supporters secretly hope Trump wins early in the primaries, too. They believe this would, on the one hand, prevent the

Joe Biden team from being as complacent as it is now and, on the other hand, stimulate Democratic supporters and the neutral forces that dislike Trump to enter "battle mode" early, thus replicating the scene from the 2020 election where they "ambushed" Trump with exceptionally high voter turnout.

On Jan 22, Haley's campaign manager provided the media with a memorandum outlining the path for Haley's campaign toward Super Tuesday, which will clearly be the limit for her team to persist if she fails to make a good showing.

— BEIJING NEWS

## What They Say

## EU policymakers intent on reshaping economic ties

The European Commission put forward several proposals for deliberations among members of the European Union on Wednesday to strengthen the bloc's economic security.

Although the commission does not name the countries these measures are intended for, China, Russia and even the United States are widely believed to be among those that the EU seeks to prevent from "hurting" its economic security.

The measures related to trade are thought to be the ones that will directly reshape the EU's economic relations with its major trading partners.

The steps include improving the screening of foreign investments in the EU to prevent investments that may pose a risk to the EU's security; having a more coordinated approach to the EU's exports of dual-use goods — goods that can be used for both civil and military purposes — to ensure they do not fall into the wrong

hands; and understanding the potential risks associated with certain EU investments abroad.

The commission is also looking into ways to support research and development in technologies which can be used for different purposes, and at how to enhance research security across the EU.

This package follows up on the European Economic Security Strategy enacted from June 2023, reflecting the EU policymakers' rising concerns over the challenges the growing geopolitical tensions and profound technological shifts pose to the bloc's economic security.

Although many major economies share these concerns and are mulling over similar measures as well, most of them act with great prudence when it comes to the implementation of these moves in the fear that any overreach might turn the measures into restrictive, protectionist and discriminatory actions hurting normal foreign investment and partners, and thus

their own interests.

With an annual growth of just 0.6 percent in 2023, the eurozone may have already been in recession in the second half of last year. In comparison, the economic performance of China and the US is much better. That being said, if the newly proposed measures further complicate the procedure for normal investment, trade and research cooperation, they are very likely to do a disservice to the EU's already weak economic fitness.

It is a pity that the commission stopped short of defining the criteria for the EU members to evaluate and finally determine what investments, research and trading activities pose security threat to the EU's economy. That ambiguity creates a large murky space for the implementation, if not misuse, of the measures. So it remains to be seen whether these proposals can pass the bloc's internal deliberations, and if so, to what extent they will realize their intended objectives in practice.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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# GLOBAL VIEWS



**Editor's note:** The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategy Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.

ZHANG YONGJUN

## Flux analysis

The state of the US economy is still to be determined

In early January, United States Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen declared that the US economy had achieved a long-sought soft landing, a historically unusual event. Her main argument was that the US inflation rate had dropped to around 3 percent without significantly damaging the labor market, which was stronger than expected.



Data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the seasonally adjusted nonfarm employment increased by 216,000 in December 2023, surpassing market expectations of 170,000 and marking the highest increase since September.

In contrast, former president Donald Trump predicted in a recent interview that the US economy would crash. To assess the actual state of the US economy, it is necessary to analyze it based on the right economic indicators.

Even though inflation has been eased, the consumer price index is still rising by over 3 percent and the personal consumption expenditures by more than 2 percent, far from the Federal Reserve's inflation target.

According to recent data from the BLS, the CPI rose by 3.4 percent year-on-year in December, higher than the previous two months. More importantly, the core CPI year-on-year rate was 4 percent and the core PCE inflation rate was over 3 percent, both higher than the respective overall price increase,

reflecting how complex and difficult it is to tame the current inflation in the US.

For the Fed to achieve its 2 percent inflation target, it will need to persist with the tight monetary policy, at least in the short term.

The two parties meanwhile are in constant dispute over fiscal budgets due to the US' massive debt burden. This also has an impact on the economy.

And the US labor market may not be as positive as indicated by the nonfarm employment increase. In December, the seasonally adjusted total employment population aged 16 and older decreased by 683,000 compared to the previous month, which dramatically deviated from the trend in new nonfarm employment.

According to the US Census Bureau, the US population grew by over 1.75 million to 336 million in 2023, which means an increase of about 443,000 in the fourth quarter. However, the BLS data shows that the labor force decreased by 676,000 in December from the previous month and by 446,000 compared to September.

If the total population is growing but the labor force and the total employment population aged 16 and older are falling, it signals a decline in labor force participation and a lack of willingness to work.

The quarterly changes in the US employment population and GDP growth can be tracked to study the correlation between the two. Both the change in the total employment population aged 16 and older and the number of new nonfarm employment show a certain corre-

lation, though not a strong one, to the GDP growth, but the former is stronger.

For example, the US experienced two consecutive quarters of negative GDP growth in the first half of 2022. In the same period, the new nonfarm employment figures were quite positive, standing above 370,000 every month and 678,000 in the peak month. In contrast, the total employment population aged 16 and older in the second quarter decreased by 271,000, which was more consistent with economic contraction. Similar situations have occurred several times before.

Therefore, despite the acceptable performance of new nonfarm employment, the decrease in the total employment population aged 16 and older in the fourth quarter of 2023 should not be neglected.

The Christmas holiday at the end of December has a major impact on the labor force and employment numbers. Some people may quit their jobs during the season and seek a new one after the holiday, which partly explains the drop in the December employment figure.

However, it must be recognized that the seasonally adjusted data have largely eliminated the impact of such seasonal factors, and both October and December recorded employment decreases, resulting in the US' second quarterly decline after the pandemic. Therefore, whether employment will rebound in January will be critical to assessing the health of the labor market.

US trade contracted in the second half of 2023. According to recent data from the Bureau of Eco-



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

nomics Analysis, imports from January to November in 2023 fell 3.6 percent year-on-year, with import of goods falling by 5 percent, or 2.1 percent after adjustment for price changes. Most of the months registered a negative growth.

The decline in US goods imports indicates a reduced demand for imported products, reflecting a sluggish demand for commodity consumption.

In 2023, the Conference Board repeatedly forecast an economic downturn in the US. After continuous falling over an extended period of time, the organization's Leading Economic Index (LEI) dropped past its recession warning threshold determined by historical experience. Therefore, it is suggested that in the first half of 2024, the US GDP

may record two consecutive quarters of negative growth, leading to a technical recession.

Yellen's claim of a soft landing is therefore premature.

Of course, many institutions and analysts believe that what the US economy will experience is a noticeable slowdown, not a recession. For example, in the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024 report published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, it is forecast that the US economy will grow by 1.4 percent in 2024, which is 1.1 percentage points lower than the 2023 estimate. However, if a recession

does not take place, inflation may stand above 2 percent for an even longer time.

The author is deputy chief economist with the China Center for International Economic Exchanges. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

XU QIYUAN AND YANG ZIRONG

## Divergence disturbance

Timing and extent of the Fed's interest rate cuts this year may not align with market expectations

The United States Federal Reserve and the market are nearing consensus that the current cycle of interest rate hikes is coming to an end. However, there is still significant disagreement about the timing of future interest rate cuts.

Wall Street is optimistic about the prospect of interest rate cuts by the Fed and has already priced it in. According to data from the CME FedWatch Tool on Dec 1, the market expects the Fed to start cutting



Xu Qiyuan



Yang Zirong

interest rates in March, with a potential cut of up to 125 basis points within the year. Fueled by this optimism, the US dollar index had fallen to 103.2 as of Dec 1, a decrease of about 4 percent from its peak in October, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average hit a new record this month.

In contrast to the market's optimism, the Fed's stance leans toward caution. Looking ahead, the divergence between the market and the Fed on interest rate cuts may once again create disturbances in financial markets.

The evolution of the current US inflation cycle is influenced by both supply and demand factors. On the supply side, the supply chain has largely recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Due to base effects, the downward pressure of supply chain improvements on inflation may weaken in the future and could even turn upward again due to new supply shocks. On the demand side, tight monetary policy will continue to suppress domestic demand in the US, but rising demand outside



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

the US could exert inflationary pressure.

Specifically, two major supply factors and two major demand factors may have varying degrees of impact this year, leading to challenges on the pathway for the US to bring the level of inflation back to normal.

First, the aftermath of the major strikes in the US is gradually becoming apparent. Although the current wave of strikes in the US auto sector has temporarily ended, the direct and indirect impacts of the strikes may just start to emerge. If high inflation persists, the victories obtained by auto-

**The focus of the Fed's monetary policy will shift from a primary focus on containing inflation to an equal emphasis on cutting inflation and creating jobs.**

workers from the strikes could set an example for other industries, and the possibility of more strikes, which could potentially push the levels of inflation even higher, cannot be excluded. However, with the power of the trade unions significantly weakened compared with the 1970s, whether more strikes lead to a spiral in the increase of wages and prices will take time to determine.

Second, supply gaps may lead to a slight rise in crude oil prices in 2024. In 2023, the prices of crude oil edged lower in choppy trade, mainly due to unexpected disruptions on the supply side. In addition

to the increase in US crude oil production, Western policymakers have allowed Russian crude oil to continue circulating in the market by setting price limits, having seen an increase in Iran's crude oil exports. The oil production from these non-core OPEC countries has exceeded expectations, leading to a decline in crude oil prices. Looking ahead to the rest of this year, the oil supply from core OPEC countries is likely to remain at a low level, and uncertainties such as the unclear outlook of the Ukraine crisis pose questions about whether Russian oil can continue to circulate in the market. Geopolitical risks such as the escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict also pose risks to oil supplies.

Third, a possible weakening of the US dollar may contribute to a rise in commodity prices. The US dollar index may drop considering the end of the Fed interest rate hikes and the shift to rate cuts this year, which could drive up global commodity prices and exert inflationary pressure on the US.

Fourth, China's macroeconomic policies may further stimulate global economic recovery and increase demand. China's total investment dropped in 2023 due to issues in the real estate sector and local government debts. However, the recent issuance of 1 trillion yuan (\$139.4 billion) in central government bonds, the restructuring of local government debts and rollout of regulatory measures to support the financing of the real estate sector are indicators suggesting that the Chinese government is actively steadying economic growth and spurring recovery. Looking ahead to the rest of this year, China could see the stabilization and growth in investment with the defusing of financial risks and the implementation of pro-growth policies. China's macroeconomic policies and economic

recovery may boost global demand.

The focus of the Fed's monetary policy will shift from a primary focus on containing inflation to an equal emphasis on cutting inflation and creating jobs. However, if the unemployment rate in the US does not rise significantly, two factors may result in delays in the Fed's rate cuts compared to the market curve.

First, the path to bring the level of inflation back to normal may not be smooth sailing. In this process, if the Fed hints about interest rate cuts too early, it may lead to a significant rise in financial asset prices, a rebound in business investment, and an increase in consumer spending. This could result in a more solid foundation for inflation or a rebound in inflation, making it more difficult for policymakers to attain their target of controlling the level of inflation at around 2 percent.

Second, the Fed needs to rebuild its credibility, making it more inclined to cut rates later than expected. The Fed's misjudgment of the inflation situation in 2021 damaged its credibility. To rebuild its credibility, the Fed may lean toward a more hawkish stance. The timing and extent of the Fed's interest rate cuts this year will depend on specific economic data, and the possible divergence between the Fed's actual actions and market expectations may once again increase disturbances in financial markets.

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## LIFE

# Accessible documentary explores China before China

Eight-part examines origins of Chinese culture and politics and contribution to modern country, tracing roots back to the Paleolithic period, **Fang Aiqing** reports.

Time flows according to its own rhythm. But over the course of tens of thousands of years, the numerous individuals who lived within it, each for a period as short as a shooting star flashing across the night sky, have knit the vicissitudes of life, partings and reunions, sorrow and joy, into the magnum opus of history.

This is also true in China, where the emperors and nobles, heroes and heroines whose names and deeds have been recorded in written documents and oral legends passed down through the ages, as well as the ordinary people whose lives have left traces only on the cultural relics they left behind, have fascinated generations of archaeologists, their nature and cultural genes key to understanding why and how China has become the country it is today.

This is the idea conveyed by the eight-episode documentary, *China Before China*, which tells the story of the origins and early development of Chinese civilization, and contemporary attempts to portray ancient societies based on archaeological findings.

The series, a joint effort between a video production team and hundreds of archaeologists from across the country, is currently airing each week on Shanghai-based Dragon TV, as well as on streaming platforms BesTV, iQiyi, Tencent Video, Youku and Bilibili.

"What we want to explore are the characteristics of Chinese civilization and its spirit that have been transmitted through our blood, and from which we can trace the cultural genes that make us the Chinese people," says Jin Ruiguo, director of the news center of the National Cultural Heritage Administration and chief supervisor of the documentary.

"They reflect the origins of Chinese civilization and are the roots of confidence in our culture," he adds.

As the narration says, the documentary presents the way "people throughout history have made their efforts to live their lives".

Chief director Gan Chao says their aim was to depict the more specific social landscapes of our ancestors, but with a human touch that makes people on different rungs of the social ladder visible.

Drawing the specific details of history from piles of ancient documents, cultural relics and archaeological sites — as well as the inferred social evolution behind the artifacts — they have established an emotional connection with today's audience by telling individual stories, the director adds.

Apart from their well-organized and beautifully written narration, the series digs deep into the information contained in archaeological sites and cultural relics, on the basis of which they used digital technology to bring ancient

architecture and cities back to life, and invited actors to re-create scenes of daily life and production, as well as feasts, ritual ceremonies and other scenarios.

The costumes and ornaments the characters wear, the tools, utensils and sacrificial offerings they use, as well as the ritual procedures they experience, are the fruit of rigorous, multidisciplinary research. All of this provides the audiences with a direct, visual idea of the long past.

"The findings from archaeological excavations and associated research are the foundation of accuracy, and yet, we have to create a sense of reality in the historical scenes for the audience to feel engaged with the ancient societies we've re-created," says Qin Ling, associate professor at Peking University's School of Archaeology and Museology, and chief academic producer of the documentary.

For example, in the fourth episode, the audience is able to see what Liangzhu may have looked like more than 5,000 years ago. The Archaeological Ruins of Liangzhu City, which is located in today's Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2019.

Digital technology has been used to reproduce the grand capital, which was located on vast green plains. The city had a remarkable water and moat network, mostly composed of artificial waterways, and eight of its nine city gates were water gates.

As very little waste has been found in these former waterways, this would seem to indicate that they were strictly controlled to ensure smooth water traffic, the episode's narrator explains.

He adds that in the center of the city, an area known as Mojiaoshan, a 10-meter-tall man-made terrace was home to the palaces of kings and nobles, as well as other ceremonial architecture. The episode shows the king and queen, accessorized with various jade ornaments from head to chest, being escorted by lesser leaders as they attend a major sacrificial ceremony.

He says that outside the palatial complex were workshops making high-end handicrafts like jade and lacquer ware and the artisans' residences, as well as the mausoleums of the upper classes, and that thick walls encircled the inner city. Civilians lived in small settlements on the outskirts.

West of the ancient city, between the canal-laced flatlands and the verdant Tianmu Mountains, the remains of a system of upstream and downstream reservoirs have been found.

As the largest dam system in the world at the time of Liangzhu, it had a pondage capacity three times the size of West Lake in Hangzhou today.

Zhao Hui, a professor at Peking University's School of



**From top:** The Terracotta Warriors at Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum in Xi'an, Shaanxi province; an actor plays a Liangzhu artisan deliberately carving a jade ware; restored jade ware production tools from the Lingjiatan site in Anhui province; a bronze head from the Sanxingdui site of Sichuan province; a pedal-patterned pottery piece unearthed from the Dawenkou site in Shandong province.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Archaeology and Museology, who was part of the pre-review of the documentary, says the costumes, props and scenes accord with academic advice and have avoided exaggeration.

intensifying social inequality and differentiation, and the increasing use of pottery and jade ware, the latter mostly in the form of ritual and funerary objects.

This period saw the flourishing of the Hongshan Culture, located in the West Liaohe River basin in today's Northeast China; the Dawenkou Culture, mainly in today's Shandong province, and the Miaodigou Culture in the Central Plains region — both representatives along the Yellow River — as well as the Daxi, Lingjiatan and Songze cultures of the Yangtze River basin, among others.

The spread of painted Miaodigou pottery, with both concrete and abstract artistic expression, and the similarities in the shape and ritual use of jade among these different cultures, suggest that the upper-class members of these societies enjoyed frequent interaction and exchanges.

These regional cultures, often dubbed "stars shining all over the sky" by Chinese archaeologists, developed in parallel, each with their own strengths, cultivating diversity in Chinese civilization, while building potential for future integration.

Slightly later, the 5,000-year-old archaeological sites, such as Liangzhu, Qujialing and Shijiahe in Hubei province, ushered in an era of ancient states, which were either bonded by beliefs, ritual practices or the secular wisdom of governance.

They flourished before the Central Plains and northern cultures, such as Taosi, in today's Shanxi, and Shimao in today's Shaanxi province and, finally, Erlitou in today's Henan province, rose around 3,800 to 3,500 years ago, took the lead and became China's earliest dynastic state.

The last three episodes review the Shang (c. 16th century-11th century BC) and Zhou dynasties (c. 11th century-256 BC), their rise and decline, Bronze Age cultural — that of the Sanxingdui archaeological site in Sichuan province, in particular — political, ethical and ritual systems, and how they were involved in the process of the country's unification.

To make this brief history of early Chinese civilization work, the production team filmed some 230 archaeological sites and museums over the past three years, and these video clips will also be screened at 18 museums involved.

The Shanghai Media Group, which produced the series, will be working with Warner Bros Discovery on the production and promotion of its international versions, as the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation on Dec 9.

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## Giving folk art a sharper profile

A fold, a cut, scissor blades zigzag back and forth, a flick, and dancing pieces of red paper unfold as several pomegranates emerge, side by side. "I could have done it better," Zhou Dongmei says humbly, as she puts down the scissors and shows the finished paper-cut to curious onlookers.

"When I was young, my grandmother used to make paper-cuts, and I would watch her. In my hometown, many of our neighbors knew how to make paper cuttings. Since it was so common in our village, every household had a 'flower-cutting aunt' or a 'flower-cutting mother,'" she says.

Zhou grew up in Pucheng, Fujian province. The paper-cutting tradition took root in this southern county 1,700 years ago, when migrants from the northern Central Plains introduced it during the Western Jin Dynasty (265-316). Literati chronicled the relocation, writing about the craft, and since then, paper-cutting in Pucheng has evolved into a uniquely diverse and exquisite form that sets it apart from the simple style found in the north.

"Take pear blossoms as an example. Northern paper-cuts produce a general outline lightly embellished with patterns. But in Pucheng, we add many delicate patterns and Chinese characters to the blossoms as well," Zhou explains.

Paper-cuts were once used in every rite of passage in Pucheng. From birthdays to weddings, food and gifts were all presented with paper-cuts in corresponding patterns.

"When I got married, we had a big rice cake with a cake-shaped paper-cut on it, and a pair of fish with a fish-shaped paper-cut on them," says Zhou.

Both craft and tradition are fading away with the younger generation. Zhou, who has maintained her ties and is dedicated to preserving the art, set up a workshop in 2008 to produce and sell paper-cuts and train craftspeople.

She has created many innovative patterns that have contemporary relevance, such as her Fu Culture series, which features local specialties and patterns based on elements of the Beijing Winter Olympics. In order to appeal to young people, she applies patterns to cultural and creative products like tote bags, teacups and cellphone cases.

Her workshop also offers free short-term and long-



Intangible cultural heritage represents our distinctiveness. We hope to improve it, so that more young people will be willing to join us."

**Zhou Dongmei**, inheritor of Pucheng paper-cutting

term training for those interested, and both organizes and participates in events to promote Pucheng paper-cuts.

"During the Spring Festival, we used to make paper-cuts and give them out to passengers at Changle Airport in Fujian province for free. We do such things to continuously promote our products," says Zhou.

Her efforts have not been in vain. Young people are now becoming both buyers and inheritors of this ancient art form. Wang Xu has been learning paper-cut for more than a decade under Zhou, who is also her husband's aunt.

"At first, we learned the basic skills, so we were able to make the necessary cuts. By practicing more, we gradually came to understand the language of paper-cutting and its forms. We also learned drawing techniques and then, we started creating our own pieces through trial and error," says Wang.

Pucheng paper-cutting was listed as national intangible cultural heritage in 2014. The same year, Zhou was recognized as an inheritor at the provincial level and eight years later, in 2022, Wang was recognized as an inheritor at the municipal level — one of the youngest additions to the inheritor list.

A number of pieces made by her have been collected by local museums and some have been exhibited in countries such as Panama, Costa Rica and Peru. Apart from making new pieces, Wang also regularly teaches paper cutting for free at primary schools, high schools and universities.

"Intangible cultural heritage represents our distinctiveness. We hope to improve it, so that more young people will be willing to join us," says Wang.

*Li Hezi contributed to this story.*

CHINA DAILY



**Top:** Dishes with corresponding paper-cut patterns in Pucheng, Fujian province. **Above:** Wang Xu is making paper-cuts in her workshop. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# LIFESHANGHAI

The annual Yuyuan Garden Lantern Show kicked off in Shanghai on Sunday to celebrate the upcoming Year of the Dragon, which begins on Feb 10.

The 40-day event at the major tourism destination features a diverse collection of lanterns that take the zodiac creature as its theme. It's the 29th edition of the show, which was inscribed on the national intangible cultural heritage list in 2008.

Like the previous edition, this year's show, which features thousands of lanterns, is also inspired by *Shanhaijing*, or *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, a major source of Chinese mythology that dates back more than 2,000 years.

"This year's (show) depicts magical scenes where Chinese dragons live in harmony with aquatic plants and creatures," says Yin Ge, general manager of Shanghai Yuyuan Tourist Mart culture and branding department.

"It expresses the broad-mindedness of Chinese people to dance and prosper with people from other cultures, and showcases our traditional culture's unfading charm," she says.

One area features a cluster of nine dragon lanterns that are inspired by artifacts from different dynasties, Yin says.

"We'd like to showcase Chinese people's unity and continuous explorations, and express our openness to the world."

Lanterns at the Gold Plaza and Jiuqu (Zigzag) Bridge present dazzling and fantastical deep-sea scenes of lanterns shaped like fish, coral and other marine life.

The show also features dance performances, parades showcasing intangible cultural heritage, markets, puzzles and games.

"Preparations started last March," Yin says. "This has been the most difficult setup in the show's history."

It was tricky, for instance, to arrange the 400-odd fish-shaped lanterns to form the 50-meter-long and nearly 2-ton dragon that "flies" over Ninghui Road, she says.

## Tips:

Admission to the lantern show is free, except for the following periods: 10 am-10 pm from Feb 10-16 and Feb 22-25, and 2 pm-10 pm from Feb 17-21. Tickets can be purchased online or at booths around Yuyuan Garden. Prices range from 50 (\$6.90) to 80 yuan.

Also challenging was placing the lanterns in the water near Jiuqu Bridge.

"The craftspeople had to wear waterproof suits and go into the cold water to install them one by one," Yin recalls.

Actually, the show debuted at the amusement park Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris on Dec 15, where it will run until Feb 25 and also marks the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and France.

The Paris show featured 60 installations of lanterns shaped like dragons and other mythological creatures, in addition to Chinese folk performances and Shanghai delicacies.

"I really love all of these, especially the part showcasing mythical creatures and Chinese mythology," says Damien French, a visitor to the show in Paris.

And people from around the world are also visiting the show in Shanghai.

German teacher Susan Hess and her husband have gone to the event in Yuyuan Garden every year since they moved to the city four years ago.

"I love the Center Plaza because this is the place where I always go first. I think the dragons together are really great, and I like them. I also love the fish, and all the lanterns are very dynamic. I think this is my feeling about Shanghai at the moment — it is very lively and dynamic," says Hess.

"I love to see people are excited about Spring Festival. And I think it is a very nice atmosphere in China when family members come together for reunions, admire all these lanterns and have nice food. I think this is a very nice tradition."

The shows in Shanghai and Paris are also accessible via a QR code, enabling visitors from either side to see the other show.

"The connection between the lantern shows in both cities also represents the integration of Chinese and French cultures," says Hu Junjie, vice-president of Yuyuan Inc.

"We hope people in both cities can get closer to Eastern aesthetics and enjoy Lunar New Year together."

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# A brilliant celebration

An annual lantern show sheds new light on ancient culture, **Wang Xin** reports.

## Dragons fly high throughout the city

As Spring Festival approaches, shopping malls and commercial brands across Shanghai have set up art installations to usher in the upcoming Year of the Dragon.

The dragon is the only mythical creature among the 12 who in the Chinese zodiac. It appears as a chimera combining the features of nine real animals. It has antlers like a deer, a head like a camel, eyes like a rabbit, a neck like a snake, a belly like a mollusk, scales like a fish, claws like an eagle, paws like a tiger and ears like an ox.

The dragon is hailed as one of the most iconic and revered Chinese symbols, and is associated with such qualities as power, royalty, wisdom, luck, fortune, prosperity and success.

It's so deeply ingrained in tradition that it's heralded as a totem of the country's national identity and cultural heritage, and Chinese often refer to themselves as "descendants of the dragon".

"These installations embody Shanghai's blessings for people born in the Year of the Dragon," 34-year-old office worker Xu Fei says, while visiting a dragon-themed display in Raffles City in Changning district.

University student Yu Xin, 21, points out while admiring installations during a walk that some of his friends' names include *long*, the mandarin word for dragon.

Here are some locations in Shanghai hosting installations.

### 1. Talkoo Li Qiantan



**Address:** 500, Dongyu Road, Pudong New Area

Luxury brand Louis Vuitton presents a giant dragon installation at its Talkoo Li Qiantan store that combines the brand's classic checkerboard grid, four-leaf flower and traditional Chinese elements.

### 2. Huijin Department Store



**Address:** 1000 Zhaojabang Road, Xuhui district

This dragon sculpture is jointly presented by Huijin Department Store and the Dunhuang Museum. The image comes from the ancient murals in the world-famous grottoes of Dunhuang in northwestern China's Gansu province. It represents sanctity, majesty, good fortune and protection.

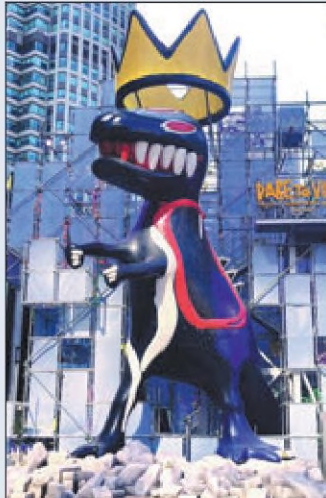
### 3. Raffles City Changning



**Address:** 1139 Changning Road, Changning district

This installation creatively combines traditional folklore and modern art to depict a giant roaring dragon that lights up at night.

### 4. HKRI Taikoo Hui



**Address:** 789 West Nanjing Road, Jing'an district

In tribute to American Neo-Expressionist Jean-Michel Basquiat, who pioneered the acceptance of graffiti, HKRI Taikoo Hui is presenting the large-scale art installation, *The Crowned Dinosaur*. It depicts a 15-meter-high dinosaur named Pez, surrounded by scaffolding to celebrate the theme of fearlessness. The Chinese characters for "dinosaur" include the character for "dragon".

### 5. Philips Healthy Living Lab



**Address:** 253 North Maoming Road, Jing'an district

Philips Health Living Lab chose red as the principal hue for the sculpture, and the installation occupies the entire height of two floors. It depicts a dragon sliding into the building through the outside wall. Its body is covered with written Lunar New Year blessings.

### 6. "Xixingle Zara" Flash Mob Space



**Address:** 193 Anfu Road, Xuhui district

Fashion brand Zara and Chinese home decoration brand Xixingle are presenting a pink dragon on Anfu Road. It incorporates classic Chinese motifs, such as dragons and peaches, to interpret Eastern aesthetics in a modern and stylish way.

—WANG XIN

YANG JUNZHOU CONTRIBUTED TO THIS STORY.



The annual Yuyuan Garden Lantern Show kicks off in Shanghai on Sunday to welcome the upcoming Year of the Dragon. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY



It (the lantern show) expresses the broad-mindedness of Chinese people to dance and prosper with people from other cultures."

**Yin Ge**, general manager of Shanghai Yuyuan Tourist Mart culture and branding department

## LIFE



# Overseas sound waves crescendo

Foreign musicians are finding their flow on Chinese streaming platforms, **Chen Nan** reports.

When American singer-songwriter Galen Crew returned to the stage for the encore during his show in Beijing on Jan 10, which was the final performance of his Troubadour Tour, the crowd started singing *Beijing Welcomes You*, a song released in 2008 to mark the 100-day countdown of that year's Beijing Olympic Games.

"I was so moved, and it nearly brought me to tears. There was so much love between us in the room. It was truly an unforgettable moment," says Crew.

The singer-songwriter released his first song, *Sleepyhead*, from his 2016 album, *Acoustic Daydreams*, on Chinese music-streaming platforms, including NetEase Cloud Music — one of China's leading streaming services, which has about 800 million registered users.

Since then, he has gained a large fan base in China, touring the country twice in 2016 and once in 2019. So far, he has released over 80 songs on NetEase Cloud Music. *Sleepyhead* has racked up over 60,000 comments on NetEase Cloud Music, and his channel on that platform has about 290,000 followers.

"Chinese music streaming platforms have given me a chance to connect with an audience I might not have reached otherwise. I spend hours each week responding to fan comments and interacting with them. These platforms have allowed me to have quite a unique international connection with them, which feels really special," says Crew, who started putting more effort into expanding his Chinese fan base around 2016, when he realized that fans in China were embracing his music more than anyone else around the world.

"Many Chinese fans have told me that my music has a healing effect on them and that it brings them a sense of calm or peace. The number of fans that say this exact thing is very striking to me, because my name, Galen, actually means 'healer' or 'calm.' And I don't think most of them are aware of that. The heartfelt messages I receive from fans give me motivation to continue creating, with the hope of impacting more lives in a genuine way," he adds.

The singer-songwriter actually wrote a song while in China on his first tour, called *Fragrance*, and filmed a music video for it in Shanghai and Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

He also says that another interesting fact is that his music is currently not very popular in his home country. So, the way that Chinese listeners celebrate it has been a great reminder that it's a big world out there. He also wrote a song, *I Know Your Name*, by working with a friend who speaks Chinese. His friend wrote the lyrics in Chinese, which led Crew to write his first song in another language.

"This is something I often tell other independent artists in America, who only think of success in terms of how it's defined in the US: be open-minded and think globally. Having your music become popular in a different country than the one you're from is a beautiful thing," he says.

According to the global music report released by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry in March 2023, China — as Asia's second-largest market — saw a significant rise of 28.4 percent in revenue, pushing it into the top five markets globally for the first time.

"The significant growth of fans in China who pay for streaming services naturally makes the market healthy and attractive for foreign artists. There are also a growing number of homegrown musicians who become new forces for collaboration when foreign artists consider expanding their fan bases," says Wei Yuan, vice-president of copyrights of NetEase Cloud Music. "The paid ecosystem is established, and inter-



national artists cannot ignore it."

Wei says registered foreign artists account for more than one-third of the 1,000 most popular artists, and the number is going up.

"Our platform users are open to a diversity of music styles, such as hip-hop and R&B, and we also help these foreign artists launch tours in China, as well as help them build a presence on Chinese online platforms by communicating with Chinese fans," Wei adds.

China's music-streaming platforms also offer their own form of social media, allowing verified artists to post photos and videos to their profiles for users to "like" and comment on.

Canadian rapper Alexander Leon Gumuchian, who's known by his stage name, bbno\$, is one of the most popular rappers on NetEase Cloud Music. His song, *Lalala*, has been played on the platform over 150 million times.

The rapper has been keeping in touch with his Chinese fans since 2017 by releasing songs on Chinese streaming platforms.

"The first time that I found out about my popularity in China was a huge shock to me. Also, growing up in Vancouver, Canada, most of my friends were of Asian descent, and lots being Chinese. I deeply appreciated the culture prior to having success in the market," says the rapper, who was born in 1995 and has released seven studio albums since 2017.

He adds that he learned Mandarin when he was home-schooled.

He has released nearly 200 songs on Chinese streaming platforms, including some created exclusively for China. He also has collaborated with Chinese artists, such as female rapper Vava.

"The world is so interconnected via social media these days," adds Gumuchian, who will return to China with a tour in September and October.

Among China's younger listeners, songs often go viral on social media apps like Sina Weibo and Douyin, so active social media presences help artists expand their fan bases. Many young Chinese are bilingual, which allows them to communicate with foreign artists without language barriers.

"It's been seven years since the first time I listened to your song. And now I'm a university student; your songs have been accompanying me throughout my youth, creating lasting memories," comments a fan of Danish pop singer-songwriter



**From top:** With about 780,000 fans on Chinese music streaming platform QQ Music, Danish pop singer-songwriter Christopher Nissen performs in Shanghai on Oct 27, 2023; Norwegian singer-songwriter Aurora Aksnes experiences Chinese culture during her first trip to Beijing; Canadian rapper Alexander Leon Gumuchian is one of the most popular rappers on Chinese streaming platform NetEase Cloud Music; American singer-songwriter Galen Crew returns to China with a show in Beijing on Jan 10.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Christopher Nissen.

Another fan of Nissen writes: "You are the most hardworking artist I have ever seen — you keep updating your social media frequently."

With nearly 200,000 followers on his Sina Weibo account, Nissen communicates with his fans in China and keeps them posted about his tours in Chinese cities.

"Ni hao to all my friends in China! I am so excited to share great news with you: I'll be back in China on tour this year! I know many of you have been waiting patiently these years. And I can't wait to bring my music to you in person," the singer-songwriter posted on his Sina Weibo on Sept 16.

"It feels truly amazing. I feel the Chinese fans have been incredible over the years and have been with me for around 10 years now. China was actually the first country outside of Denmark that I had hits in, so it feels very special to me," Nissen tells China Daily.

Born in 1992 and having five albums to his name, the singer-songwriter has gained about 780,000 fans on QQ Music, one of the streaming platforms that are part of the Tencent Music Entertainment Group, a leading online music-and-audio platform in China.

The first song he released on Chinese streaming platforms was *Against the Odds* in 2011. So far, he has released more than 200 tracks in China, including remixes and acoustic versions.

"I kept having success with songs, and I was amazed to be met by fans already at the airport (when) arriving. It was truly memorable and unbelievable to grasp that my music connected so far away from home. It was like a dream," says Nissen, who has also made appearances on Chinese TV shows.

Norwegian singer-songwriter Aurora Aksnes made her first trip to Beijing last year. Besides performances and meet-and-greets with fans, she spent a week in the capital enjoying cultural experiences like listening to *pipa* (four-stringed lute) music, tasting tea and wearing traditional Chinese clothes.

"It's important that our cultures merge. Music and art get to stretch their arms as far as possible," says the singer-songwriter, whose album, *The Gods We Can Touch*, received warm feedback on Chinese music-streaming platforms.

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## An ode to our unflagging uniformed uncles in blue

Every year, we expats need to head to the nearest visa office to renew our paperwork. It is an unenviable task that even the pandemic couldn't relegate to the back burner.

Staring at us from our passports is that immutable date on that inner page that simply demands that we need be present at the facility prior to the designated day or things can go south in a hurry.

Actually, south seemed like a tantalizing prospect that recent workday, as the capital was in the midst of a particularly frigid winter chill. Andy Dufresne said he had Mozart in his head to keep him sane during his month in solitary confinement. While my taxi ride to the visa office wasn't even close to being in "the hole", I did have Snow Miser's solo from the 1970s' holiday classic *The Year Without a Santa Claus* on my mind to keep me company on that subzero sojourn: "Whatever I touch, turns to snow

in my clutch. I'm too much!"

I think the Miser probably suffered from intimacy issues, much like Heat Miser and King Midas for that matter. It was a bit more uplifting than *Sound of Silence*, and it was a deep and dark January to boot.

Well, the actual toughest part of the journey was standing streetside and trying to order a Didi taxi on my handset — while wearing gloves! It's impossible, so despite the -10 C temps that morning, I had to push the tiny buttons with fat frozen fingers that resembled plump undercooked kielbasa.

But my day was about to improve markedly the moment I hopped in the cab. To my chagrin, I had accidentally entered the wrong destination, to which the friendly cabbie said: "No problem, just reenter it" Which I did.

Upon learning I was from North America, he asked if winters were colder than here in the capital, to which I replied, "Usually, but not this time around." This cheerful chauffeur was apparently just an appetizer for the fine service I was about to be treated to that day, it turns out.

You see, a while back I had twisted my posterior cruciate ligament something fierce, and ambulate with a bit of a giddyap in my gait. Think an ambling Doc House but certainly no *Ironside*. So, that moment when an eminent member of the Thin Blue Line at the visa office saw me exit the cab with a cane, he immediately sprang to action and guided me up the broad staircase gracing the building's main entrance.

After passing through a security check, I entered the complex thinking my law enforcement officer friend had returned to his post. But instead I was surprised to see he was not only an officer but a true gentleman, as he continued to accompany me to the front of the line, where my paperwork processing was prioritized and expedited. I mean, he didn't even swipe away my cane to see if I was a poseur looking for red-carpet treatment!

Well, I tried to avert my gaze from the non-caners, who were dutifully waiting in line to renew their visas. I mean, what's a feller to do? My private LEO was treating me like a king (of the jungle) — a true LEO the Lion! It gave me a sense of pride, as he saw me as his "mane" man no doubt. Even the fable of the mouse removing the splinter from the lion's paw gave the little whiskered one a lifetime of bodyguard treatment.

Anyway, I began the somewhat painstaking process of filling in the necessary documents when my cop friend asked, "what's in the envelope"; at which point I realized he was pointing to all the paperwork faithfully filled out in advance by my intrepid HR office. In other words, my new best friend saved me a good 20 minutes and the horror of holding a poxy pathogen-ridden public pen for that interminable duration. I was liking my LEO more and more.

Upon learning that I hadn't prepared passport-style photos in advance (actually, I think the only thing I did right that morning was remember to bring my passport), he escorted me to the photographer, rushed downstairs to pay for the service, then had me scan him back from the comfort of my chair. My, the perks of a walking stick!

I will be forever in this kind police officer's debt, having bent over backward as he did to help out a fellow human. And on the way out, I was again immersed in the holiday spirit, as I watched two bespectacled intellectual types in the facility's lobby try and capture their opponent's Queen in a spirited and trash-talk fueled game of *xiangqi* (Chinese chess). Of course, this brought another holiday tune to my head: *Chess Nuts Boasting in an Open Foyer*.

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