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# CHINA DAILY

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President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, greet children at a welcoming ceremony upon their arrival in Macao on Wednesday. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

WORLD WATCH  
By Fabien Pacory

## GBA key to driving innovation, economic dynamics

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is an advanced platform for innovation made up of strategic clusters for the development of foreign trade. This year marks the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland, making it an opportune moment to highlight the region's remarkable and multifaceted developments. Notably, the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, Zhuhai, Guangdong province, officially began closed-loop operations on March 1. It empowers cross-border e-commerce, acting as a Sino-Lusophone platform. China's total import and export volume with Portuguese-speaking countries stood at approximately \$220 billion in 2023. China is deepening its cooperation with Lusophone countries such as Portugal, Brazil, Mozambique and Angola. It reflects the growing importance and future potential of China's efforts to inject new energy into the modernization of the Global South.

In October 2023, I visited Zhuhai, and was awestruck by the quality of new mechanisms developed to boost supply-chain management with the rest of the world.

According to data from the General Administration of Customs of China, in the first half of this year, China's cross-border e-commerce imports and exports totaled 1.22 trillion yuan (\$164.79 billion), an increase of 10.5 percent year-on-year. In China's foreign trade, cross-border e-commerce is now one of the three major trade methods, alongside general trade and processing trade. So, the new cooperation zone in Hengqin, which is issuing new measures to propel cross-border e-commerce, will play an important role in the future.

So far, Guangdong has set up 6 million square meters of overseas warehouses worldwide. The Guangdong commerce authorities said they will fully use the port

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# Xi envisions shining future for Macao

President calls for leveraging institutional advantages of 'one country, two systems'

By MO JINGXI and WILLIAM XU in Macao

President Xi Jinping has urged the Macao Special Administrative Region to fully leverage the institutional advantages of the practice of "one country, two systems", work hard and be bold in making innovations to create a brighter future for the cherished pearl of the motherland.

Xi made the remarks on Wednesday afternoon as he arrived in the SAR amid eager anticipation of people from all walks of life ahead of the 25th anniversary of

Macao's return to the motherland, which falls on Friday.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, and his wife, Peng Liyuan, were warmly welcomed by hundreds of young people and representatives of the public, who flanked the red carpet waving the national and regional flags as well as colorful bouquets. "Every visit to this beautiful place



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has been very delightful for me," Xi said in a brief speech at the airport.

This is the seventh time in 25 years that Xi has set foot in Macao, which has a land area of 33.3 square kilometers and is located close to Zhuhai in Guangdong province.

In 2019, President Xi attended a gathering celebrating the 20th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland and the inauguration ceremony of the fifth-term government of the Macao

SAR. At that time, he called on all sections of society to build on what Macao has accomplished and take all undertakings in the SAR to the next level.

"This time, I'm here to celebrate with fellow compatriots the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland and see Macao's new developments and new changes in these years," he said.

On behalf of the central government and Chinese people of all ethnic groups, Xi extended sincere greetings and best wishes to Macao's residents, and said that Macao's development and the well-

being of its residents is always on his mind.

Over the past 25 years, the practice of "one country, two systems" with Macao characteristics has achieved success widely recognized by the world, showcasing great vitality and unique charm, Xi said.

It is the glory of Macao's residents and the pride of all Chinese people that the motherland is developing rapidly in an unstoppable way with each passing day and Macao is making steady progress with a promising future, he said.

Xi added that he will spend time visiting different places in Macao

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## Major steps urged to take rural vitalization effort forward

By CAO DESHENG caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping has urged further deepening rural reform and stepping up the pace of agricultural modernization, in order to make the country stronger in agriculture, make rural areas more prosperous and make farmers' lives even better.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman

of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks in recent instructions on work related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers, which were conveyed at the annual central rural work conference held in Beijing from Tuesday to Wednesday.

He said that in 2024, China secured a new record in grain output, ensured a steady growth in farmers' incomes and maintained harmony and stability in rural areas, which provided foundational sup-

port for promoting high-quality socioeconomic development.

Xi laid out priorities for work related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers in the next year, highlighting the need to uphold integrated urban-rural development, deepen rural reforms, and enhance systems for strengthening the agricultural sector, benefiting farmers and making rural areas continue to prosper, while comprehensively advancing rural vitalization.

He highlighted the importance of ensuring the stable production and supply of grains and essential agricultural products, saying that the arable land "red line" has to be upheld.

China has vowed to keep the total area of arable land above the red line of 1.8 billion *mu* (120 million hectares).

Xi called for strengthening the development of high-standard

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## Digital interaction



Visitors take photos of the Unitree G1, an advanced humanoid robot developed by Unitree Robotics, a Chinese company based in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday at Techfest in Mumbai, India. PRAFUL GANGURDE / HINDUSTAN TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES

## OVERSEAS TRAVEL AGENCIES BULLISH ON CHINA'S INBOUND TOURISM

Visa-free entry, longer transit periods among positive policies helping attract more visitors

By YANG FEIYUE yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Overseas travel agencies are raring to tap into the Chinese tourism market's potential as the country's positive policies continue to sweeten the deals being offered.

Sanne Prestegaard, a travel con-



sultant from Sinex Travel in Copenhagen, Denmark, recently had a mishap that turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

Prestegaard had planned to visit

Shanghai for the China International Travel Mart held from Nov 22 to 24. She applied for a visa in early November, and encountered a few hassles.

"I tried to apply online from home, but I had problems with the visa application system accepting the photos I had taken, so I gave up and decided to go to the visa center on Nov 8," she recalled.

Although she had prepared what she considered the correct visa application material — including copies of her documents and her profile photos — she still fell short of meeting the requirements as she had failed to provide details of her flight tickets.

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# ANNIVERSARY OF MACAO SAR



Tourists visit Rua do Cunha to find local cuisine in Macao on Tuesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

## Macao's fusion flavors shine

Since its return, city takes slew of measures to preserve its unique dishes

By LI XIANG in Macao  
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Macanese chef Palmira Pena is in the kitchen preparing a classic dish, "Minchi". Palmira has started cooking the essential ingredients: minced pork and beef. The enticing aromas fill the air as she chops onions and garlic for seasoning and fries diced potato in oil.

Once everything is ready, she begins to blend her aunt's traditional secret recipe, which artfully combines Eastern and Western seasonings. "This is my family's secret recipe," she said, adding that it is also the "key to the deliciousness of this dish".

Palmira, daughter of Portuguese father and mother who hails from Zhuhai, Guangdong, owns a restaurant in Taipa, Macao. She takes pride in her heritage and eagerly steps into the kitchen whenever diners express a desire to experience authentic Macanese dishes.

According to Palmira, the essence of Macanese cuisine lies in its remarkable fusion. This culinary style combines Portuguese and Chinese influences, integrating seasonal ingredients and spices sourced from Europe, South America, Africa and Southeast Asia. The result is a rich tapestry of flavors that reflects the diverse history and cultural intersections of Macao.

"Macanese cuisine is the world's first fusion cuisine. Its uniqueness lies in combining Eastern and Western ingredients; for instance, I use olive oil alongside Chinese rice wine. I prefer cooking with an iron wok because I admire Chinese culinary techniques and enjoy steaming hot food prepared in it. This dish beautifully blends Eastern and Western cultures," she said.

### Story of Macanese cuisine

Following Macao's return to the motherland in 1999, both the central and Macao Special Administrative Region governments have prioritized protecting cultural heritage and preserving local diversity.



A meal gathering with the Macanese community takes place at the Macanese Association in Macao on July 20. LI XIANG / CHINA DAILY

The fifth Chief Executive of the Macao SAR, Ho Iat-seng, emphasized the vital role of the Macanese community in Macao's population.

He affirmed that the Macao SAR government will support the community's development. He also underscored the government's commitment to respecting the Macanese people's language, culture, customs and religious beliefs, ensuring that their unique and cherished heritage will continue to thrive in Macao.

The story of Macanese cuisine dates back to the Age of Exploration, when, from the 15th century onward, Portuguese sailors embarked on ambitious voyages. These adventurers navigated the west coast of Africa, rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and sailed through the Indian Ocean and the Strait of Malacca, ultimately landing in Macao.

Longing for the familiar flavors of home, they blended ingredients from Portugal with local produce and those gathered during their travels, creating dishes that evoked memories of their homeland.

The term "Macanese cuisine" highlights this unique blend of Chinese and Western flavors originating from Macao. UNESCO has recognized Macanese cuisine as the world's first fusion cuisine.

Otilia Rodrigues Novo, a young Macanese chef, is reproducing the traditional dish "Capela," enjoyed by locals after Christmas Mass. Traditionally large and greasy, Otilia has transformed it into an elegant single-serving meal.

She enhances the flavor with Southeast Asian ingredients like sour tamarind and orange juice, balancing the richness of the pork and beef with a sweet and tangy twist. While traditional Macanese dishes are simply presented, Otilia adds vibrant fruits and herbs for a refined touch.

Otilia sees the kitchen as a laboratory where art and science converge, allowing her to express her creativity. "Today's consumers have high expectations for food, focusing on color combinations, rich textures and the aesthetic appeal of plating. Even lesser-known Macanese dishes can be transformed into exquisite, high-end cuisine. As a Macanese chef, I take great pride in this," she said.

In Macao, visitors can explore the old streets for traditional flavors or dine at Michelin-starred restaurants in the vibrant city. As a "World Center of Tourism and Leisure," Macao has seen a surge in visitors thanks to its unique attractions, comprehensive

facilities, and a "1+4" appropriately diversified development strategy.

With Macao's rising popularity, Otilia feels energized. "More and more visitors from around the world are coming to Macao. As a Macanese, I feel a strong urge to promote our cuisine, blending modern creativity with traditional essence for guests from all corners of the globe."

### Recipes not shared

When it comes to Macanese cuisine, one classic dish that stands out is "minchi".

Miguel de Senna Fernandes, president of the Macanese Association, smiles as he notes that every Macanese family has its unique way of preparing it. "As a result, they often argue about it, with everyone convinced that their family's version is the best in the world."

In Macanese households, recipes are cherished and closely guarded. For generations, these recipes have been passed down within families, rarely shared with outsiders.

"Macanese recipes were traditionally kept within families and seldom shared publicly, making preservation challenging and putting some recipes at risk of being lost," Otilia said.

Since Macao's return to the motherland in 1999, the protection of cultural heritage has become increasingly important.

In 2012, Macanese gastronomy was recognized as part of Macao's Intangible Cultural Heritage, becoming a national project in 2021. In 2020, the Macanese Cuisine Database was launched to promote this unique food culture.

"Since Macao's return, the SAR government has been promoting and preserving Macanese cuisine," Otilia noted. "The government has published many books on Macanese cuisine and created a dedicated database for its dishes. This initiative helps more people discover the richness of Macanese culinary traditions and ensures that this 400-year-old heritage will continue to be preserved and developed."

## Hengqin zone spurs growth, attracts talent

By LI XIAOYUN in Hong Kong  
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With business-friendly environment and improved living conditions equivalent to neighboring Macao Special Administrative Region, the cooperation zone on Hengqin Island of Zhuhai, Guangdong province, is becoming a popular choice for Macao residents to live and work in.

Covering about 106 square kilometers and located across a river from Macao, the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin was officially established in September 2021. According to its statistics bureau, over 16,500 Macao residents were living in Hengqin as of September, a 19 percent increase from last year. More than 5,000 Macao people now work in the zone, up nearly 5 percent on a yearly basis.

One of them is Hazel Wong, a young entrepreneur from a Macao family steeped in traditional Chinese medicine. Wong started her own pharmaceutical company in Macao in 2018, and expanded the business to Hengqin in April 2019, just two months after the central government announced plans to develop the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

"With these favorable policies and leveraging Hengqin as a springboard, I want to access the bigger markets of the Greater Bay Area and the rest of the Chinese mainland," said Wong.

Her company helps mainland traditional Chinese medicine businesses promote their products in Macao, facilitating the entire process from registration to distribution. "In the future, I hope to promote more TCM products and services to Macao and other Portuguese-speaking regions via the platform of Hengqin," she added.

Wong is also planning to make Hengqin her home. She bought a 130-square-meter house in Macao New Neighbourhood in late 2023, shortly after its opening on Nov 28.

As the mainland's first residential development for Macao buyers in Hengqin, Macao New Neighbourhood offers around 4,000 flats that can accommodate 12,000 to 15,000 residents. The project is equipped with essential amenities including shops, schools, clinics and elderly service centers.

The idea for such a large-scale housing development dates back to the central government's development guidelines of the Greater Bay Area released in 2019, and two years later, when the Hengqin cooperation zone was set up, Bei-

jing reiterated its support to accelerate the construction of this project, with the aim of providing one more option for Macao people to pursue quality living.

Macao is one of the world's most densely populated cities, with around 686,600 people living in an area of 33.3 square kilometers.

The shortage of public housing and high prices for commercial homes caused by this limited land have been a headache for the Macao government and people. The introduction of Macao New Neighbourhood is seen as a welcome relief, as Hengqin is three times the size of Macao.

The houses are priced at about 30,000 yuan (\$4,100) per square meter. In comparison, recent official data shows that residential properties in Macao average over 85,000 Macao patacas (\$10,600) per sq m. Notably, the architectural style and public service facilities of the housing complex are aligned with Macao standards and systems.

Medical professionals from the SAR, for instance, are allowed to practice at the clinics and to prescribe 290 types of medications available in Macao. Moreover, students can attend nearby Hengqin School, which is affiliated to century-old Hou Kong Middle School — one of Macao's most well-respected schools.

"In Hengqin, I've found a sense of home," said Wong.

Macao entrepreneur Calvin Sio's story is similar to Wong's. He started a technology company in 2018 that makes eco-friendly products from materials like tea dregs and brewing waste.

Last year, he moved his company's research base to a new startup hub in Hengqin, "attracted by the cooperation zone's supportive policies and open atmosphere," which he believes will help him reach the mainland market.

Sio said he has witnessed the transformation of Hengqin over the years. "It used to take a long time to travel from Macao to Hengqin by boat, but now it's a quick 30-minute drive from my home in Macao to my office in Hengqin."

Since last year, Macao single-plate private cars have been allowed to enter Guangdong without having to apply for a mainland vehicle registration plate.

Earlier this month, the third line of the Macao Light Rapid Transit — Hengqin Line — began operations, slashing travel time between Lotus Station in Macao and Hengqin Station in Zhuhai to two minutes.



Young people from Macao work at a business hub in Hengqin.

CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Snapshots reveal city's diverse true spirit

When people think of Macao, they often envision it as a "casino hub" — characterized by uniquely glamorous luxury hotel buildings equipped with casinos — because gambling industry serves as its pillar sector. However, what is Macao like in the eyes of its local residents?

With this question in mind, during a week of interviews in Macao last month, we randomly encountered local residents with a question: what is the image that best represents the city on their phones? They provided a variety of answers.

At a night market selling handicrafts and local delicacies, we met a stall owner from Portugal working in Macao, selling Portuguese dolls handmade by herself. This lady showed a photo of a small temple of



Zhang Yi  
Reporter's  
log

Chinese folk belief on the street of Macao, as she felt it represents China. Living in Macao for about 20 years, the lady said both Portugal and Macao are her homes.

Not far from this Portuguese lady's stall, a young local from Macao gave a counterpart answer, showing us a colorful photo he took of Portugal-style Macao buildings, recommending that we must visit these places.

Sam Hou-fai, Macao's incoming chief executive, also responded to the question, saying, "One must take a photo at the Ruins of St

Paul's, located next to the Na Tcha Temple, where Eastern and Western cultures blend."

Their answers complemented each other. The Ruins of St Paul's, designed in the 1600s by Western priests traveling to the east, now stands as a famous landmark of Macao. Besides it, the worship of Na Tcha, also spelled as Neza, is one of Macao's most distinctive traditional customs, listed as a national intangible cultural heritage.

In the hearts of the people of Macao, Na Tcha is seen as a hero who is fearless, capable of defeating evil spirits and protecting the people.

In Macao, the fusion of Chinese and Western cultures, including religion, architecture and cuisine, in this small yet beautiful city is evident, just as it is in its residents.

Jose Chan Rodrigues, a host and livestreaming blogger from Macao, has a quarter of Portuguese heritage as his grandfather hails from Portugal. One of his most unforgettable photos is of his father with the renowned singer Leslie Cheung. At that time, his father assisted in bringing the singer to Macao for his first concert in the city.

As Macao aims to develop itself into a city of concerts in recent years, Jose himself has hosted numerous events this year and taken photos with artists from around the world.

Becoming a sports city is also one of the focuses of Macao's recent development initiatives. A local entrepreneur shared a photo from a marathon event this year to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to China.

The picture shows him participating in a running event with his children. To his surprise, the famous diving champion Quan Hongchan

was also captured in the photo. He mentioned that the Macao children were thrilled to run alongside Quan and even gave her many turtle plush toys that she likes.

This year, many Olympic athletes visited Macao on various occasions. During the summer, the mainland Olympic delegation for the Paris Olympics came to Macao to interact with local residents, share inspirational stories and even play friendly matches together.

All of these developments are inseparable from the support and care that the motherland provides to Macao. Many elderly individuals who experienced Macao's return to China recall that the most unforgettable moment or picture in their lives was the tearful night of Macao's return and the moment when the national flag was raised in the city.

With the support of the central government, Macao, with its mere 33.3 square kilometers of land, now

has a broader scope for development. This year marks the third anniversary of the establishment of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, a place in Guangdong province but very close to Macao.

Hengqin has attracted Macao residents and mainland people for employment and business opportunities. A young woman who frequently travels between Macao and Hengqin shared a photo she took standing in Hengqin featuring the city of Macao.

The photos and stories shared by these individuals display that Macao is not just a "casino city"; it boasts a diverse culture, developing and diversified industries, and a promising future.



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# ANNIVERSARY OF MACAO SAR

## Xi hails chief executive's contribution

President says Ho tackled challenges, made hard-won achievements

By ZHOU JIN  
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President Xi Jinping acknowledged on Wednesday the work of the fifth-term Macao Special Administrative Region government and its Chief Executive Ho Iat-seng in consolidating the city's prosperity and stability, expressing hope that the outgoing chief executive will continue contributing to the practice of "one country, two systems".

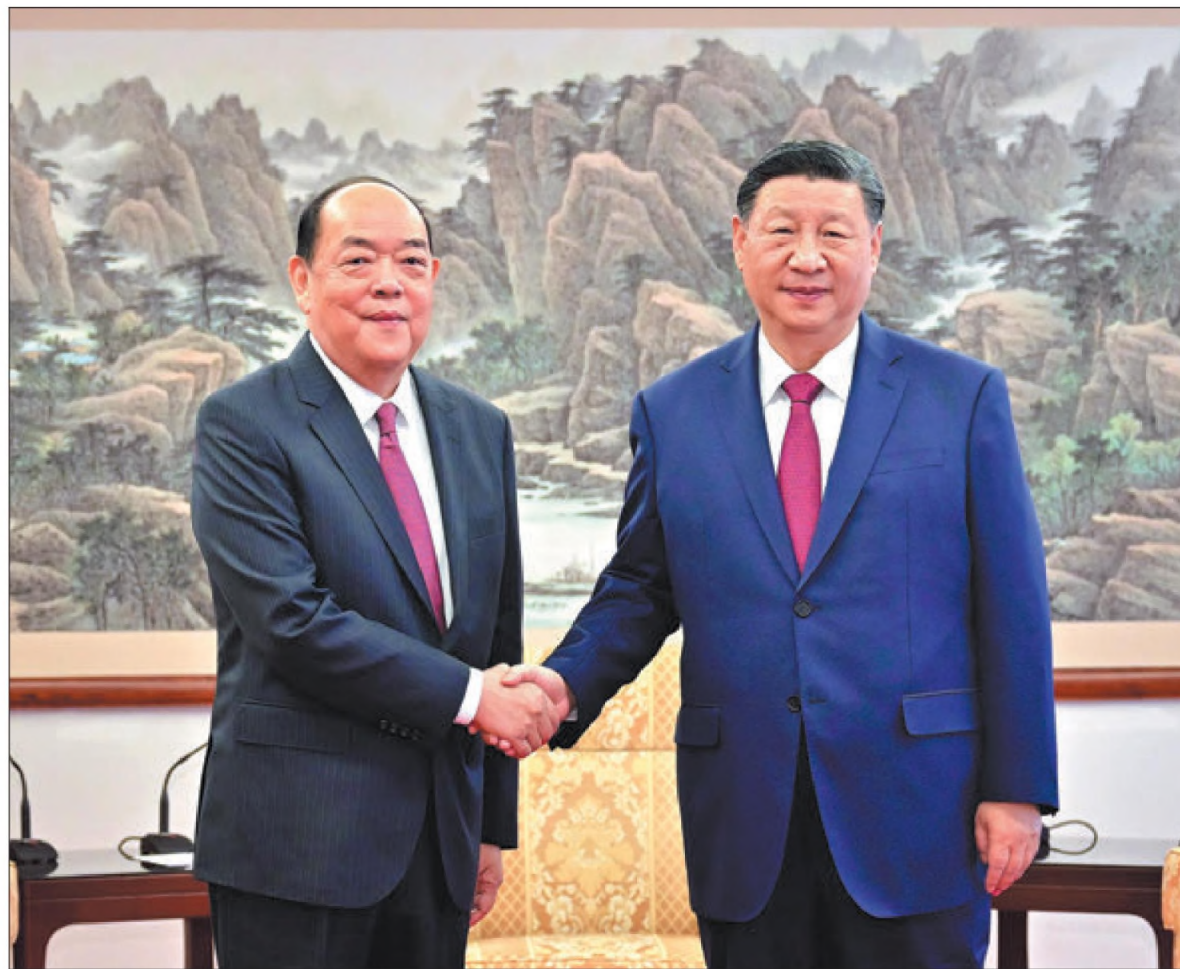
Xi made the remarks when meeting with Ho in Macao shortly after his arrival in the city to attend a gathering marking the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland and the inauguration of the SAR's sixth-term government.

The president praised Ho's tenure over the past five years, saying that he has tackled challenges head-on and made hard-won and pragmatic achievements.

Ho has led the SAR government to fully and faithfully implement "one country, two systems", safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests, and successfully overcome the severe challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Xi said.

Ho and the SAR government also made efforts in promoting the moderately diversified economic development of Macao, achieving new progress in various fields, and consolidating as well as advancing Macao's prosperity and stability, the president noted.

Xi said that he hopes Ho will support the new chief executive and the SAR government in their law-based governance, and make new contributions to the practice of "one country, two systems" and the development of Macao and the nation.



President Xi Jinping shakes hands with Ho Iat-seng, the outgoing chief executive of the Macao Special Administrative Region, during their meeting in Macao on Wednesday. Xi arrived in Macao earlier in the day for celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland and the inauguration of the SAR's sixth-term government. He will also inspect the SAR. ZHAI JIANLAN / XINHUA

Extending a warm welcome, Ho said he was sincerely grateful to Xi and the central government for the trust in and support for him.

With the strong support of the central authorities, the Macao SAR government united various sectors to deal with COVID-19 and pushed

for new progress in the development of the SAR, he said. Ho also pledged support to the new SAR administration in exercising law-based governance.

Since its return to the motherland 25 years ago, Macao has achieved all-around development

and continuously integrated into national development.

Once a quiet coastal town, Macao has been transformed into one of the wealthiest cities in Asia. Its gross domestic product increased from 51.9 billion patacas (\$6.23 billion) in 1999 to 379.5 billion patacas

in 2023, Xinhua News Agency reported.

In the first three quarters of this year, its GDP topped 301 billion patacas, up 11.5 percent year-on-year. In 1999, only 7 million travelers visited the city, while the number surged to 32.545 million as of Dec 7.

## Macao: Visit sets a clear path for SAR development

From page 1

during his three-day stay and hold extensive and in-depth exchanges with friends in Macao to discuss the region's development.

Wong Ho-ian, a student of Escola Choi Nong Chi Tai, who stood near the podium when Xi was delivering his speech, held a bright yellow "pearl" in her hands — a prop she used during the dragon and lion dance performances held to welcome the president and his wife.

"Although I'm only a high school student, I have learned a lot about how the motherland has supported Macao's development. I was very happy to hear him say that Macao is like 'a pearl on the palm of the motherland,'" Wong said, adding that the way Xi described the city struck a chord with Macao's residents.

Wong Kit-cheng, a lawmaker in Macao, said that Xi's visit represents the central government's best wishes for the SAR.

Wong, who also serves as the vice-president of the Women's General Association of Macao, said the president's arrival will set a clear path for Macao's development in the new era and the work of the new SAR government. "It also reflects the central government's high attention to Macao's sustained prosperity and stability," she said, adding that the motherland has always been a strong supporter of Macao.

Duarte Alves, president of the General Assembly of the Macanese Youth Association, said it is a great honor to have Xi visit Macao for a gathering to mark such an important date. "Macao today is a result of the vision of the country's leaders for decades and we, as people in Macao, are very proud," he said.

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## Mainland, Macao tap cooperation potential in new sectors

By WANG KEJU  
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The Chinese mainland has employed an array of measures for further opening up its service sectors to Macao, in line with the shifting development needs of the special administrative region, and for providing businesses on both sides with greater scope for cooperation and growth, analysts said.

By opening up new avenues for Macao businesses, the central government is empowering the city to pursue a more diversified and sustainable development path beyond its traditional strengths in gaming, they added.

The latest step came as the Ministry of Commerce signed amendments with Macao in October to further enhance the liberalization of trade in services under the framework of the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement.

The mainland and Macao signed the CEPA, an arrangement similar to a free-trade agreement that is established between two separate customs territories of a single sovereign state, in 2003 with the objective of promoting the joint economic prosperity of the mainland and Macao.

At the core of the most recent revision is a comprehensive package of opening-up initiatives aimed at further lowering or eliminating the market entry threshold for Macao-based service providers in a range of industries, including finance, telecommunications and construction.

Some of the measures will be piloted in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to facilitate regional institutional connectivity



Passengers from Macao pose for photos aboard the first train of the Macao Light Rapid Transit system's Hengqin Line on Dec 2. The 2.2-kilometer line, which links Macao's Lotus Station with Hengqin Station in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, started operations on that day. CHEONG KAM KA / XINHUA

before putting them into practice across the nation.

The service sector accounts for a significant component of Macao's economic development, which can be achieved effectively within the city's limited land area, said Qi Pengfei, director of Renmin University of China's Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao research center.

The new steps will bring huge opportunities for Macao enterprises, especially in areas such as finance, entertainment and cultural services, to access the vast mainland market — a critical step in Macao's sustained efforts to diversify its economy, Qi said.

While Macao's booming gaming industry has fueled rapid economic growth and job creation, the outsized influence of the sector might crowd out the development of other sectors, and it limits Macao's overall economic resilience and ability to withstand downturns, Qi added.

According to the plan issued in November last year for Macao's economic diversification from 2024 through 2028, the goal is to increase the share of value-added nongaming activity to about 60 percent by 2028.

In the past, Macao's enterprises in the service sector faced various barriers, such as high market access thresholds and restrictions on business operation duration, when trying to enter the mainland market, said Liang Haiming, chairman of the Hong Kong-based China Silk Road iValley Research Institute.

By tapping into the vast mainland market, Macao's service enterprises can now leverage their unique strengths to cultivate new competitive advantages beyond the traditional pillar industries, Liang added.

As part of the new initiatives, the amendments have outlined various measures to open up the financial sector, one of the new engines of growth for Macao.

Macao's financial services industry has seen a surge in its contribution to the city's overall tax revenue, with its share increasing from around 6.9 percent in 2019 to some 16 percent in 2023 — making it the second-largest source of tax income after the gaming sector, according to the Statistics and Census Service of Macao.

To catalyze the further growth of Macao's financial sector, the amendments have included steps to expand the business scope of Macao-based banks operating on the mainland, and to promote bond market interconnectivity.

For the mainland, the greater access granted to Macao service enterprises will also bring about substantial benefits, said Xu Hongcai, deputy director of the China Association of Policy Science's economic policy committee.

The entry of Macao service providers will introduce advanced management concepts, high-quality service products and innovative business models, helping to upgrade and develop the service industry on the Chinese mainland, Xu added.

## Outlook rosy as SAR diversifies its economy

By ZHANG TIANYUAN  
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Macao's push to break free from its casino-dependent economy paints a rosy picture for the young generation's aspirations for careers in areas such as scientific research, technology, arts and tourism.

As the city marks its 25th anniversary on Friday as a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China, its economic transformation is opening doors that were once inconceivable for residents.

Tang Chi-pui, a 38-year-old assistant professor at Macau University of Science and Technology's State Key Laboratory of Lunar and Planetary Science, exemplifies a new generation that is charting unconventional careers in the SAR.

"When I completed my doctorate at Nanjing University, Jiangsu province, in 2014, pursuing lunar research in Macao seemed far-fetched," said the Macao native, who studies Chang'esite-(Y), a lunar mineral crucial to understanding the moon's evolution and the first lunar mineral discovered and identified by Chinese scientists.

Tang's parents once envisioned a stable civil service path for their son — a traditional path in a city where jobs typically revolve around casino floors, government offices and insurance sales.

### Tangible transformation

The transformation is tangible. In early November, Tang gave a speech at a local high school, where students and teachers eagerly inquired about paths to aerospace research careers. "I have never been asked questions like that before," he said. "The unprecedented curiosity indicates how Macao's expanding technological sphere is opening new horizons."

He attributes this expansion to the nation's development of aerospace sectors and the government's financial incentives for technology. Macao's efforts to shake off a long-

standing reliance on casinos have been in full swing since 2006, when then SAR chief executive Ho Hau-wah vowed to diversify economic development, echoing the nation's 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-10).

The vision morphed into the "1+4" strategy, unveiled in 2023, to entrench Macao's status as a tourism and leisure hub while wagering on healthcare services, modern finance, advanced technology, and the meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions industry.

### Skyrocketing growth

Since returning to the motherland, Macao has seen its gross domestic product skyrocket nearly eightfold, from \$6.1 billion in 1999 to \$47 billion last year. As for gaming revenues, which once contributed more than 60 percent of GDP, officials aim to cut the share to less than 40 percent by 2028.

Sam Hou-fai, the city's incoming chief executive, who will take office on Friday, pledged to advance the SAR's diversification by developing aerospace research, traditional Chinese medicine and financial services.

Hong Kong lawmaker Adrian Pedro Ho King-hong, who is also familiar with Macao policies, said, "Over the next decade, many young people will gravitate toward emerging sectors, particularly in traditional Chinese medicine, technology and specialized finance."

Some Macao students have already chosen technically focused university programs to pursue fresh opportunities, switching from general business studies, Ho said. But he added that "building a high-tech ecosystem in Macao will require time."

Macao could accelerate its economic restructuring by leveraging Hong Kong's talent and fundraising pools, Ho said.

The integrated development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area has also greatly helped Macao diversify its economy.

The Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone, established in 2021 on Hengqin Island of Zhuhai, Guangdong province, has enabled Macao to develop industries such as high-end manufacturing, TCM, financial services and cultural tourism. As of September, the zone has attracted 6,461 Macao enterprises and 16,539 Macao residents to move in.

### Tourism efforts

In the tourism sector, Macao's visitor arrivals surged 30 percent year-on-year to 25.92 million in the first three quarters, with mainland tourists accounting for 70 percent of the visitors. International visitors made up just 6.5 percent of the total.

Paul Wong Fai, president of the Macau Leisure Tourism Services Innovation Association, said the city is ramping up efforts to draw tourists from Asia as well as Europe and the United States.

Wong noted that Macao's next administration plans to create an integrated tourism zone for international travelers. "The government is already revitalizing various districts across Macao, blending community development with tourism initiatives," he said.

"The government's move is breathing new life into neighborhoods like Rua da Felicidade, the area around Fortaleza do Monte, the historic Lai Chi Vun Shipyards, and Barra Square near A-Ma Temple," Wong said. "These efforts aim to highlight Macao's unique fusion of Eastern and Western cultures."

### 'City of performing arts'

Developing Macao as a "city of performing arts" has also been discussed in recent years amid its economic reshuffle. In 2023, more than 2,000 major performances and 10,000 cultural events drew a total of nearly 20 million participants. Large-scale concerts alone attracted 1 million people, generating \$137.4 million in ticket sales.

Henry Lei Chun-kwok, an associate professor of business economics at the University of Macau, said the economic impact is clear, since typical mainland tourists spend an average of around \$385 per visit, while concertgoers spend nearly twice that amount on accommodations, dining and shopping.



# ANNIVERSARY OF MACAO SAR

Grenville Cross

## Commemoration affirms success of 'one country, two systems'

At midnight on Dec 19, 1999, China resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Macao from Portugal, and now the 25th anniversary has arrived. Having been governed by Portugal since the 16th century, its return triggered national celebrations — an estimated 30,000 people converged on Tiananmen Square alone. Following the return of Hong Kong and Macao to the motherland, the Taiwan question became the only historical issue requiring resolution.

Whereas thanks to the outgoing Hong Kong governor, Chris Patten, who arbitrarily manipulated the previously agreed democratic settlement, the United Kingdom's handover of Hong Kong in 1997 was marred by acrimony, the return of Macao was the polar opposite.

At the handover ceremony, Chinese president Jiang Zemin said, "Our two sides have worked together in conformity with the historical trend of the times and brought about the smooth transition and transfer of government in Macao." In consequence, Macao had entered into "a brand-new era in its development".

The Portuguese president, Jorge Sampaio, concurred. He said the agreement with China over Macao's future had been "sensible and peaceful". Given his country's long association with the territory, he called the handover "an essential unique moment in the history of Macao", and so it has proved.

The Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on Macao was signed in 1987, and then absorbed into its Basic Law, which was enacted by the National People's Congress in 1993. It provides (Article 5) that the socialist system will not apply in Macao after 1999, and that the "capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years" (this is identical to the Hong Kong Basic Law's Article 5).

In contrast to Patten, the last Portuguese governor of Macao, General Vasco Rocha Vieira, faithfully observed the joint declaration, and this ensured a smooth handover.

From the outset, it was hoped that Macao would be governed in accordance with Deng Xiaoping's visionary "one country, two systems" policy, and this has been achieved.

As in Hong Kong, president Jiang explained that the future special administrative region would be vested "with executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication", and this became the reality.

Since the handover, the executive and legislative branches have per-



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formed effectively. The best interests of the residents have been prioritized, and each has conscientiously contributed to national objectives. Whenever frictions have emerged, they have been resolved in a constructive spirit.

President Jiang also said the "Macao compatriots have a glorious tradition of patriotism", and this has been amply borne out. For example, the Macao Basic Law's national security provisions, which are drafted in identical terms to Hong Kong's (Article 23 in both places), were implemented without difficulty in 2009 and enjoyed popular backing.

Social stability has been maintained in Macao, and its per capita GDP is among the highest in Asia. It has a high Human Development Index and the world's second-highest life expectancy (after Hong Kong). According to the World Bank, life expectancy has risen from 65 years in 1960 to 84.8 years this year.

The judiciary, presided over until August by the Court of Final Appeal's chief judge, Sam Hou-fai (who served for almost 25 years and is now the chief executive designate) has ensured stability. It has upheld the rule of law, maintained legal standards and handled its caseload with professionalism, sensitivity and skill. Sam set a fine example that will undoubtedly inspire his successor, Song Man-lei, a former prosecutor. Having been Macao's first female deputy prosecutor, Song is now its first female chief judge, a feat that will encourage many younger women.

One striking aspect of Macao's post-reunification development has been its role as a bridge linking China to other parts of the world. In 2023, for example, an agreement was signed between Macao and Zhejiang province to facilitate access by the lusophone countries to Zhejiang's wholesale center for small products (the world's largest). Zhejiang has China's fourth-largest economy, and Macao is also helping it to strengthen cooperation with Latin America and Europe.

As a special administrative region of China, Macao has remained highly autonomous politically and economically. It is sometimes called

the "Las Vegas of Asia", and has opened up by developing its gaming, tourism and service industries.

Although famous for its gaming (which nets healthy revenues), Macao has sought to diversify its economy. In 2023, the six biggest casino concessionaires committed to investing \$15 billion in the coming decade, 90 percent of which will be spent on non-gaming development.

Although Macao is one of the world's most densely populated cities and has many visitors every year, it has developed a sophisticated transportation network. It has modernized roads, an effective light rail system, comprehensive bus services and visitor-friendly taxis.

Macao has also spread its wings globally and now participates in over 100 international organizations, including the International Association of Prosecutors, whose executive committee met in the city in April.

In May, when Xia Baolong, director of the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, visited Macao, he emphasized its credentials as an international city and highlighted its advantages. They included the "one country, two systems" policy, sufficient development space, an internationalized business environment, a unique mix of Chinese and Western cultures, a strong economic base, and a passion for loyalty and patriotism.

As Beijing envisages the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area becoming an economic powerhouse by 2035, the development of Hengqin (a small island in Zhuhai city in the mainland that neighbors Macao) as a special zone will be crucial. The Hengqin cooperation zone, established in 2021, is now witnessing scientific and technological research, high-end manu-

facturing, and traditional Chinese medicine production. Every effort is being made to attract foreign investment in advanced manufacturing, financial services and e-commerce, and steady progress is being made.

As an international city, Macao also has other irons in the fire.

Since 1999, Macao has also helped the country to develop its ties with the lusophone world. They have included commerce, culture and tourism, covering many areas. On Nov 22, for example, a three-week film festival got underway, featuring 30 films from China and the lusophone nations, divided into five sections. The first section focuses on the works of Chinese director Guan Hu and Portuguese director Miguel Gomes, while the other sections involve a variety of Chinese and Portuguese-language films.

With Beijing's encouragement, Macao is busily honing its technolog-

ical credentials. It is now developing integrated units, new energy projects and even artificial intelligence. It is establishing a supply chain for chips, from design to testing, which complements Hong Kong's endeavors in this area. The Guangdong-Macao in-depth cooperation zone is creating an environment in which Macao's innovation and industry transformation can proceed apace.

The new-term Macao government will be inaugurated on Friday, and President Xi Jinping has indicated his expectations of the incoming chief executive, Sam Hou-fai. He wants him to adopt a spirit of responsibility, further diversify the gaming economy, tackle livelihood issues and improve the city's national security regime. Although some people have prospered in Macao, others are struggling, with housing costs being a serious social problem. Sam will need to think outside the box if he is to tackle these issues, as he appreciates.

He is committed to the spirit of "upholding fundamental principles and breaking new ground", and reform will be his "key focus", which is encouraging. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lives of the vulnerable have been impacted, and social welfare policies will require overhauling. Sam hopes to win people's trust and enhance governance capabilities while upholding national security. His challenge will be to turn these laudable aspirations into practical policies capable of yielding concrete results.

Sam intends to meet with his Hong Kong counterpart, John Lee Ka-chiu, to share views, which is a step in the right direction. He believes there is "significant potential and space for synergy and joint development between us and Hong Kong", and nobody can gainsay that.

By pooling their talents and working constructively together, the two SARs can have a huge impact on the GBA and beyond.

By any yardstick, the "one country, two systems" policy has more than proved its worth in Macao, and joyous celebrations on the 25th anniversary are wholly warranted. While maintaining the best of the past, it has provided a framework for the city's relentless progress. There appears no reason why, given its success, it should not be extended beyond 2049 (the expiry date envisaged by the Joint Declaration), and this would benefit the entire country.

The views do not necessarily represent those of China Daily.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Lau Siu-kai

## Strong reasons behind smooth implementation

Over the past 25 years, the implementation of the "one country, two systems" policy in Macao has been smooth and successful, which has been recognized by national leaders. Five years ago, President Xi Jinping applauded Macao compatriots for "creating the best development situation in Macao's history and writing a glorious chapter in the successful implementation of 'one country, two systems' with Macao characteristics" at a ceremony celebrating the Macao Special Administrative Region's 20th anniversary.

Since the 1999 handover, Macao has made significant progress in politics, economy, people's livelihoods and cultural affairs. Politically, it has maintained stability, correctly handled the relationship between the central government and the SAR, respected the central government's comprehensive jurisdiction over the SAR, established benign interactions among the executive, legislative and judicial organs, improved governance efficiency and effectiveness, completed the local legislation of Article 23 of the Basic Law, and adopted robust measures to strengthen its capacity to safeguard national security.

Economically, Macao has achieved impressive growth, with its per capita GDP ranking among the top globally. It has also attained preliminary results in promoting economic diversification. In terms of people's livelihoods, Macao has continuously improved education, healthcare, housing and social security, elevating residents' living standards and quality of life. Culturally, Macao actively inherits and promotes Chinese cul-



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ture and vigorously carries out national and patriotic education, which has significantly enhanced the idea of the motherland, national consciousness, and understanding and support for the "one country, two systems" policy among residents, especially young people.

In an important speech, President Xi pointed out four significant experiences Macao gained in successfully implementing the "one country, two systems" policy: Consistently enhancing public confidence in this policy, always moving along its correct direction, continually strengthening its mission and responsibility, and laying a solid social and political foundation for it.

Macao can successfully implement the "one country, two systems" policy because it enjoys favorable conditions, some of which are in short supply in Hong Kong. These conditions have engendered high trust and respect among Macao residents for the country and the central government.

First, Macao experienced a history of "colonial" governance different from that of Hong Kong. Portugal was far inferior to the United Kingdom in terms of modernization, industrial development, political stability and governance capabilities.

Portugal ruled Macao for four centuries. Not only did it fail to create an "economic miracle" comparable to Hong Kong's in Macao, but it also left Macao in a relatively backward economic state, and the living standards of Macao residents were also low. Before returning to the motherland, many Macao residents were unhappy with various aspects of Macao's situation and desperately craved improvements. Therefore, they had eager expectations for a new Macao.

They espoused and supported the "one country, two systems" policy. Its inception thus took place in a favorable political atmosphere and was looked on positively by the public.

Second, before returning to the motherland, Macao's economic structure was simple, mainly relying on the gaming industry. This economic structure was not conducive to creating a large, modern middle class. Members of the modernized middle class, such as that in Hong Kong, are generally more susceptible to the influence of Western political values. Under Macao's pre-modern class structure, the authoritarian Portuguese Macao government rarely encountered mistrust from Macao's tiny middle class and other pro-Western elements, and Macao's executive-led political system faced few challenges.

Since returning to the motherland, Macao respects the central government's comprehensive jurisdiction, and the central government and the SAR have a harmonious relationship. Meanwhile, Macao has maintained its original executive-led political system. The relationship between the executive branch and the legislative

body is cooperative and cordial, and the executive and the judiciary respect each other's functions. The Macao SAR government administers effectively and enjoys the support and trust of residents. Accordingly, it can vigorously undertake various tasks to promote economic development and improve people's livelihoods.

Third, for historical reasons, Macao's patriotic forces, especially the business community, have long been the dominant political force in the city. Before and after the founding of the People's Republic of China, there was no large-scale influx of anti-communist and anti-China elements into Macao. After riots against the Portuguese Macao government broke out at the end of 1966, its prestige plummeted irrevocably. Since then, the patriotic forces of Macao assumed a more substantive role in the governance of Macao and, as a result, were able to grow further, gain experience and accumulate popularity. For this reason, patriotic forces could more smoothly take over and run the Macao SAR government and successfully implement the "one country, two systems" policy after the handover.

Fourth, powerful internal and external hostile forces have not coveted or threatened Macao. Portugal had always practiced authoritarian rule before the "Carnation Revolution" in 1974. Therefore, it had little political incentives to introduce democratic reforms in Macao. The Portuguese were worried that democratic reform would jeopardize the rule of the Portuguese Macao government. Even after Portugal agreed to hand Macao back to China, the Portuguese Macao government, unlike the British Hong

Kong government, was not motivated to expand those few anti-communist and anti-China elements in Macao. Instead, it wisely chose to rely more on the patriotic forces to stabilize its rule in the twilight years of its administration. In addition, the number of anti-communist and anti-China elements in Macao has always been small, and the Macao SAR government is highly vigilant and wary of internal and external hostile forces.

Fifth, Macao residents are willing and keen to integrate into the country's overall development with the central government's guidance and support and obtain endless development momentum from it. These conditions ensure that the central government's myriad policies to benefit Macao can be implemented efficiently, allowing Macao to accelerate its development. For example, the central government has repeatedly approved land reclamation in Macao, significantly enlarging Macao's land area. Even more important was the establishment of the Hengqin Guangdong-Macao Deep Cooperation Zone and its subsequent development. This cooperation zone has greatly expanded Macao's economic and geographical development space. In the long run, it will help improve the livelihoods and employment of Macao residents, enrich the content of the practice of the "one country, two systems" policy and promote the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Finally, following Macao's return to the motherland, it can step up national education in an environment free of obstruction from hostile forces, allowing the original intention

of the "one country, two systems" policy and the core content of the Basic Law to be deeply rooted in the hearts of Macao residents, especially young people. There is generally no significant difference in the understanding of the policy and the Basic Law among all walks of life, which is conducive to the comprehensive and accurate practice of the policy.

From the perspective of comprehensively and accurately practicing the "one country, two systems" policy, Macao indisputably enjoys a set of favorable conditions to become a model of it. It is true that Macao still has much room for improvement in strengthening governance, promoting industrial diversification, improving people's livelihoods and uniting society. When President Xi met with the incoming chief executive of Macao, Sam Ho-fai, on Nov 1, he said he hopes that Sam will be brave enough to shoulder heavy responsibilities, live up to his mission, lead the new government of the SAR, unite all sectors of society, work together with them, be innovative in a principled way, be committed and enterprising, do well, continuously create new situations in the practice of "one country, two systems" with Macao characteristics and make greater contributions to building a strong country and achieving national rejuvenation.

Sam's election platform echoed the requirements and has become the guiding tenets of Macao's future policies and development. I hope that under the leadership of Sam, Macao will perform even better in the practice of the "one country, two systems" policy, governance efficiency, economic development, and social harmony by building on its original solid foundation.

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## CHINA

## Expertise on display



Mohammad Javad Haghi from Iran competes in the third SCO Countries Worker Skills Contest on Wednesday in Qingdao, east China's Shandong province. The contest attracted skilled workers who competed in three categories, promoting skills exchange and mutual learning among SCO countries through training, themed lectures and company visits. LI ZHENG / XINHUA

## China and India strengthen ties through dialogue, mutual trust

The two neighboring countries pledge to improve bilateral relations, address border question

By ZHAO JIA  
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Beijing and New Delhi expressed their readiness to build political mutual trust, resume dialogue mechanisms, and enhance cooperation in trade and culture on Wednesday, as senior officials met in Beijing to discuss boundary issues. Analysts noted that the move has significant potential to strengthen bilateral ties.

Vice-President Han Zheng met with India's Special Representative and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval. Doval was in Beijing to co-chair the 23rd meeting of the Special Representatives for the China-India Boundary Question with Wang Yi, who serves as China's special representative on the China-India boundary question and the director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs.

This bilateral mechanism, initiated in 2003, aims to comprehensively address the border dispute between the two countries. Over

the years, the mechanism had convened 22 meetings, with the most recent one held in India in 2019.

In October, the leaders of China and India met in Kazan, Russia, where they agreed to make good use of the mechanism, maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas, and work toward a fair and reasonable settlement of the border issue.

During the talks in Beijing, Han emphasized that China and India, as ancient civilizations and emerging major powers, carry "global influence and strategic significance" through their commitment to independence, unity, and cooperation.

As 2025 marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India, Han urged both nations to maintain high-level exchanges, foster political mutual trust, and gradually resume institutional dialogues and exchanges and cooperation across various sectors to stabilize bilateral ties.

Doval expressed India's willing-

ness to enhance strategic communication and expand mutually beneficial cooperation with China, providing new momentum for the relationship.

Wang, during the meeting, called on China and India to channel their resources into development and revitalization while placing the border issue in an appropriate position within their overall bilateral ties.

In response, Doval said India is committed to maintaining pragmatic communication with China to create conditions for the eventual resolution of the border issue.

The two representatives reached a six-point consensus, including a commitment to seek a fair, reasonable, and mutually acceptable solution to the border issue based on the political guidelines established in 2005. Both sides agreed to refine border area control regulations and strengthen confidence-building measures to ensure sustainable peace and tranquility in the border regions.

Furthermore, they pledged to

enhance cross-border exchanges and cooperation, including resuming Indian pilgrimages to China's Xizang autonomous region, advancing cross-border river cooperation, and promoting border trade through the Nathu La Pass.

Since the border conflict in 2020, Beijing and New Delhi have held 21 rounds of China-India Corps Commander Level Meetings and 32 meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on China-India Border Affairs.

Wang Shida, a researcher at the Institute for South Asian Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said the detente between China and India serves the interests of both nations.

"With each nation home to over 1.4 billion people, development should be the greatest common denominator between the two neighbors," Wang said. He added that the resumption of talks is crucial for unlocking the potential for cooperation across a wide range of fields.

## Bay Area: Economic outreach expanding

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resource advantages of the Bay Area, deepen the system and mechanism reform, innovate approaches and methods and accelerate the global deployment of overseas warehouses and other infrastructures. These efforts will significantly help the cross-border e-commerce industry and build an infrastructure network with a global reach.

The Hengqin cooperation zone endeavors to develop new advanced industries, focusing on scientific and technological research and development, as well as future-oriented sectors, while also supporting industries such as traditional Chinese medicine.

Significant efforts are being made to foster new advanced materials, new energy, artificial intelligence, internet of things, and biotech and life sciences industries. The cooperation zone is looking to speed up the development of the microelectronics industry chain for specialized chip design, testing and inspection, develop the AI-enabled collaborative innovation ecosystem and start the pilot projects for the application of the next generation of internet industry clusters.

Meanwhile, the cooperation zone is encouraging private capital to set up market-based multicurrency venture capital funds and private equity funds and attract foreign investment to provide more support for high-tech industries, innovations and startups, facilitating the development of modern financial businesses. It is an ecological model that is committed to promoting Macao economy's sustainable development, ensuring the coordination of environmental development and protection to achieve the target of sustainable protected islands. It's not only a highly sustainable place but also the first-batch national marine ecological civilization demonstration site and ecological protection and construction demo area. Hengqin Mangzhou Wetland Park is a huge natural mangrove area with reeds, a real bio-reserve of biodiversity. Next to it is also the Zhuhai Wanshan Marine Development Experimental Zone, one of the first comprehensive locations of its kind in China. The area today significantly contributes to the growth of the blue economy.

After Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone, and Hetao

Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation Zone, the Bay Area proved itself as a well-engineered and well-orchestrated area, a proof of the effectiveness of synergistic industrial development, for future technology empowerment and AI restructuring, upgrading digital platforms and building sustainable ecosystems.

The Bay Area innovates cross-border fiscal management and has set up a highly convenient market access system. The international competitive edge of Hengqin cross-border e-commerce is not just about trade; it is about setting up an international window for influence and cooperation to become a significant breakthrough point. The use of technology to drive other industries forward is a strategic move that will undoubtedly strengthen the region's position in the global supply chain management landscape.

The Bay Area continues to develop with new advanced cooperation zones set to revolutionize the region's economic outreach and global trade dynamics with the Global South. Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin is a new system. It is a

high-standard and open system adapted to accelerations and new momentums and continues to deepen the reform structure of the foreign trade system and new trade formats.

It is a 5.0 new industry space, built upon the ethical frameworks of Industry 5.0, where responsible technology and science drive the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, involving environmental governance, circular economy, and other pillars of socio-environmental well-being. This new-system economy integrates advanced technologies, among others — to drive innovation while prioritizing socio-environmental prosperity.

The collective rise of the Global South is a distinctive feature of the great transformation across the world. As the Bay Area continues to integrate advanced technologies into its business models and leverage its unique geographical and cultural ties, its future looks promising, with significant implications for the Bay Area and beyond.

The author is executive vice-president of the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China and a doctoral candidate in sustainability and knowledge economy at Skema Business School in France. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Importance of more cross-Strait youth exchanges in focus

By ZHANG YI in Harbin  
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Ma Ying-jeou, former chairman of the Chinese Kuomintang party, arrived in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, on Wednesday to begin his third visit to the Chinese mainland, aiming to promote cross-Strait exchanges amid tense relations.

Ma is leading a group of approximately 20 Taiwan youth to the northeastern province to participate in an ice-themed event. They will also visit Sichuan province in the southwest to experience traditional Chinese culture before returning to Taiwan next Thursday.

During a meeting with Ma on Wednesday evening, Song Tao, head of both the Taiwan Work Office of the Communist Party

of China Central Committee and the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said that compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are all Chinese and should prioritize the future of the nation and the interests of the Chinese people.

He called for upholding the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus, firmly opposing Taiwan separatist forces and external interference while actively promoting cross-Strait exchanges and cooperation.

He urged cooperation to advance the development of cross-Strait relations, maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, seek the great

rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and create long-lasting prosperity for the Chinese people.

Ma said that people on both sides of the Strait belong to the Chinese nation and should adhere to the 1992 Consensus, oppose "Taiwan independence", expand exchanges and cooperation, and jointly promote the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations, allowing the Chinese nation to stand tall in the world.

This visit represented Ma's second trip to the mainland this year and his third in less than two years, highlighting his ongoing efforts to foster cross-Strait engagement.

Following a recent nine-day tour to Taiwan by 40 mainland students and teachers invited by the Ma Ying-jeou Culture and Education Foundation, Ma emphasized the critical importance of such youth exchanges between the two sides.

The foundation is doing its utmost to promote youth exchanges between the two sides, constructing bridges of peace across the political divide, and conveying the heartfelt desire for communication among people on both sides, he said while leaving Taiwan for the mainland in the morning.

"This is what I can do to the best of my ability for the people of Taiwan and for cross-Strait peace," he said at the airport. "The more exchanges there are between the youth on both sides, the deeper the understanding, and the fewer conflicts there will be in the future."

## Thrive and grow



A giant panda nicknamed Mei Zhu plays on a chair on Wednesday at the Chimelong Safari Park in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. Thanks to her caregivers, Mei Zhu has grown from 178 grams at birth to 10,880 grams in six months. XIA SHIYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Meeting: Enhancing rural cultural prosperity stressed

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farmland while reinforcing the support of agricultural technology and equipment.

It is important to actively develop industries to help farmers increase their incomes, comprehensively improve agricultural efficiency, and boost county-level economies, he said.

While emphasizing the need to broaden channels to get farmers' wallets fuller, Xi urged efforts to consolidate the achievements in poverty alleviation, and forestall any large-scale relapse into poverty.

Xi also called for learning from the experience of the Green Rural Revival Program to promote rural development, enhance rural cultural prosperity and build livable, business-friendly and beautiful countryside.

The Green Rural Revival Program refers to an initiative proposed by Xi in 2003, when he worked as secretary of the CPC Zhejiang Provincial Committee to improve the environment and raise living standards in rural areas.

A draft version of the guidelines of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet, on further deepening rural reform and advancing rural vitalization was discussed at the rural work conference.

The meeting's participants stressed the importance of learning from and applying the experiences of the Green Rural Revival Program in comprehensively advancing rural vitalization, and called for all-out efforts to enhance agricultural efficiency, rural vitality and farmers' incomes through various means.

It is crucial to ensure the nation's food security, continuously strengthen the supply of staple foods and other essential agricultural products, keep the total grain acreage stable, and ensure stable and abundant grain production, they said.

It was also highlighted at the meeting that the task of further deepening rural reforms must be comprehensively carried out, and the pilot program to extend a second round of rural land contracting for another 30 years after expiration should be advanced in an orderly manner.

# CHINA



Travelers from Seychelles pose for a photo with a Sichuan opera performer in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Nov 20. WANG QIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

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"They had not been issued yet, so I was supposed to go back the following Monday," she said.

However, later that day she heard the news that China had extended its visa-free policy to nine countries, namely: Slovakia, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Andorra, Monaco, Liechtenstein and South Korea, starting Nov 8.

"I was so happy and lucky," Prestegaard said about the visa-free entry, adding that it saved her both time and money.

Liu Laila, who has arranged trips for Danes to China for about three decades, is excited about the latest policy.

"I clearly feel there is a recovery after the pandemic, but the number of Danish tourists coming to China is still not large enough," said Liu who joined the travel mart event in Shanghai to explore new destinations for her customers.

"The challenge we face is that there are fewer flight routes to China, and flight ticket prices have risen, especially during peak seasons," she added.

## Danish delight

The former visa policy was not making it easier for Danes to travel to China.

Denmark has more than 400 islands, with about 70 inhabited. In a complex procedure, some travelers had to drive from island to island to complete their China visa application. The cost of the visa was nearly 1,000 yuan (\$137.50), Liu said.

With these restrictions removed, Liu said she is now going to "roll up her sleeves" to try and introduce more visitors to China. "The Danish people have some of the best paid vacations, which are a huge incentive for them to travel," she said.

Liu witnessed Danish travelers' enthusiasm for China when she first went to Denmark in the 1980s.

"I was working as a teacher at an adult education center then, and whenever I showed the students my pictures from China, they were intrigued and asked me if I could show them around one day," she recalled.

This inspired her to found her travel business in 1993.

Over the years, she has taken her Danish clients to major Chinese cities, including Beijing, Shanghai and Xi'an in Shaanxi province. All of them gave her positive feedback about their experiences, she said.

She later led trips to the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region in the south and Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, which were also well-received by the visitors.

"Most of them were blown away by what China has to offer, which was quite refreshing to them, very different from what they had read or heard back at home," she said.

Even during the pandemic, Liu said she was approached by many acquaintances who kept asking her when she was going to resume arranging trips to China.

This time, Liu brought several Danish colleagues on the China tour. They were all impressed by the Bund in Shanghai, and the folk customs, and urban and natural scenery in Fujian province, she said.

Next year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Denmark, and Liu said she is looking forward to playing a positive role in boosting bilateral exchanges by arranging more visits by Danish travelers and artists.

## Boost from policies

On Tuesday, China announced further relaxations of the visa-free transit policy, with extension of foreign travelers' period of stay, and expansion of the list of accessible ports and provincial-level regions.

Eligible travelers transiting to a third country or region will be permitted to stay in the country for up to 240 hours, or 10 days, up from 72 or 144 hours, the National Immigration Administration said.

Earlier, during the travel mart in Shanghai, China released favorable policies to boost inbound tourism.

The visa-exemption policy was extended to nine more countries, including Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Japan, and will run from Nov 30 to the end of 2025.

The country has also decided to further optimize the visa-free policy, including exchanges and visit purposes into the visa-free entry scope, and extending the period of visa-free stays from 15 to 30 days.

These measures now enable ordinary passport holders from 38 countries to enter China without a visa for business, tourism, visiting relatives and friends, exchange visits, and transit for no more than 30 days.

China will continue to facilitate cross-border travel, welcoming people from all countries to visit and experience its diverse charm and share in its development dividends, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said in November.

Mao said that China has also taken measures to make work and life more con-

venient and comfortable for foreigners residing in China. Cities and provinces such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong have improved their mobile payment, bank card and cash services, as well as others that increase the ease of online shopping and transportation for foreign visitors.

She also noted that Chinese telecom operators have improved foreign services and launched new packages to make it more convenient for foreign visitors to access 5G networks in the country.

Foreign entries into China reached 8.19 million in the third quarter of this year, an increase of 48.8 percent year-on-year, according to statistics from the National Immigration Administration. Among these, more than 4.8 million visits were made by travelers with visa exemptions, up 78.6 percent compared with the same period last year.

Yang Wenjuan, who is in charge of marketing for the German travel agency China Event and who participated in the Shanghai travel mart, was thrilled by the news of the 30-day stays.

As Germany has been one of the biggest European sources of visitors to China, Yang believes the prolonged period will allow her clients to better explore the country.

"Most of them were blown away by what China has to offer, which was quite refreshing to them, very different from what they had read or heard back at home."

Liu Laila, travel agent who has arranged trips for Danes to China for about three decades

**240**  
hours

The period eligible travelers in transit can stay in China visa-free

number of independent travelers.

"I've had interactions with many partners in China during this trip, and I'm optimistic, because I think there are still many experiences that can be recommended to German tourists that will boggle their minds," Yang said.

She plans to develop a Silk Road trip that takes in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and Zhangye, Gansu province, an important stop on the ancient route.

## Surging interest

He Laiqiang, who runs the travel consultation service Sada International in Osaka, Japan, said the policy to resume and also extend visa-free entry is long overdue and will help open up the Japanese outbound tourism market.

China has already done a good job in promoting attractions such as the Wulingyuan scenic area in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, the Silk Road, and pandas in Sichuan province, he said, adding that many young Japanese have a strong interest in visiting the country.

In addition, many Japanese companies have run businesses in China since its opening-up, with a number of their nationals living in the country before returning home.

"Generally, they got to stay for two years before their replacement would arrive, and those people have been wanting to come back and revisit China," said He, who has worked in the tourism industry in Japan since the 1980s.

The visa-free policy will save Japanese travelers from not only the visa application fees, but also the complex procedure involved. "There was a lot to fill in on the application form, and many had to hire a professional agency to get things done," He said.

Now that the Chinese government has smoothed the way, He said the key is to look at more travel routes.

He said he has developed a better understanding of Chinese travel products through meeting local tour operators, who he hopes to introduce to his clients in Japan.

Irina Antonova, a senior executive at Russian Tour, believes more tour guides who speak Russian are needed in China, especially at popular smaller destinations.

"The number of our guests is increasing every year, and they feel their Chinese experiences are increasingly comfortable, and the services are getting better," said Antonova, who started bringing Russian travelers to China in 2020.

She assisted more than 3,000 travelers to visit China last year, many of whom said they enjoyed interactions with Chinese people as well as the vast natural landscape.

"They loved arrangements where they could cook and eat with the locals, or engage in a handicraft class," she said.

"We've already got bookings for next year from more than 1,000 people," she added.

Antonova wants to collaborate with local travel agencies to create diverse tours tailored to Russian travelers.

## Looking for partners

Rolf Blomkvist, a travel operator from Sweden, said he found potential partners for a future tourism business in China when he attended the Shanghai travel mart, and during an ensuing trip to Fujian province.

"So far, I have had very good experiences meeting new people who are open-minded," he said.

In the early 2000s, he ran a booming business sending Swedish travelers to China.

"It rapidly grew bigger and bigger and it was very successful," Blomkvist recalled.

Yet, things got problematic after 2008, due to geopolitical factors, and he gradually lost the business.

Since China has sent out signals to welcome inbound travelers, Blomkvist said it has rekindled his hope of resuming his tourism business.

"All the itineraries are there, and I just need to find reliable partners here," he said.

With the 240-hour visa-free transit policy for Swedish travelers, Blomkvist said he can work with tour operators to combine China travel experiences with other trips in Southeast Asia.

In addition to doing business, Prestegaard, the travel consultant from Denmark, ended up having a great time in China, when she visited Fujian province.

She was especially impressed by a bamboo-rafting journey along the Nine-Bend stream in Wuyi Mountain and the leisurely lifestyle at the picturesque site.

"I loved it, it was magnificent. The views of the mountains, I had never seen anything like that. It was like being in a dream," she said.



Top left: Foreign tourists pose for a photo in Yongshun, Hunan province, on Nov 7. CHEN SIHAN / XINHUA Top right: Inbound travelers visit a gift shop at a mountain scenic spot in Quanzhou, Fujian province. YANG FEIYUE / CHINA DAILY Above: Tourists from Russia visit the Bund in Shanghai on Dec 4. CHEN HAOMING / XINHUA

## ACROSS ASIA

## Editor's note:

In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.



A view of Patan Durbar Square in Kathmandu, Nepal, which draws visitors with its Himalayan sights. ZHANG KAIKIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Feeling at home

Homestays become major tourism draw in Nepal

Rajkali Rawat, from Patarasi Rural Municipality of Jumla, midwestern Nepal, had not heard about homestays until a few years ago.

Now, along with five other women, she hosts many visitors through the lodging arrangement in her Himalayan home.

Her homestay provides food made from traditional cereals like buckwheat, millet, rice and beans, among other crops. Tourists are attracted to the organic dishes and traditional culture.

"I used to think operating a homestay would be a lot of hassle. But I was wrong," Rawat said. "It has become a good source of income."

In a homestay, tourists live in people's homes, share meals, and experience local life and culture. Living in a Nepali village as a homestay guest is perhaps one of the fastest and best ways to get to know the real Nepal, according to locals and visitors alike, with daily cultural activities a major attraction.

Homestays in Nepal can be traced to 1980, when the late Captain Rudra Man Gurung opened the first homestay of its kind in the country's hospitality sector.

The women of Patmara village opened their community homestay four years ago and the model has since spread to other areas.

Locals said the homestay greatly promotes traditional dishes, preserves local culture and offers natural beauty.

Patmara is known as a gateway to the popular Rara Lake and trekkers visiting the lake often go to the village.

According to operators, a homestay can rake in 300,000 rupees (\$2,200) to 400,000 rupees a year.

Rawat said that since homestays are new to Jumla, they usually hold monthly meetings to discuss



A boat traverses near the Himalayan foothills in Nepal, with the Annapurna mountain range as the backdrop. TIM GRAHAM / GETTY IMAGES

improvements in hospitality. Facilities and services are reviewed, and they address any complaints made by tourists to improve the experience.

The community homestay in Patmara started four years ago and the community has held more than 100 meetings. Before operating the homestay, the women visited popular scenic areas like Pokhara and Ghale Gaun offering homestays.

Kalashi Budha, secretary of the community homestay, said many homestays focus on decoration. "But here, natural beauty is enough to attract tourists."

Tourists can enjoy the green highland pastures during the monsoon

and in winter they are mesmerized by snow-covered pastures.

"The view and traditional food make tourists happy," Budha added.

The women initially took out loans to start the homestay, with many of them becoming financially independent and offering to support others in turn.

Rawat said women used to ask for money at home for the family expenses, but now they take care of their children's and husbands' expenditures.

Rawat's husband, Nara Bahadur, has been in Saudi Arabia for the last two years. Before that he worked for five years in Malaysia. His income has also been invested

in the homestay arrangements.

Other villages have similarly started operating homestays and welcoming guests.

According to Budha, more than 1,000 tourists from Australia, the United States, France, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan have experienced Patmara homestays.

"With the arrival of tourists after homestays were opened, sanitation in the villages has improved," Budha said.

"Most of the tourists arrive by making phone contact, while some arrive after visiting Rara Lake."

Women operating homestays also have other roles. Once a month, they monitor the nearby forest to check on any illegal wildlife activities.

They are particularly concerned about the conservation of red pandas as most tourists come to see the shy animals.

Conservation efforts are underway to save red pandas and Mahardra Community Forest has been designated as a pocket area for their protection.

Patmara is located just beyond Urthuchautara, on the way from Khalanga. Tourists use the shortest route to reach Rara Lake, with 10 to 25 vehicles arriving daily.

In 2011, Nepal Tourism Year was rolled out and helped set off the homestay trend in the country in anticipation of a surge in tourism.

Homestays were conceived as an alternative arrangement for an expected hotel room shortage during the tourism campaign aiming to attract 1 million international visitors before it ended.

The lodging option became a permanent feature of Nepali tourism, with hundreds of homestay offerings across the country.

THE KATHMANDU POST, NEPAL

## Cambodia grapples with growing challenge of online information

Two-thirds of social media content creators do not verify whether the information they post is accurate, according to a UNESCO report published late last month, with Cambodia one of the latest countries facing the growing challenge of online content.

The report, which surveyed 500 online content creators from 45 countries and territories through an online poll, showed that 73 percent of creators expressed a desire for training on fact-checking. Twenty creators were also interviewed in-depth to understand their practices and challenges.

The findings showed that they struggled to evaluate the credibility of the information they encountered online before sharing it. About 42 percent of respondents admitted they relied on the number of "likes" and "shares" a piece of content received to determine its accuracy.

The survey also highlighted that 59 percent of creators were unfamiliar with legal frameworks and international digital regulations. Just over half said they were aware of training programs on the topic, but only 13.9 percent expressed an interest in attending such sessions.

A lack of knowledge about fact-checking processes left some content creators vulnerable to legal uncertainties, potentially leading to sanctions or prosecution in some countries.

Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO director-general, said that digital content creators have acquired an important place in the information ecosystem, engaging millions of people with cultural, social or political news.

"But many are struggling in the face of disinformation and online hate speech and calling for more training. As part of its mandate for media and information literacy, UNESCO will support them through the first-ever global training course," she said.

### Local perspective

Nop Vy, executive director of the Cambodian Journalists Alliance, said UNESCO's findings reflected the situation locally.

He estimated that only 30 percent of Cambodians possess digital literacy, a low rate that raised concerns about the dissemination of unchecked or false information by content creators.

"Fact-checking is not easy, especially in Cambodia," he said, adding that many content creators and social media influencers lack the capacity and tools to fact-check information.

He also said that some creators focus on gaining fame without considering the potential consequences of their content.

Chhort Bunthang, a researcher specializing in culture, education and tourism, said that Cambodia produces a variety of content, including original and copied materials.

While some content is educational and well-researched, others promote misinformation or incite immorality in society.

"There is some content that is outright fabricated, like eating



Unethical content on social media undermines trust in professional journalism and negatively impacts traditional media outlets."

Tep Asnarith, spokesperson for Cambodia's Ministry of Information

cow dung or shoes, which holds no value for society," he said.

He further highlighted content addressing societal and political issues, emphasizing that such topics should be based on facts rather than nationalist sentiments or anger, which can destabilize society.

Bunthang also criticized content that sensationalizes violence or sexual misconduct without addressing the consequences of such actions.

"Some videos merely show perpetrators committing acts of violence or harassment without educating viewers about the repercussions," he said.

Bunthang said that while some health-related content is beneficial, others lack credible sources, posing potential risks to users, particularly those with preexisting conditions.

Tep Asnarith, spokesperson for Cambodia's Ministry of Information, said that digital tools are becoming increasingly integral to daily life in the country, demonstrating its access to internet services.

However, he acknowledged that the rise of digital technology has also brought challenges, including the rapid spread of misinformation through social media platforms, with posts often faster than traditional, fact-checked media outlets.

"Unethical content on social media undermines trust in professional journalism and negatively impacts traditional media outlets," Asnarith said.

Over 1,400 online media outlets are officially registered with the ministry but the number of content creators exceeded the figure.

Asnarith urged online content creators and social media users to uphold societal ethics, public order and respect for individual rights and dignity, while preserving Cambodia's cultural values.

"Social media users and content creators must adhere to professional and societal ethics in this digital media landscape. Unfortunately, some individuals, driven by personal gain or popularity, violate these principles," he said.

As an example, he mentioned the publication of violent or graphic images that invade privacy and dignity, potentially causing harm and unnecessary suffering.

THE PHNOM PENH POST, CAMBODIA

## Hanoi gears up for low-emission zones

The Hanoi People's Council approved a resolution to establish low-emission zones in the Vietnamese capital on Dec 12.

Measures will focus on transportation, including allowing vehicles that are environmentally friendly, and using clean and green energy.

Vehicles of priority or with circulation permits from the authorities will be able to operate within the low-emission zones.

Restrictions or bans can be applied for vehicles that do not meet the Euro emissions standards, specifically the Euro 4 for cars and Euro 2 for motorcycles, in the zones during specific hours.

Proposals for fees and charges for pollution-emitting vehicles traveling in low-emission zones are expected to be put forward sometime in the future, while the first zones could come into force in 2025.

In addition, support policies will be proposed for residents in these zones, for organizations and businesses transitioning from fossil fuel-powered to environmentally friendly vehicles, as well as for investments into green transportation infrastructure.

Under the green move, the low-emission zones must be in line with urban development prioritizing

public transportation or sufficient road infrastructure for appropriate traffic planning.

The authorities must also devise a plan to monitor and assess emission levels and emission reduction in the affected areas and prepare for the transportation mode transition.

The specific implementation road map stated that low-emission zones will be piloted in the Hoan Kiem and Ba Dinh districts from 2025 to 2030, while other localities are encouraged to implement a similar model.

From 2031, areas in the capital that meet one of the relevant criteria



High-rise buildings are seen amid heavy air pollution conditions in Hanoi, Vietnam, on Nov 30, 2023. NHAC NGUYEN / AFP

identifying low-emission zones must implement the green model.

Based on the criteria, the district-level people's committee will

develop a proposal for a low-emission zone, customized for the specific conditions and capacity of the locality.

The proposal for the low-emission zone takes into account relevant input from state management agencies responsible for environmental protection and transport.

Prior to the issuance of the low-emission zone resolution, feedback was gathered from 30 districts and municipalities for the drafting process.

A report from the Hanoi People's Council showed that the capital is facing challenges in air pollution management and environmental protection, with a widespread decline in air quality.

Low-emission zones have been implemented across Europe as well as in major cities in Asia such as Beijing, Seoul and Jakarta.

VIET NAM NEWS, VIETNAM

## WORLD

# US Supreme Court to hear TikTok's case

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco  
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The US Supreme Court announced on Wednesday it will consider TikTok's challenge to legislation that could force the popular social media platform to be sold to a US company by Jan 19 or face a nationwide ban.

The announcement came two days after TikTok filed the petition to the nation's highest court. At the center of the challenge is the legislation called the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act.

Passed by Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden in April, the act requires that TikTok's Chinese parent company, ByteDance, divest its ownership within 270 days or face a ban in the US market, where the platform has 170 million users.

The law would prohibit the TikTok app on both Google's and Apple's app stores and require web-hosting services to stop supporting the platform or face substantial financial consequences.

TikTok has insisted that the Justice Department's allegations are unfounded. The company has denied accusations of sharing user data with Chinese authorities or serving as a conduit for Chinese propaganda.

The bigger issue here is that social media platforms are manipulating users and abusing personal information, and all of them are doing it no matter where they are from, said Ker Gibbs, an executive in residence with the China Business Studies Initiative at the University of San Francisco. "All the focus is on China, but Congress really should be looking at all the platforms that Americans are using," he told China Daily.

"There's a political case to make because so many small businesses are making money on TikTok, and they will be sorry to see it banned from the US," Gibbs said.

In May, TikTok sued the US government to block the controversial law. The US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld the law earlier this month, finding the government's national security arguments were legitimate.

In the lower court's ruling on Dec 6, which deemed the law an appropriate response to perceived national security threats, Judge Douglas Ginsburg wrote, "The First Amendment exists to protect free speech in the United States. Here the Government acted solely to protect that freedom from a foreign adversary nation and to limit that adversary's ability to gather data on people in the United States."

In response to the ruling, TikTok said in a statement that the law "was conceived and pushed through based upon inaccurate, flawed and hypothetical information, resulting in outright censorship of the American people."

"The TikTok ban, unless stopped, will silence the voices of over 170 million Americans here in the US and around the world on Jan 19, 2025," the company said.

The platform's legal challenge

has garnered significant support from several civil rights organizations. A coalition including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), and the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University filed an amicus brief on Tuesday, urging the Supreme Court to block the enforcement of the law.

Those organizations' representatives have voiced strong concerns about the constitutional implications of the potential ban.

Patrick Toomey of the ACLU's National Security Project called the law "mass censorship" and stressed that the US Constitution "imposes an extraordinarily high bar" on such censorship.

"The government should not be able to restrict speech, especially to the extent here, based on guessing about the mere possibility of uncertain future harm," said David Greene, civil liberties director at EFF, in a statement.

The brief particularly criticized what it called the government's failure to demonstrate imminent harm or explore less restrictive alternatives to address its security concerns. It also said the lower court failed to "hold the government to its burden."

The potential international ramifications of the case have drawn attention from experts.

John Whibbey, an associate professor of media innovation and technology at Northeastern University, warned about negative consequences for American companies operating abroad, expressing concern about establishing a problematic global precedent.

"My overall take is that there are going to be second- and third-order consequences from this we can't fully anticipate," he told the university's news outlet Northeastern Global News on Dec 6. "I think that's going to be really unfortunate," he added. "I'm worried about the precedent of it as a cascading norm around the world."

The law is set to take effect the day before the presidential inauguration on Jan 20. President-elect Donald Trump attempted to ban TikTok but failed in 2020 during his first term. He changed his stance by pledging to "save TikTok" during his campaign. Trump expressed having "a warm spot" for TikTok at a news conference on Monday. Then he met with TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Florida.

The Supreme Court will hear oral arguments on Jan 10 from TikTok and government attorneys and representatives of app users challenging the ban.

The court's swift acceptance of the case signals its recognition of the case's importance. As the final stop for a court case, the Supreme Court typically selects cases involving crucial constitutional questions or those that affect the entire nation.

The high court agrees to hear only about 80 cases each year from 7,000 to 8,000 petitions it receives, and it rules on only 1 percent of requests, according to The Pew Charitable Trusts.

## Bidding adieu



Locals bid farewell on Tuesday to people displaced by conflict returning home from Port Sudan to the city of Singa in Sennar Province, Sudan, which was retaken by the Sudanese Armed Forces from the Rapid Support Forces last month. The armed conflict between the SAF and the RSF has been escalating recently, with the two parties mobilizing for decisive battles. AFP

## Energy plan to risk global climate goals

By YANG GAO in Toronto  
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Are lower gasoline prices a good thing or a bad thing? It depends on whom you ask. With US President-elect Donald Trump to take office on Jan 20, some Canadian experts have expressed concerns about the future of US energy policy.

During his campaign, Trump talked about his commitment to boosting US domestic oil and gas production.

The American Petroleum Institute released a new policy road map for the incoming administration and next the Congress on Nov 12.

It includes restarting permitting for liquid natural gas exports, opening up more land for drilling for oil, and repealing or relaxing environmental regulations.

"We should expect expanded US production to reduce oil and gas prices globally," Ross McKittrick, professor of economics at the University of Guelph, told China Daily.

"Lower prices could benefit consumers but might also discourage investments in renewable energy; carbon dioxide emissions are likely to grow unless natural gas displaces coal use in some regions," he added.

On the regulatory front, McKittrick sees potential risks for Canada if the US focuses on developing oil

and gas at the expense of climate policies.

"If US trading partners like Canada impose stricter greenhouse gas regulations, we would risk losing competitiveness in trade," he said.

He emphasized the need for policy reforms, saying, "Canada's Emission Reduction Plan is too costly and restrictive. We need bold leadership to balance economic interests with sustainability goals."

"If Trump succeeds in getting oil and gas prices down, it will undermine the economics of wind and solar energy," he added.

McKittrick also noted that many countries would keep subsidizing green energy, yet this shift by the US might slow down global progress.

From an international perspective, McKittrick said: "If the US pulls out of the Paris Agreement, ... It would serve to undermine global climate action and perhaps embolden other countries to ease up on their commitments. The EU may slow its embrace of green energy, partly due to the high costs of wind and solar, and this trend could accelerate with US policy changes."

Warren Mabee, director of the School of Policy Studies at Queen's University, focused on the broader market dynamics.

"A decline in international pricing for oil and gas products could

make it more difficult for renewables to be adopted. Similarly, reduced US funding for renewable technology might stall global progress," Mabee told China Daily.

He noted the potential for innovation in bioenergy and clean technology. "Diversifying our energy mix and expanding international trade partnerships could increase our innovation potential," he said, citing bioenergy as one such promising field.

Mabee said that US energy policy might reshape global trade dynamics. "By ramping up domestic production, the US may decrease its reliance on international markets and, in turn, diminish the bargaining power of energy-exporting countries," he said.

That could influence other countries to recast their respective energy policies, thus slowing the pace of the spread of renewable technologies worldwide.

"North America's energy market is undergoing major reorganization; we need a better read on where our resources can be best invested," he noted.

"It means thinking carefully about how we invest in new technologies and making sure our policy landscape is designed to support these investments to deliver maximum benefit," he said.

## Exchanges to boost Sino-US relations

By XING YI in Madrid  
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People-to-people exchanges will promote better mutual understanding and enhance bilateral relations between China and the United States, and recent policies have shown good signs, said experts at a recent forum.

They made the remarks at the 2024 Imperial Springs International Forum held last week in Madrid, Spain, with the theme of collective actions for a shared future.

During a panel discussion on people-to-people exchanges for mutual understanding, Li Cheng, a prominent expert on China-US relations, noted that government-to-government and "even business-to-business" exchanges between China and the US have encountered some problems recently.

In this context, "people-to-people exchanges, such as programs for professionals and students, have become increasingly valuable and important," said Li, who served as director of the John L. Thornton China Center at the US think tank Brookings Institution from 2014 to 2023. Last year, Li founded the Centre on Contemporary China and the World at the University of Hong Kong.

### Good signs

Last week, China and the US extended the agreement on cooperation in science and technology for an additional five-year period, and last month, the US State Department changed its travel advisory for China, lowering it from "reconsider travel" to "exercise increased caution." Li said they were all good signs.

Li also highlighted China's initiative, announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to the US last year to invite 50,000 young people from the US to China for exchange and study in five years, is making good progress.

Xue Lan, dean of Schwarzman College at Tsinghua University, echoed Li on the great potential of student exchange in boosting mutual understanding between China and the US, and between China and the world.

Since 2016, Schwarzman College has admitted around 150 scholars every year from around the world with diverse backgrounds to study for a master's degree in global affairs, during which the students are given opportunities to travel around China and engage in exchanges with experts in various disciplines.

"I think this one-year experience is irreplaceable for the scholars, and no matter where they go after graduation, their understanding of China will enable them to promote better collaboration with China," Xue said.

Xue noted that despite the geopolitical tensions, the number of applications from the US to this program has been growing. "As the dean, I feel very pleased to see there are still many young Americans having such passion and curiosity about China, and I think exchanges and communications among young people are extremely crucial for the future China-US relations," he said.

Besides educational exchanges, experts also stressed the role tourism has played in promoting intercultural understanding between nations and praised China's unilateral visa-free policies.

## England's tuition fees to rise with inflation

By JONATHAN POWELL in London  
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Amid fears of a growing financial crisis among universities in England, the UK government is expected to announce that tuition fees will rise in tandem with inflation over the next three years.

Following last month's announcement of England's first tuition fee rise in eight years, Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson is set to unveil the plans for fees to exceed 10,000 pounds (\$12,700) during this parliament, reported the Financial Times newspaper.

Tuition fees in England, frozen at 9,250 pounds since 2017, were raised last month to 9,535 pounds for the 2025-26 academic year.

Rampant inflation has eroded the real-term value of tuition fees, prompting university leaders to

seek government help as institutions become increasingly dependent on higher-paying foreign students to manage their financial struggles.

Government sources informed the FT that the fee increases will be part of Labour's upcoming three-year public spending review, with institutions required to implement reforms as a condition of the higher payments.

With the UK's independent fiscal watchdog, the Office for Budget Responsibility, forecasting annual inflation of just above 2 percent until 2028, linking fees to inflation over the next three years could push tuition costs above 10,000 pounds.

As part of Labour's economic growth strategy, Phillipson aims to enhance academic standards and boost university contributions to innovation.

Following last year's abrupt slowdown in profitable international student enrollment, university administrators indicated that adjusting fees in line with inflation would help stabilize the sector's finances. International enrollment dropped 30 percent at some universities due to previous Conservative government policies.

Analysts warn that with institutions facing a 3.4 billion-pound income decline and losing 2,500 pounds per domestic student, the fee increase last month barely offsets new employers' national insurance costs announced in the recent UK budget, providing only an 18 million-pound net gain annually.

"It's nothing like enough," said Nick Hillman, director of the Higher Education Policy Institute think tank.

## Chinese businesses committed to development in Kenya

By EDITH MUTETHYA in Nairobi, Kenya  
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In line with the outcomes of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation summit held in Beijing in September, the Chinese business community in Kenya has expressed its commitment to participate in the economic development of the east African country through infrastructure development, job creation, cultural exchanges, environmental protection and corporate social responsibility activities.

They lauded the 2024 FOCAC summit, noting that it injected new

vitality into China-Kenya relations, creating new opportunities for practical cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, peace and security, and cultural exchanges.

Liu Chenghui, chairman of the Kenya China Economic and Trade Association, an organization focused on promoting and facilitating economic and trade relations between Kenya and China, said that driven by the Chinese quality, speed, solutions and commitment, the enterprises have developed projects that have helped Kenya's economy and social development.

Liu, who spoke during the launch of the 2022-23 Chinese Enterprises in

Kenya Social Responsibility Report in the capital Nairobi on Tuesday, said Chinese enterprises in Kenya have employed more than 60,000 Kenyans in 2022-23, with the localization ratio exceeding 90 percent.

"We encourage our member companies to balance social responsibility and environmental protection with economic factors. We actively support their participation in educational, environmental, and welfare activities," he said.

Zhou Zhencheng, the minister counselor at the Chinese embassy in Kenya, said Chinese enterprises in Kenya have actively promoted the synergy between the Belt and

Road Initiative and Kenya's Vision 2030, becoming a driving force for the development of China-Kenya relations.

"From building schools to combating pandemics, from afforestation efforts to empowering women, Chinese enterprises have been writing new chapters in China-Africa cooperation with their concrete actions, adhering to the principles of sincerity, real results, affinity, and good faith," he said.

Zhou said China will continue to support Kenya in achieving industrialization and economic transformation, advancing cooperation in emerging fields such as renewable

energy and the digital economy.

Mohamed Daghar, principal secretary in Kenya's Ministry of Roads and Transport, said the report launch was an affirmation of the deepening relationship between China and Kenya and an assurance that the two countries will continue to collaborate.

"We are friends; Kenyan and Chinese governments have mutual cooperation that is beneficial to all," he said.

Daghar said the infrastructure development by Chinese companies has eased transportation within major cities like Nairobi, adding the development of hydrocarbon handling facilities in the Port of Mombasa has benefited both Kenya and the neighboring countries.

Jane Makori, the deputy director-

general of Asia and the Pacific directorate at the Kenyan State Department of Foreign Affairs, said the department is open to facilitating the Chinese private sector to invest in the country.

"We are grateful to the Chinese private sector in conjunction with the Kenyan private sector for supporting the efforts of the China and Kenya governments to build a closer community with a shared future," she said, calling on Chinese enterprises to encourage more investors to take advantage of the investment opportunities in Kenya.



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## CHINA PERSPECTIVE

## GDP goal for '25 may stay at 5%

Economist: Fiscal, monetary policies 'should be front-loaded at a rapid pace'

By WANG KEJU  
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Luo Zhiheng

China's GDP growth target for 2025 could be set at around 5 percent, unchanged from this year, after a top-level meeting outlined more proactive and effective macroeconomic policies for the coming year, to tackle various challenges head-on and push the economy on an upward trajectory, said a senior economist.

"To achieve this goal, the fiscal and monetary policy toolkit should be front-loaded with great intensity and at a rapid pace, to stay ahead of market expectations and bring about better synergy," Luo Zhiheng, chief economist at Yuekai Securities, said in an interview with China Perspective.

China Perspective is an interview series presented by China Daily, characterized by insightful conver-

sations with senior economists on significant economic issues. Luo's comments came after policymakers set next year's agenda at the annual Central Economic Work Conference last week, adopting a "more proactive" fiscal policy for the first time and shifting its monetary stance to a "moderately loose" approach, marking an end to a 14-year run of prudent monetary policy.

Confronted with a complex web of economic challenges, ranging from sluggish domestic demand to external pressures stemming from global economic weakness and ongoing trade tensions with the United States, China needs a proactive, countercyclical approach to

shore up growth, Luo said.

In particular, China has made it clear that it will raise its deficit ratio in 2025, Luo said, adding that a deficit target of as high as 4 percent of its GDP could be considered next year, up from the current 3 percent goal set for 2023.

"The deficit ratio is not just about the scale of fiscal support, but also about its ability to anchor market expectations, as it is widely interpreted as a barometer of the authorities' determination to prop up the economy and address persistent challenges," Luo said.

Given the uncertainties surrounding fiscal revenue and the pace of special bond issuances, policymakers should be prepared to promptly augment budgets within the year to accelerate expenditure growth and better leverage the countercyclical function of fiscal policy, Luo said.

In another move to enhance the effectiveness of the fiscal policy, Luo said that efforts should be

made to expand the scope of usage of local government special-purpose bonds and promote the project-oriented allocation approach of these bonds.

The State Council, the country's Cabinet, said on Monday that local authorities will have more autonomy and flexibility in using these bonds, with a negative list management mechanism specifying the areas where they can't be used.

Complementing the fiscal policy initiatives, monetary easing measures, including cuts to the reserve requirement ratio and interest rates — which were also explicitly mentioned at last week's annual meeting — stand as another key component of the countercyclical response, Luo said.

"The People's Bank of China has about 0.5 percentage point of room to maneuver in terms of further interest rate cuts in 2025," Luo said, noting that it must carefully calibrate such moves to support economic expansion, while also

factoring in potential implications for the exchange rate and the profitability of the banking sector.

According to the central bank, the current weighted average RRR for financial institutions is around 6.6 percent. This level still leaves ample room for further reductions when compared to the policies of major central banks around the world.

These countercyclical measures should be delivered on the ground as early as possible, so as to get ahead of the curve, shape market sentiment and bolster overall domestic demand, rather than merely reacting to the evolving circumstances, Luo said.

In addition, expanding domestic demand is high on the government work agenda next year. While the shift from an investment-driven to a consumption-driven economy is a necessary and inevitable process, it is not an overnight transition, Luo added.

Investment and consumption are the *yin* and *yang* of domestic demand — it's not an either-or situation; the goal is to find the optimal mix of the two complementary forces to ensure well-rounded growth, Luo said.

## Briefly

## WeChat expands QR payments for visitors

Chinese financial services provider UnionPay International and payment platform WeChat Pay have introduced enhanced payment services for foreign visitors to the Chinese mainland, aiming to offer more diverse and convenient payment options. Travelers using any of eight overseas e-wallets, including Bangkok Bank Mobile Banking and Naver Pay, can now make payments on the mainland by scanning China's WeChat QR codes, according to UnionPay.

## RMB strengthens against USD

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 11 pips to 7.1880 against the US dollar on Wednesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

## Greener self-sufficient power grid prioritized

By ZHENG XIN  
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China is set to further enhance its energy self-sufficiency while expanding its renewable energy dominance in the coming years, said the National Energy Administration during a conference in Beijing on Sunday.

While crude oil production in China has increased for six consecutive years, natural gas output has also risen for eight straight years, boosting the country's energy self-sufficiency rate above 80 percent in 2024, the NEA said.

The country's total power generation capacity stands at around 3.32 billion kilowatts this year, with electricity output reaching 10 trillion kilowatt-hours, up 5.7 percent year-on-year, it said.

Renewable energy resources are on course to contribute more to the country's total energy supply. China is set to add more than 300 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity this year, accounting for over 85 percent of all newly installed capacity, a significant step in the country's green and low-carbon energy transition, it said.

China continued to accelerate construction of large-scale wind and solar power bases in the Gobi Desert and other arid regions this year amid efforts to boost renewable power, said Wang Hongzhi, head of the NEA.

To date, China had installed about 510 million kW of wind power and 840 million kW of photovoltaic power, with the utilization rate remaining at above 95 percent, driving rapid growth in both sectors, Wang said.



Technicians check equipment at a solar power station in the Kazak autonomous county of Aksay, Gansu province, in November. TIAN YUE / FOR CHINA DAILY

China has also transformed and upgraded 180 million kW of coal power units and eliminated more than 8 million kW of outdated capacity this year, with the proportion of intelligent production capacity in total coal production capacity increasing to more than 50 percent, the NEA said.

While major hydropower projects progressed in an orderly manner throughout this year — with several large-scale projects approved for construction, boosting total hydropower capacity in the country to 435 GW — China has also become the world's largest nuclear power producer, with the country's total nuclear power generation capacity topping the global list.

A total of 102 nuclear reactors are currently in operation or under construction with a total installed capacity of 113 GW, it said.

With enhanced national energy security guarantee capacity and green low-carbon development, the China Electricity Council expects

the country will add around 250 GW of new solar power capacity in 2024, bringing the total installed capacity to over 850 GW.

This would account for more than a quarter of China's total power generation capacity, it said.

According to global consultancy Rystad Energy, China's solar sector is set to break records in the coming years, with total installed solar PV capacity expected to cross the 1,000 GW mark by the end of 2026.

Rystad Energy expects 255 GW of new solar PV installation in China in 2024, with another surge in installation towards the end of the year expected — around 20 GW in November and 50 GW in December.

Renewable energy installation has surged since last year and the momentum has not been slowing down, said Zhu Yicong, vice-president of renewables and power research at Rystad Energy.

China has shown its clear leadership in global PV installation and we are expecting close to 60 percent of such global installation to

come from China this year, Zhu said.

Looking ahead, the NEA said during the conference that the country will accelerate the planning and construction of a new energy system in 2025.

Wang said China is on track to establish a national unified power market with a preliminary structure to be established by 2025, further integrating renewable energy resources while optimizing the distribution of power across the vast national grid.

A national unified power market is a system where electricity is bought, sold and distributed across the entire country in a standardized way. It connects all regions, ensuring equal access to power, promotes competition and allows for efficient pricing.

Efforts will be made to ensure continuous operation of the medium and long-term electricity market, with the goal of achieving full provincial coverage of electricity spot markets, he said.

## CR20G completes major highway in Uzbekistan

By ZHONG NAN  
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China Railway 20th Bureau Group Corp, a unit of State-owned China Railway Construction Corp, handed over the upgraded A380 highway project to its clients in Uzbekistan on Sunday, further advancing regional connectivity under the Belt and Road Initiative.

This is currently the highest-standard highway in Uzbekistan and a key project within the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor. Once operational, it will not only improve local transportation conditions, but also bolster economic growth along the route, said Wang Bairen, head of the A380 highway reconstruction project at CR20G.

The corridor links China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and the Arabian Peninsula. The vast region it covers generally follows the trajectory of the ancient Silk Road.

The corridor starts from Xinjiang and traverses Central Asia before reaching the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Peninsula. It traverses the five Central Asian countries — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan — and more than 10 countries and regions in West Asia, including Saudi Arabia and Turkey. It is a tailor-made program for connectivity within a landlocked region.

Before the reconstruction, the 87-kilometer A380 roadway had only two lanes, and its surface was severely worn, with potholes, sinkholes and cracks. As a result, vehicles could only travel at speeds of up to 60 kilometers per hour.

Following the reconstruction by CR20G, the A380 highway now features four lanes and a concrete surface, allowing vehicles to reach speeds of up to 120 kilometers per hour.

The most notable feature and challenging aspect of the A380 highway reconstruction project was the simultaneous opening for traffic and construction, said Wang.

"This road serves as a key international route connecting Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan and other countries in the Caspian Sea region," he said. "The old road was heavily congested, particularly

during the local cotton harvest season, when large vehicles continuously passed through."

To minimize the impact of heavy vehicles moving about during construction, the Chinese company implemented effective measures tailored to road conditions. It coordinated with local governments to successfully complete road closures before construction began and manage road diversions and reconstruction work during construction.

Over the course of more than three years of construction, CR20G deployed more than 50 Chinese managers and engineers to lead over 600 local employees in acquiring skills such as maintenance, surveying, testing and other operational tasks.

Notably, during the road paving phase, they utilized advanced large-scale concrete slip-form pavers, setting a record by paving more than 900 meters per day, said Wang.

Since entering the Uzbek market in 2018, CR20G has completed two big-ticket agricultural irrigation projects within the country. These projects have not only alleviated the region's water resource shortages, but will also yield significant long-term economic benefits for local agriculture.

As a key part of Uzbekistan's agricultural modernization strategy, Wang said that the commissioning of these projects has enhanced the local production capacity of both grain and cash crops.

With more than 17,000 employees, Xi'an, Shaanxi province-based CR20G has built a market presence in more than 20 countries, including Mozambique, Morocco and Mongolia.

Wan Zhe, a professor at the Belt and Road School of Beijing Normal University, said that building a comprehensive interconnected network for the BRI is a significant upgrade and enhancement of the existing connectivity framework, which includes ports, roads, railways and airports.

"In the next stage, advancing the digitalization of infrastructure, strengthening industrial and supply chain services and improving transportation efficiency will generate fresh growth points," Wan said.

## Culinary, cultural delights at Lhasa's Wanda Plaza

By PALDEN NYIMA  
and DAQJIONG in Lhasa

A gourmet and cultural experience week is ongoing at Wanda Plaza in the eastern suburbs of Lhasa, capital of the Xizang autonomous region.

Taking place from Saturday to Friday and with the theme of "Winter Tour in Xizang, Taste Authentic Cuisine", the event has been curated by the region's department of culture and tourism and co-organized by the government of Lhasa, becoming a major tourism attraction.

Featuring over 100 food vendors and intangible cultural heritage creative enterprises from across the region, the event offers a sensory journey through the rich tapestry of Tibetan flavors and traditions.

From dried yak jerky to highland barley beer, Tibetan desserts and spicy chili sauces, the food exhibition area is a bustling hub where

visitors can sample the diverse "Taste of Xizang" offerings.

Khadro, a salesperson from the guest room department of Lhasa Hotel, said that since the event kicked off on Saturday, their business on the first few days has been good.

"In addition to selling cultural and creative ethnic products, customers also like the bread, sausages and cured meat we produce and sell at the hotel," said Khadro, adding their stall also used the event to advertise the laundry services available at the hotel.

Xiao Yong, a manager of the hotel, said the culinary experience extends beyond traditional dishes, with innovative creations like barley bread, muffins, nut bars and savory yak meat receiving high praise from guests.

"For visitors, the event is not just about food but also a gateway to understanding Tibetan culture."

Ren Xiaodong, a vendor offering lamb skewers, offal, chive flower sauce and other products from the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, aims to bridge culinary cultures and introduce Tibetan locals to the flavors of his region, fostering cultural exchanges through food.

"The dining cultures of the Inner Mongolian region and Xizang are similar, and I hope to spread the delicious food from our region to Xizang through such events," said Ren, adding such events have helped him to make his products known to more people in Xizang.

In addition to the gastronomic delights, the event showcases Tibetan intangible cultural heritage at dedicated exhibition zones. Designers like Adrol blend traditional elements with modern aesthetics, creating pieces like necklaces made of turquoise, red coral and silver,

that captivate consumers with their unique fusion of styles.

"By displaying and enhancing the brand of highland characteristic cuisine and cultures, the event aims to boost urban commercial districts, and it also aims to enhance the city's nighttime consumption," Xiao Chuanjiang, an official from the region's department of culture and tourism, was quoted as saying by Xizang Daily. "The event also will provide citizens and tourists with more affordable, convenient and down-to-earth life experiences."

Xiao said the region will continue to strengthen the development of the "Taste of Xizang" brand in the future, and showcase Tibetan culture and tourism resources to the outside world to enhance the reputation of Tibetan cultural tourism.

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# BUSINESS

## Supply of high-tech talent rises

Report shows new economy sectors particularly competitive

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
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A new report released by Maimai, a Chinese professional networking platform, revealed that the talent market in China's digitally-fueled and high-tech new economy industries remains highly competitive, with the talent demand-supply ratio climbing steadily over the past few years.

Despite the rising competition, average monthly salaries in these sectors have shown slight increases, signaling a continuing demand for skilled professionals in emerging industries, the 2024 annual talent migration report said.

The talent supply-demand ratio in new economy sectors, which encompass industries such as internet, gaming, fintech, e-commerce, artificial intelligence and new energy vehicles, has surged from 1.29 in 2022 and 2 in 2023 to 2.06 in the first 10 months of 2024, the report showed. This means that for every available job, there are over two candidates competing for it.

Although the job market in new economy sectors remains competitive for jobseekers, salaries have seen a moderate upward trend. Between January and October 2024, the average monthly salary for new job postings reached 42,874 yuan (\$5,902), up from 42,789 yuan in 2023 and 41,394 yuan in 2022, the report said.



College jobseekers look for suitable occupations at a campus career fair in Fuyang, Anhui province, on Nov 16. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Lin Fan, founder and CEO of Maimai, said the report points to intensifying competition for positions in the job sector, adding that "there is still a shortage of core technical talent, particularly in AI-related fields".

The report said demand for technical professionals remains particularly strong, with technology roles comprising the majority of new job

openings during the January-October period of this year.

Notably, AI-related positions are in the highest demand, including roles like algorithm engineers, AI engineers and natural language processing experts. Java, back-end developers, C++, and Android developers are also among the most sought-after positions.

In terms of salaries, the highest-

paying technical roles among new job postings in the first 10 months are led by digital front-end engineers, who command an average monthly salary of 67,728 yuan. Non-technical roles also see competitive salaries, with product management positions emerging as a major focus. Product supervisors earn an average monthly salary of 59,241 yuan, making it the highest among

non-technical roles.

The report also revealed significant talent shortages in key technical fields, especially AI fields. Cloud computing, for instance, has the most significant talent gap, with a demand-supply ratio of just 0.27, meaning that there are approximately four job openings for each applicant. Other high-demand areas include search algorithms and deep learning, which continue to face talent shortages, despite strong recruitment activity in these fields over the past few years.

During the first 10 months, Beijing remains the leading city for new job openings, followed by Shanghai, Shenzhen in Guangdong province and Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, the report said.

However, the report indicates that both Beijing and Shanghai are facing talent outflows, with their talent inflow-outflow ratios falling below 1, signaling that many professionals are leaving these hubs for other regions. In contrast, cities like Suzhou in Jiangsu province; Shenzhen; Hangzhou are seeing stronger talent inflows, reflecting their growing appeal as innovation and tech centers.

Tang Qiuyong, executive director of Chinese human resources think tank HRflag, emphasized that while Chinese companies are under pressure to cut costs and improve efficiency, this should not come at the expense of employee well-being.

"Efficiency gains should be driven by technological innovation and the use of advanced tools, rather than by overburdening employees," Tang said.

## University tech helps in all-round progress

By ZHUANG QIANGE  
and PANG BO

Li Xiaoyan, president of Henan province-based Huanghuai University (HHU), is proud that his institution has helped save people's lives in 2022 and 2023 with its high-tech achievements in landslide deformation and technical research.

These achievements have been used to successfully predict two landslides — one in July 2022 in the northern part of Erzhuangke village, Nanshi subdistrict at Baota district of Yan'an in Shaanxi province, and another at the district's Wangjiagou village in September 2023.

Due to the successful predictions, local residents were evacuated in advance and casualties were avoided.

Located in the prefecture-level city of Zhumadian and in the Dabie Mountains region, HHU is the only applied science and engineering undergraduate university in southern Henan. It was established in 1973.

To build on its distinctive features, Li said the application-oriented HHU took up various disciplines as the basis, setting up schools including machinery and energy engineering, animation, architecture and civil engineering, biology and food engineering, medicine, chemistry and pharmaceutical engineering, and intelligent manufacturing.

During the past decade, it has cultivated more than 170,000 high-quality applied talent, with over 60 percent employed in Henan, providing strong support for developing the Dabie Mountains region, Li said.

Meanwhile, to help launch enterprise-led collaboration between industries, universities and research institutes, the university also established 32 collaborative innovation centers, leading to local economic and social progress, said professor Yu Miao.

For example, HHU's double quaternary ammonium salt compounds based highly efficient anti-scaling and oil displacement agents have been used on the Shenhua Ningmei 4 million metric ton-per year coal indirect liquefaction project, helping enterprises save more than 200 million yuan (\$28 million) in costs, Yu said.

He added that its "high sensitivity fiber optic monitoring probe technology" has helped improve environment monitoring instruments with independent intellectual property rights, high sensitivity, good stability, excellent cost-effectiveness and long service life, leading to economic benefits of 1 billion yuan for the market.

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## COSCO Shipping launches high-speed sea route to Africa

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan  
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At a berth in Qingdao Port, a subsidiary of Shandong Port Group, over 20,000 cubic meters of cargo — including machinery, vehicles and steel — were loaded onto the *Green Nagoya* on Monday, a newly delivered 72,000-deadweight-ton cargo ship. The vessel is expected to arrive at Dar es Salaam Port in Tanzania in about 20 days.

The voyage marks the official launch of a new direct shipping route run by COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers Co Ltd between Qingdao in Shandong province and major ports in southeast Africa, which is set to run on a weekly basis, said the company.

"This route adds a safe and fast maritime shipping alternative between China and Africa, aiming to boost trade connectivity between two sides and helping

stabilize the global supply chain," said Gu Weidong, deputy general manager of COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers.

Gu said that the new route will improve shipping efficiency by at least 30 percent, reducing voyage times to 20 days.

He attributed the efficiency of the service to enhanced collaboration with Qingdao Port, which streamlines loading operations at a single port, as well as advanced vessel facilities and intelligent voyage systems.

Notably, the *Green Nagoya* can reduce fuel consumption by at least 40 percent under the same cargo load and voyage conditions. Over the 5,000-nautical-mile route, this translates to savings of 380.4 metric tons of carbon emission per 10,000 tons of cargo transported, Gu added.

According to COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers, the shipping route has been launched to meet

growing trade demand between China and Africa, driven by the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The line connects Qingdao Port with major southeast African ports such as Dar es Salaam, Mombasa and Durban. With four voyages scheduled each month, the service is expected to handle up to 1.5 million cubic meters of exports annually, significantly boosting trade flow and serving as a "high-speed sea route" for general cargo, the company said.

Ming Gang, supply and marketing manager at Yongfeng Group, a leading steel producer based in Dezhou, Shandong province, highlighted the advantages of the new route.

"Previously, our steel products were shipped from multiple domestic ports, which extended loading times and posed safety risks. The new regular service from Qingdao



A vehicle is loaded onto the *Green Nagoya*, a newly delivered cargo ship, at a berth in Qingdao Port, Shandong province, on Monday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Port allows us to consolidate shipments, ensuring timely deliveries and product safety while improving client communication," Ming said.

The launch of the new line also positions Qingdao Port as the sole hub for general cargo liners operated by COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers in northern China.

Liu Junfeng, marketing manager

at the Dagang branch of Qingdao Port, emphasized that more goods, including steel, equipment, vehicles and advanced manufacturing products, will now be shipped through Qingdao Port.

"Qingdao Port's excellent connectivity to highways and railways also will help clients reduce transportation costs and save time," Liu added.

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## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Dialogue key to unlocking brighter prospects for development of future Sino-US relations

Despite what some would have us believe, the so-called Thucydides Trap is not a historical inevitability. Since it is known of, it can be avoided. That is essentially the consensus reaffirmed on various occasions by the leaders of the United States and China.

US president-elect Donald Trump will be sworn into office for a second time at his inauguration on Jan 20. Which way the world's most important bilateral relationship evolves in the years ahead not only concerns the interests of people in both countries, but also has a bearing on the future of the whole humanity.

Thus it is all the more important for policymakers of the two countries to strive to manage the differences between the two sides, enhance mutual trust and expand cooperation, so as to find the right way for the world's top two economies to get along well with each other. That can only be done through dialogue. This is basically the message that Beijing has sent to Washington in the hope of keeping the mutually beneficial relationship on the track of stable, sound and sustainable development.

The upbeat tone of Foreign Minister Wang Yi's speech on Tuesday at a symposium summing up China's foreign relations in 2024 points to the dynamic and vast possibilities that await Sino-US relations, as long as the two sides join hands. If they do, "great things can be accomplished", as Wang said.

The past serves as a guide to the future. Over the past four years, more than 20 communication and exchange mechanisms have been established or restarted between the two sides, including the economic and financial working groups which held meetings over the past week. This communication has led to major progress being made in such fields as counternarcotics, law enforcement, climate change, artificial intelligence and youth exchanges. Just days ago, the two countries renewed their decades-old science and technology agreement, enabling their scientists to continue cooperation in climate research, earthquake monitoring and public health. All this points to the vast common interests the two countries share.

Yet despite this, the smooth and healthy development of Sino-US relations still faces many obstacles and challenges, most obviously from the China hawks in Washington that are seeking to suppress China's development. Propelled by their jaundiced view of China, the US has launched attacks on China's trade and high-tech, and promoted "decoupling", as well as engaging in "brutal interference" in the country's internal affairs, such as the Taiwan question.

In a latest sign that the US has no intention of easing restrictions on China's high-tech development, the outgoing Joe Biden administration is reportedly preparing a trade investigation into China's production of older-model semiconductors, which could ultimately result in tariffs, import bans or other actions targeting certain Chinese-made semiconductors and the products that contain them. Reports of the proposed move come shortly after the Biden administration announced curbs on the sale of semiconductor-making equipment and restrictions on numerous Chinese companies, prohibiting them from accessing US technology.

Such coercive actions are in essence aimed at depriving China of the right to development. If not abated they will inevitably lead to a locking of horns as China has no intention of relaxing its pace of modernization on the path it has mapped out.

History shows that China and the US stand to gain from cooperation, and lose from confrontation. It was not a complete exaggeration for Trump to say recently that "China and the United States can together solve all of the problems of the world". But for that to happen, the US must refrain from seeking a new Cold War, or a conflict with China. China is doing its best to keep relations on an even keel, hopefully the US will too.

## Youth visit promotes cross-Strait exchanges

Ma Ying-jeou, former chairman of the Chinese Kuomintang party, hit the nail on the head when he said, before departing Taiwan for his third visit to the Chinese mainland on Wednesday, the more cross-Strait youth exchanges there are, the less chance there will be for a conflict between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Ma, who was the head of the island's authorities from 2008 to 2016, said that the exchanges between young people on the two sides of the Strait were aimed at building "a bridge for peace".

During the nine-day tour, the youth delegation he is leading is scheduled to visit Heilongjiang and Sichuan provinces to participate in a cross-Strait youth ice and snow festival in the former, as well as other events, according to the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council.

Considering that the tour was arranged just two weeks after a mainland youth delegation concluded a nine-day visit to the island, it is fair to say the youth exchanges across the Strait have become markedly more frequent recently, reflecting the common wishes of the Chinese people on the two sides of the Strait to continuously strengthen people-to-people exchanges. Something the secessionists on the island are trying to block to meet their narrow ends.

The family hospitality the Taiwan youths experience during their stay on the mainland should let them feel a sense of homecoming. The trip is also expected to provide those who have never been to the mainland with a valuable firsthand experience to see for themselves what the other side of the Strait is like, helping them to see through the secessionist-minded Democratic Progressive Party's yearslong smearing of the mainland, and de-sinicization attempts with the youths as their key target audience.

The DPP authorities should be held accountable for the tense cross-Strait relations, which fundamentally contradict the common interests of people on both sides of the Strait, as it is their reckless collusion with external forces in pursuit of their objective to separate the island from its motherland that is the root cause of the rising tensions.

Although the Ukraine crisis and the Taiwan question are totally different in nature, with the latter being China's internal affair that brooks no interference from any external party, the DPP authorities and their foreign patrons are trying their best to mislead the world to make the two comparable so that they can channel the ready support for the US proxies in the former to the latter and covertly establish the false status of the island, which is an inalienable part of China, as a "sovereign state".

The mainland has exercised considerable restraint in the face of the continuous provocations from the DPP authorities, as Beijing has always borne a bigger picture in mind, and is committed to exhausting all means for a peaceful reunification of the country.

The great lengths the DPP authorities are going to in trying to justify and realize their secessionist goal, in defiance of the Taiwan compatriots' opposition, make them the largest security threat to the residents on the island, whom they are willing to use as a human shield and hostages in pursuit of their goal.

The cross-Strait tensions have risen further since Lai Ching-te succeeded Tsai Ing-wen as head of the DPP authorities in May and proceeded to try and push the envelope on the DPP's agenda. The biggest challenge facing cross-Strait relations at present is that the DPP authorities are stubbornly adhering to their secessionist stance and are betting the island's future on their gamble that external forces will enable them to change the reality: the island is a part of China of which the Central Government in Beijing is the sole legal representative.

However, the more the DPP secessionists try to sever cross-Strait ties by obstructing people-to-people exchanges, the more support the mainland will provide to set the stage for people-to-people interactions between the two sides of the Strait. Apart from Ma's visit, that the annual 2024 Shanghai-Taippei City Forum held in Taipei from Monday to Tuesday concluded with full success was another nail in the coffin for the DPP authorities' secessionist endeavors.

Beijing will always be committed to promoting youth exchanges and economic, trade and governance cooperation across the Strait so as to continuously expand the common interests and deepen mutual understanding of the two sides of the Strait. In doing so, it is also effectively squeezing the space the DPP authorities can exploit for their secessionist cause.

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## Cai Meng



## Opinion Line

## Reforms key to food security and high-quality rural development

Although China is not an agriculture-based economy anymore, as it was for most part of its long history, and more Chinese people live in cities and towns than villages today, agriculture and related rural work are still of vital importance to the country, not only for the sake of food security and social stability but also the high-quality development of the nation it seeks.

The volatile global situation further highlights how imperative it is for the populous nation to realize food self-sufficiency.

That explains why the annual Central Rural Work Conference, which was held in Beijing from Tuesday to Wednesday this year, has caught no less attention than the year-end central work meetings in other fields held recently.

At the conference, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for further deepening rural reform and making solid advances toward building up China's strength in agriculture.

As the readout of the meeting indicates, authorities at various levels should strictly adhere to the red line of farmland protection, promote the construction of high-standard farmland, strengthen support for agricultural science and technology and equipment manufacturing, and ensure the stable production and supply of grain and other important agricultural products.

The country needs to build a diversified food supply system and support the stable development of animal husbandry in order to improve the long-term mechanism of grain and food conservation.

Meanwhile, more attention should be paid to developing rural industries that can create rural jobs and increase rural residents' income, improve the comprehensive benefits of agriculture, broaden farmers' income channels, avoid abject rural poverty, promote rural infrastructure and the cultural

industry, strengthen rural environmental protection, and enhance grassroots governance efficiency.

In particular, as the meeting stressed, a key reform related to the rural work should be to promote the pilot project of extending the second round of land contracts for another 30 years after their expiration in an orderly manner, explore effective forms of utilization of idle farmhouses through leasing, equity investment and cooperation, and create new investment and financing mechanisms for rural revitalization.

As the meeting required, the rural reforms must be based on the actual situation in rural areas, respect the wishes of farmers, give full play to the main role of farmers, improve working methods and encourage local governments to explore effective new practices and experience to ensure the reforms can deliver concrete results to improve farmers' well-being.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## Building a global community of health for all

A global scientific white paper on proteomic research published by Nature on Dec 11 with He Fuchu, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, as the leading scientist, not only shows China's growing academic influence, leadership and organizing skills in the field of life sciences but also showcases the significant contributions of Chinese proteomic research (which is the study of proteins at cellular level) in promoting global scientific collaboration, building a global community of health for all, and fostering a community with a shared future for mankind.

Previously less known to the public, the proteomic project can, in some sense, be compared to the human genome project, an international collaboration that sequenced

and mapped all the genes of our species in 2022. The initiative focuses on revealing the real-time panoramic map of the proteome involved in life activities.

Proteins play multiple roles, such as signaling transmission, oxygen and nutrient transport, and promoting growth, apart from many other functions. Human bodies are composed of trillions of cells, each containing proteins, the dynamic changes in which are key to determining birth, aging, illness, and death of the body.

The project is a grand alliance of top global scientists who have come together to analyze the principles and evolutionary patterns of human proteomes. They seek to map the human proteome through an entire life cycle, noticing changes during major global outbreaks, correspond-

ing to dietary patterns and living environments, thereby revealing deeper laws of life processes.

Developments in global biotechnology have made such a project possible. It even uses modern technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data analysis, as mentioned by He in media reports. The paper published in Nature bears the signatures of more than 80 scientists, demonstrating the strong organizational and coordination capabilities of Chinese scientists.

As the domestic life science sector continues to develop, Chinese scientists will make significant contributions to promoting global scientific collaboration, building a global community of health for all, and fostering a shared future for mankind.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Washington paying lip service to Latin America's needs

The op-ed article "What China Got Right in Latin America" that Foreign Policy magazine published on Monday was apparently a followup to the APEC gathering in Lima, Peru, last month, which provided further evidence of China's growing clout in Latin America that has made some US pundits and policymakers feel uneasy fearing Washington is losing its "backyard" to Beijing.

Although the two authors of the article call on Washington to go beyond its geopolitical contest with Beijing in Latin America, and join hands with China to improve "the region's woeful infrastructure" so as to not just "reduce poverty and inequality in the Western Hemisphere" but also "provide an opportunity for

positive collaboration between the West and China", that appears to be only wishful thinking.

The United States is going all out around the world, including in the US' long-ignored Africa, Central Asia and Southeast Asia, to try and outcompete China. There is no indication the incoming "America first" administration, an obvious target reader of the FP article, intends to end that, particularly in Latin America. Not to mention the fact that poverty and inequality in the region or anywhere else, even in the US, have never been a true concern of the US government.

That the US should work with regional multilateral development banks in Latin America to restruc-

ture their loan portfolios to prioritize large-scale, cross-border infrastructure projects and "help fill the shortfall left by China's likely decline in overseas infrastructure investment" and "balance China's disproportionate role in the sector", as the article urged, is nothing but day-dream-talk too.

Before the conditions that have long obstructed US investment from US companies and private investors flowing to Latin American infrastructure projects, such as low returns, uncertainties and risks, see fundamental changes, the US administration will only pay lip service to its "welfare" commitment to the region and other Global South countries.

— GUANCHANG

## COMMENT

Yao Yang

## Better Sino-US ties best option for Trump

Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election heralds the start of a new era in the United States. The majority of US citizens have made a choice by rejecting the Democrats' long-standing vision of the future of the US; in its place will now be Trump's "Make America Great Again" agenda that aims at controlling the US' borders, rolling back progressive social policies, promoting traditional values and focusing on the US' own interests in international relations.

From a historical perspective, this turn was inevitable. Despite its many successes, the Democrats' agenda has brought many contradictions to US society. Trump's MAGA agenda is a necessary step to iron out those contradictions.

However, as the saying goes, the devil is in the details. Whether Trump's agenda will succeed depends on the policies that his government will implement. In the economic arena, reindustrialization is one of his central policy goals. The first Trump administration believed Chinese exports and technological competition hindered the US from rebuilding its manufacturing sector. As a result, it adopted a protectionist approach toward China, a policy the Biden administration inherited. However, its success has been very limited.

This policy rests on three pillars. On the

trade side, high tariffs are imposed on goods imported from China; on the technological side, there is export control on high-precision semiconductors and other hi-tech products; and on the investment side, US companies are forbidden from investing in several key Chinese hi-tech sectors while Chinese EV companies are forbidden from investing in the US.

However, the high tariffs have not reduced China's exports to the US. Although direct trade between the two countries has declined, China's exports to the US, counted by the rule of origin, have actually increased, mainly because many Chinese companies have moved their production capacities to third countries and are exporting to the US from there. In addition, the US' trade deficit with China remains substantial.

The US' investment policy has garnered more success through the US CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, but it remains to be seen whether that will lead to the fulfillment of the country's reindustrialization goal. China has developed strong technological and production capacities in green technologies, but the US' tight national security policy has kept Chinese investment away from the country.

The US' export control on hi-tech products has increased the difficulty for Chinese companies to obtain key

components. But it also served as a wake-up call for China to gear up its investment in those products. There are early signs of success, as China's self-sufficiency in semiconductors has increased since 2018, and the country leads in photonic semiconductors that have the potential to be a substitute for NVIDIA's high-performance GPU chips.

Better approaches exist for the US to rebuild its manufacturing sector. One of them is to open its domestic market to Chinese investment. China now has a clear edge in green technologies, including solar panels, wind power equipment, and other related products. China's EV industry is not only the largest, but also the most advanced in the world. Thanks to its great saving propensity, China has become a capital-surplus country. Chinese companies are fully prepared to invest in the US.

Allowing Chinese investment in the US will bring several benefits to both countries and the world. For the US, Chinese investment will accelerate the country's pace of reindustrialization, boost employment, and support local growth. It will also bring advanced green technologies that the US is trying to build domestically. For China, investing in the US will lessen domestic competition and stabilize Sino-US relations. For the world, cooperation between China and the US will send a

positive signal to other countries, reducing the anxiety of having to choose between the world's two largest economic powers.

Trump sent positive signals when he said during his campaign that he would welcome Chinese EV companies to invest in the US as long as they hired workers from the US. His proposal of higher tariffs on Chinese exports was aimed at bringing manufacturing back to the US. A shortcut for him to realize this goal is to keep his promise to allow Chinese investment into his country.

The national security concern is not something that can't be dealt with. Tesla's operation in China provides a good template. By storing its data inside China, Tesla has got a full-fledged permit from the Chinese government to operate on Chinese soil. The US can adopt a similar arrangement.

In the last 50 years, it was always a Republican president — from Richard Nixon to George Bush Jr — who either dared to change the course of US policy toward China, or to stabilize Sino-US relations for the good of both countries. Now it is Trump's turn.

*The author is liberal arts chair professor, Peking University. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

Liu Shuang

## China a major fund provider for Global South climate action

Global climate goals can't be reached unless developing countries are able to transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy. However, not all of them can make it there on their own. The poorest and most vulnerable developing countries — which are not historically responsible for planet-warming emissions — do not have the resources to invest in green energy or adapt to climate impacts. They require and deserve help from the international community.

One of the main agenda items at the 29th Conference of the Parties to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29), in Baku, Azerbaijan, last month, was to set a new global climate finance target. This new collective quantified goal (NCQG), will replace the goal set in 2009 for developed countries to mobilize \$100 billion a year, from 2020 to 2025, for climate action in developing countries. The COP29 outcome calls on all actors to scale up finance to \$1.3 trillion, while setting a new climate finance goal of at least \$300 billion with developed countries taking the lead.

Developing countries are urged to contribute to this mobilization on a voluntary basis. And many emerging economies, including China, are already providing and mobilizing a significant amount of climate finance. This September, my World Resources Institute co-authors and I published a paper tallying the climate finance China has provided and mobilized for supporting other developing countries' climate actions. Adopting the most common climate finance accounting methodology, our research presents one of the first analyses to allow face-value comparisons of climate finance mobilized by the largest developing country and developed countries. We estimated that China's climate finance provision averaged close to \$4.5 billion per year between 2013 and 2022.

**A quarter of China's finance comes as export credits, driven by a large number of infrastructure projects which can lead to climate and other sustainability benefits.**

At COP29, Chinese Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang reported that between 2016 and 2023, China supported other developing countries with roughly \$24.5 billion in total climate-related funding. Our numbers are different from those reported by the vice-premier primarily because we counted multilateral finance in addition to project finance, which is channeled through bilateral mechanism.

According to our estimate, China's contribution equals to about 6 percent of the total climate finance developed countries provided during the same period. This would put China's climate finance behind only the United States, Japan, Germany and France. However, the quality of finance matters as well. A quarter of China's finance comes as export credits, driven by a large number of infrastructure projects which can lead to climate and other sustainability benefits. However, there is on-going debate on whether and how the OECD methodology should include export credits and other less concessional finance.

One way China could further contribute to climate action is by improving the quality of its climate finance reporting. While it is not obligated to report under the UNFCCC, doing so would show good faith engagement with the multilateral process.

An approach modeled on the coordination used to submit the biennial transparency reports to the UNFCCC could help observers as well as administrators understand China's climate finance better. Greater transparency would provide a model for other contributors to report their finance more clearly and comprehensively — and perhaps motivate them to increase their finance, too.

The other way China can show leadership would be to increase its finance support under South-South cooperation which the new agreement reached in Baku encourages. China has an opportunity to double down on the benefits that climate finance brings.

While developed countries must lead in providing climate finance, all countries have a shared interest in ensuring developing nations — and the world — achieve an inclusive, low-carbon, climate-resilient future. In addition, we should also consider imposing taxes on high-emitting activities, redirecting fossil fuel subsidies and other ideas. But cracking the code of how emerging economies, including China, contribute in their own way could play a more important role in achieving this shared outcome.

*The author is China finance director of Global Climate, Economics and Finance program, World Resources Institute. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

Chen Jie and Sun Hongliang

## Will cooling realty sector warm up in 2025?

In the year of 2024, China's real estate sector has been undergoing a challenging adjustment period.

Despite unprecedented policy easing measures slowing the decline in market transactions and housing prices, the overall market performance remains subdued. Between January and October, housing prices across 70 major cities experienced widening year-on-year declines, which only began narrowing in November. Similarly, sales by the top 100 real estate enterprises declined by 32.9 percent year-on-year from January to November. Despite slight improvements, sales in November fell 18.62 percent month-on-month, underscoring the persistent weakness in demand.

Some encouraging developments have emerged in late 2024, driven by a series of supportive policies implemented since September. The key policies include granting local governments the flexibility to adjust or eliminate restrictions on purchases, sales, pricing, and housing classifications; further lowering mortgage interest rates; increasing investment in urban village redevelopment and hazardous housing renovation projects; and expanding credit support for select "white-listed" developers.

In response, cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen have led the relaxation of purchase and lending restrictions, which upgraded housing demand. By November, first-tier cities saw a modest uptick in housing prices, particularly in the second-hand market.

In December, the Central Economic Work Conference underscored the importance of stabilizing the real estate market. Key priorities included accelerating urban village redevelopment and unlocking housing demand. To achieve these goals and ensure market stability, the following measures were recommended:

**Subsidize urban village renovation**

For urban village renovation projects, offering cash compensation or housing vouchers to relocate residents is a preferable option. This approach can streamline relocation timelines and minimize transition costs, empowering residents to acquire homes directly from the commercial market. Such initiatives can help stabilize housing markets by expediting inventory clearance, especially in areas with lower demand.

Housing vouchers offer additional benefits by stimulating market activity. Time-sensitive incentives tied to voucher use, such as purchase bonuses, can encourage faster buying decisions and accelerate redevelopment progress, ultimately boosting market confidence.

Currently, monetized resettlement and housing voucher policies predominantly apply to major cities. Looking ahead, these initiatives could be extended to encompass a broader range of medium-sized and

smaller cities, enhancing their reach and impact across various urban settings.

**Optimize existing stock**

It's also important to develop a dynamic monitoring system to assess housing supply, population inflows, and vacancy rates across cities. Tailor new residential land supply plans to regional demand, particularly in areas with oversupply, to avoid resource wastage and escalating inventory pressures.

In cities with high housing stock or vacancy rates, the authorities should consider gradually reducing new residential land allocations while directing resources toward urban renewal and repurposing existing land. Additionally, utilizing special-purpose bonds can aid local governments in reclaiming undeveloped or sold land, fostering market confidence by indicating a near-term balance between supply and demand.

To support local government finances, debt restructuring plans should be refined based on regional housing dynamics to address fiscal gaps resulting from reduced land sales revenue. Existing initiatives, such as using special-purpose bonds to acquire idle land and the 300 billion yuan (\$41.8 billion) housing loan program for unsold properties, lay a strong foundation. Further efforts should channel bond proceeds into acquiring idle land and unsold housing for public or rental

housing, enhancing the efficiency of land and housing stock management.

**Unlock housing demand**

Policies should be tailored to relax restrictions in cities with strong population inflows, particularly for suburban areas and large-unit housing. By reducing down payment requirements, particularly benefiting first-time buyers and those seeking to upgrade to larger homes, and by moderately lowering mortgage rates, homeownership can become more attainable for a wider population.

If tax policies can be revised for second-hand housing by extending tax exemption periods and lowering deed tax rates, they can reduce transaction costs for buyers, energize the market, and facilitate smoother property transitions.

What's more, targeted policies can be introduced to address the housing needs of families with two or three children, including reduced down payment rates, increased loan limits, and dedicated purchase subsidies. Those families should also be prioritized for public or rental housing programs to ensure access to suitable living spaces that meet their unique needs.

**Improve housing quality and affordability**

In China's housing market, promoting high-quality housing construction to enhance market standards is equally cru-



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

# GLOBAL VIEWS

ARKEBE OQUBAY

## Stimulus of rise of the rest

While the world faces significant challenges, there are also opportunities to build a common future and shared prosperity

Global development faces multiple crises. Since 2000, the world has witnessed crises that have massively affected developing and emerging economies, such as the 2008 financial crisis, the commodity price crash in the mid-2010s, the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent global economic recession. The world has also faced grave geopolitical conflicts such as the Ukraine crisis that resulted in significant energy and food security challenges, and the hostilities in the Middle East that have sparked Red Sea shipping bottlenecks that destabilized global value chains. The sluggish growth rate and volatility are the marks of the global economy. Low-income developing countries, including many African countries, have been hit the hardest and experienced deepened vulnerability.

The fracturing of global collaboration has only magnified the scale and depth of the crises. It has exacerbated the harm, slowed global recovery and worsened international inequality. The momentum toward achieving the global commitments of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change has been significantly hampered. This underscores the crucial need for international cooperation and the dire consequences of its absence.

On the optimistic side, we have observed the rise of the Global South, or the "Rise of the Rest", as coined by the eminent development economist Alice Amsden. It is not only a remote possibility but an irreversible reality. Chinese President Xi Jinping highlighted at the Beijing summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation that "modernization is an inalienable right of all countries". He called for advancing modernization that is just and equitable, open and win-win. This modernization also embraces diversity and inclusivity, and is eco-friendly and underpinned by peace and security. The Global South, home to four-fifths of humanity and representing over 100 emerging and developing economies, is the propeller of the global economy, mainly by resurgent Asia. China alone accounts for over 30 percent of annual rate of global economic growth and has a share of 30 percent of global manufacturing, significantly impacting the world.

There is no better example than China that shows the brighter side. China has made a historic contribution to humanity



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

by alleviating 800 million people from extreme poverty in the last four decades, accounting for a 70 percent reduction in global poverty. China has confirmed its commitment to opening-up and deepening reform, including opening its manufacturing sector to foreign companies and promoting cross-border trade and services. It has proposed new initiatives for world peace and development, and a dialogue of civilizations, and has called for a shared future. China has played an exemplary role in South-South relations, voicing the concerns of developing countries. The FOCAC Beijing Summit held in September 2024, the expanded BRICS mechanism and the Belt and Road Initiative are vivid examples

of stimulating regional and global economies and building bridges across major regions.

At a time when economic recovery is pressing, many wealthy nations are withdrawing their commitment to economic globalization. Their rhetoric and actions contribute to the fragmentation of the global economy, entrenching trade barriers, and damaging not only their trading partners but also themselves. Some examples are the increasingly heightening US-China trade tensions and the many actions of the G7, which go against the principles of free trade that have fueled global growth.

Instead of being guided by competition principles, building resilient supply chains

is tainted by "decoupling" and "de-risking" — particularly in high-tech industries — as well as groundless protectionism and strategic rivalry. It has now become fashionable to talk about "on-shoring", "reshoring", "nearshoring" and "friendshoring", which have proved to be complicated and unrealistic in an increasingly interconnected world. The high tariffs on imports of Chinese goods by the United States and the European Union on the grounds of "fair" competition or "overcapacity" are not justifiable and are contrary to international trade rules. This can only lead to a zero-sum game and "decoupling", and sanctions will likely lead to slower innovation. The world and every nation are better off when

countries work together for a common good based on the principles of mutual benefit, win-win cooperation, and working for a shared future. No one is left behind by working for a common future and shared prosperity.

From developing countries' perspectives, China has emerged as the global green powerhouse by contributing game-changing amounts to renewable energy, sustainable mobility, electric vehicles and battery production, an exemplary achievement of green development in the historical record. This has resulted in a reduction of the costs of green solutions and made the global green transition a viable option. This has also made the Global South the uncontested leader in green development and the fight against climate change.

There are a number of critical priorities that can generate potential benefits for all. First, green development and environmental sustainability should gain traction and momentum by combining the capabilities developed and requirements. This could generate economic benefits for all and make the world safer and better.

Second, one of the significant challenges of accelerating economic transformation in developing and emerging economies is financing development. There are many critical strategies and instruments that should be introduced and developed at the national level. However, these actions are inadequate. It is urgent to address the debt burden of low-income developing economies. A sustainable solution would be to change the international financial architecture. However, this requires global collaboration and cannot be executed without reforming the global governance system. Alternative development financing should be expanded, and reforming the Bretton Woods system is essential to this solution.

Third, in an increasingly interconnected but volatile global economy, multilateralism instead of unilateralism, openness instead of protectionism, and a multipolar world order instead of a unipolar one should be the bedrock of our era to meet the common aspirations of all countries and to serve humanity.

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DONG YIFAN

## Not the time to spin wheels

Making the pie bigger and helping each other is the way for the EU and China to end their EV dispute

Since the European Commission launched the anti-subsidy investigation into China's electric vehicles in October 2023, how to properly promote the orderly and healthy development of the China-EU EV industry, and how to resolve the potential escalation of trade frictions have been a priority for the two sides. However, the recent series of measures taken by the European Union indicate that it is obviously taking a very tough attitude. Only five EU member states voted against the imposition of tariffs by the European Commission

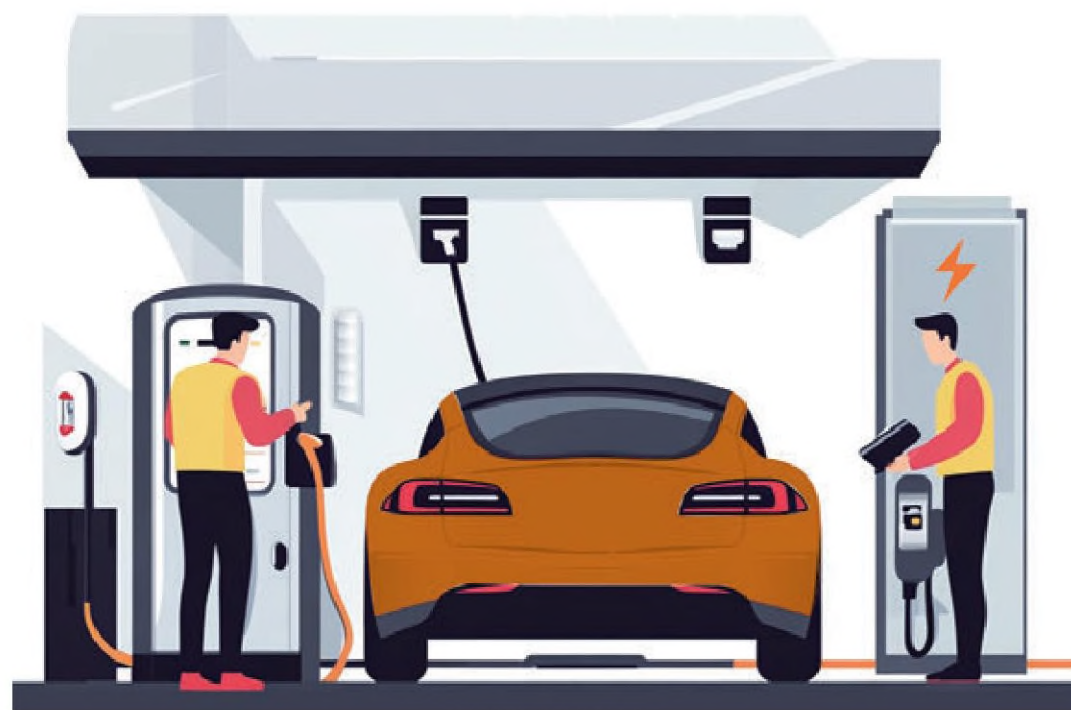
on Oct 4.

The EU claims the tariffs are in response to "unfair subsidies" China has provided to its EV manufacturers and the dumping of its EV "overcapacity" in the European market. But these claims cannot withstand scrutiny.

On the issue of subsidies, the EU side claims that the development of China's EVs completely relies on excessive subsidies. Relevant reports even describe the Chinese manufacturers' electricity, land, labor and financing as the result of government manipulation.

However, China's new quality manufacturing industries, such as EVs, relies on China's complete industrial system, solid industrial supply chain, and transportation, energy and other mature and stable foundations. In fact, China's current EV market has formed a strong competitive environment. The government does not need to support it to have excellent companies stand out. Tesla, BMW and other European and US car companies are also attracted by China's vast market and good business environment.

The so-called overcapacity theory also ignores the basic supply-demand logic of the market economy. According to the China Automobile Association, in 2023, China's new energy vehicle production and sales reached 9.587 million units and 9.495 million units, a year-on-year increase of 35.8 percent and 37.9 percent, respectively, showing that the overall development of China's EV market is healthy, and the claim that it is relying on the export of products to maintain a balance is untenable. Even with annual sales of 30.09 million cars in China, the current market share of NEVs in China is only 31.6 percent, which means that China still has



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

plenty of market potential to tap.

China's NEV exports in 2023 reached 1,584,800 units, of which 438,000 EVs were exported to the EU, accounting for only 27.6 percent of new energy vehicle exports and 4.5 percent of NEV production. Therefore, the so-called reliance on the EU market or foreign exports to absorb production capacity is undoubtedly ignoring the reality of the booming development of China's local EV ecology, distorting and misreading the logic of free trade and the market economy, and creating excuses for politically driven protectionist practices. If exports of

**In the context of today's global turbulence, making the pie bigger and helping each other is the way to tide over the crisis. Beggar-thy-neighbor approaches and a zero-sum game mentality will not bring about a win-win situation.**

a country's products are the basis for excess capacity, then this argument is to deny the basic principle of the market economy to vote with its feet and buy and sell voluntarily.

According to the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, in 2023, China imported 11,500 electric vehicles from the EU. Does this data prove that the EU vigorously supports the electric vehicle industry with subsidies and it needs the Chinese market to digest its "overcapacity"?

Objectively speaking, in recent years, China's exports of EVs to the EU have

grown rapidly. In 2023, China's EV exports to Germany, Spain and the Netherlands increased by 55.36 percent, 127.27 percent and 261.81 percent respectively, which has been a huge psychological blow to the EU, which regards cars as its own industrial advantage.

The advantages of China's EV industry are its comprehensive technological advantages, economies of scale and mature markets rather than just competitive prices. High tariffs in the EU will narrow profits and cannot completely eliminate the competitive advantages of Chinese products in all aspects. Therefore, the EU's attempt to raise the threshold of its local market to force China to give in, make concessions, and even change its industrial development system and trajectory in accordance with EU requirements, will not succeed.

However, the negative signs of economic and trade politicization and security shown by the EU on the issue of EVs are likely to pose systemic challenges to the sustainable development of China-EU economic and trade relations.

In the context of today's global turbulence, making the pie bigger and helping each other is the way to tide over the crisis. Beggar-thy-neighbor approaches and a zero-sum game mentality will not bring about a win-win situation.

Through communication and consultations on competitiveness and industrial policies, China and the EU should be able to reach a consensus on the most basic concepts and standards, build a framework and platform for discussing industrial policies and subsidies, explore common interests and sensitive boundaries through consultations at all levels, and eliminate the negative situation in which contradictions and disputes continue to rise. Recently, the new members of the European Commission have formally confirmed that the division of labor reflects the EU's tendency to pay more attention to the research and development and shape industrial policy, and also provides an opportunity for China and the EU to build industrial and competition policy dialogue.

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# CULTURAL HERITAGE



## Showcasing a dynamic era

French exhibition highlights the flourishing of art and spectacular craftsmanship of the Tang Dynasty 'golden age', **Deng Zhangyu** reports.

A visitor admires *Tang China — A Cosmopolitan Dynasty (7th-10th Century)* on exhibition at the Guimet National Museum of Asian Arts in Paris. PHOTOS BY GAO JING / XINHUA

With the rhythmic beat of drums echoing through the air, the city gates slowly open. The streets, flanked by shops, buzz with activity as vendors call out their wares. Merchants, craftsmen, musicians, artists and scholars from around the world gather here to exchange ideas and goods.

Welcome to the ancient capital of Chang'an, a cosmopolitan hub from a millennium ago, where the splendor of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) has been vividly brought to life.

*Tang China — A Cosmopolitan Dynasty (7th-10th Century)*, at the Guimet National Museum of Asian Arts in Paris offers visitors a rare and captivating glimpse into the Tang Dynasty, often heralded as a "golden age" in China's history. This era, marked by a flourishing of art, poetry and craftsmanship, also showcased a dynamic exchange with the wider world through the ancient Silk Road.

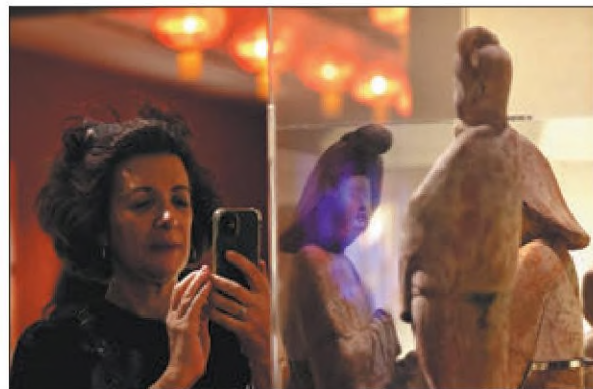
Huei-Chung Tsao, co-curator of the show from the Guimet museum, says that the exhibition meets the highest standards and can be considered a once-in-a-decade event.

It features 207 rare cultural relics from 32 museums and cultural institutions across China. Many of these pieces are being presented outside of China for the first time, and some are the must-see treasures from the lending museums' collections. It also includes antiques uncovered from recent archaeological excavations.

It's an important cultural activity to celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and France. President Xi Jinping and French President Emmanuel Macron have respectively written a preface to the show when it opened in late November.

Xi says that he believes the exhibition will help the French and other European audiences gain a more vivid understanding of the brilliant, open and confident atmosphere of the Tang Dynasty and experience the unique charm of Chinese civilization. Macron, for his part, says that the exhibition is of historic significance and demonstrates once again the vitality of cultural exchanges between the two countries, which will continue to play an important part in the development of bilateral ties.

The Guimet museum hopes the show can attract audiences of all ages, especially young people, sparking their interest in Chinese history. Tsao says some visitors told her that they still remember the grand show, 10 years ago, featuring Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) arti-



Left: A woman takes a snapshot of pottery figurines dating back more than 1,000 years at the exhibition. Right: Tang Dynasty (618-907) glazed horses and riders with foreign features attract visitors at the Guimet museum.



facts also held at the museum.

It makes her believe that an excellent exhibition can inspire more Western people to become curious about Chinese civilization.

When the Han Dynasty show was held in 2014, Xi and then French President Francois Hollande also wrote a preface for the exhibition. Now, the Tang Dynasty show is a response and echo of the grand exhibition a decade ago.

Luo Lijun, co-curator from Art Exhibitions China, says that the Han Dynasty show attracted more than 85,000 visitors in three months. This success gives them confidence to continue their cooperation with the Guimet museum for this year's exhibition.

Both exhibitions are co-organized by Art Exhibitions China, a governmental body that aims to promote Chinese cultural heritage overseas. Luo has been part of the curatorial team for both events.

"When starting our second collaboration, we and the Guimet museum coincidentally chose to introduce the Tang Dynasty to the French audience. Renowned as one of the most prosperous periods in Chinese history, the Tang Dynasty was marked by a vibrant economy, a thriving culture, intellectual openness, outstanding artistic accomplishments, and significant ethnic integration," says Luo.

In fact, the Guimet museum, dedicated to Asian art, has long been eager to host a large-scale exhibition to comprehensively showcase the Tang era, whose poetry, literature and calligraphy would go on to inspire some of the greatest literary works in later periods.

The museum has presented a total of four exhibitions spotlighting China's rich cultural heritage this year, with the Tang Dynasty show being the highlight of the year.

With an array of treasures set to be showcased outside China, Luo's team spent over a year preparing for the exhibition. The meticulous process involved selecting antiques, borrowing them from museums across China, and ultimately presenting them in a captivating manner to foreign audiences.

When choosing artifacts for overseas exhibitions, the first priority is to ensure they are not damaged. The items must be suitable for travel. They also need to captivate the audience. The selected artifacts should be well-known and important. Finally, it is crucial to showcase the latest archaeological findings, says Luo about their standards for antique selection.

The exhibition was divided into seven sections, including an immersive one that provides an overall picture of the Tang era.

Other sections focus on various aspects of this prosperous time, such as the architecture of the ancient capital of Chang'an (now Xi'an in Shaanxi province), daily life, ink painting art, craftsmanship of gold and silver wares, and the influence of the Silk Road.

In terms of architecture, it offers a map to show clearly the layout of the capital Chang'an, a then international hub, one of the most densely populated cities in the world. It boasted more than 1 million inhabitants. At its peak, the royal palace in Chang'an spread across about 3.2 square kilometers, or 3.5 times larger than the Forbidden City and 3 times the size of Versailles.

Visitors can immerse themselves in the vibrant life of the cosmopolitan era through captivating video displays of bustling street scenes and audio recordings of vendors hawking their wares, in addition to viewing the exquisite artifacts. Gold and silver wares were highly

popular in the Tang era with their craftsmanship reaching an unparalleled level of excellence.

This exhibition brings together exquisite gold and silver artifacts unearthed from the Famen Temple in Baoji, Shaanxi, an important Buddhist temple for the royal families; the Hejia Village Hoard in Xi'an, which houses large quantities of gold and silver wares for the court; and the Dingmaoqiao Hoard in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu, a treasure trove for households. It marks the first time that artifacts from these three locations are being showcased together overseas.

For instance, the incense holder made from gilt silver is a spectacular piece, featuring four finely engraved paintings on its body to demonstrate interesting stories of Buddhism. It was discovered from the underground palace of Famen Temple and was used to contain incense, a common element of Buddhist rituals and would have been used during royal ceremonies.

A silver box from the Dingmaoqiao Hoard in Zhenjiang is engraved with eight pairs of flying geese, interspersed with entwined lotus patterns and fish roe designs, creating an exquisite masterpiece. The box is a must-see piece from the Zhenjiang Museum in Jiangsu province.

According to the museum's director Zhang Xiaojun, a total of 956 gold and silver artifacts were unearthed from the Dingmaoqiao Hoard, including wine vases, food containers, storage vessels, and tea sets, dating back to the latter half of the 9th century.

These artifacts demonstrate the open and inclusive tea and wine culture of the Tang Dynasty. China has a long history of tea culture. Another highlight of the show is a set of Tang Dynasty three-

color glazed tea wares from Henan province. It includes various tea utensils and a figurine of a seated tea brewer, representing the earliest known complete set used for grinding, boiling, serving, and drinking tea. Notably, the seated tea brewer figurine is a depiction of Lu Yu, the revered "Sage of Tea".

These tea wares were excavated from a tomb chamber measuring only 4 square meters, indicating that the tomb occupant, despite their modest social status, possessed such a comprehensive tea set. This suggests that by the Tang Dynasty, tea culture had spread from the imperial court to ordinary people.

Another star exhibit is a thumb-sized golden dragon discovered from the Hejia Village Hoard in Xi'an, what was Chang'an. With its dragon head held high and limbs outstretched, this ritual instrument used in Taoist ceremonies serves to connect heaven and earth, praying for peace and prosperity for the nation and its people.

During the height of the Tang era, many foreigners settled in China, with a significant number making their homes in Chang'an and engaging in various professions. Among them, many were dancers and musicians. In Tang Dynasty tomb figurines, depictions of foreigners frequently appear.

This phenomenon also attests to the cultural exchanges along the Silk Road. Some vividly sculpted figurines of such kind are also on display.

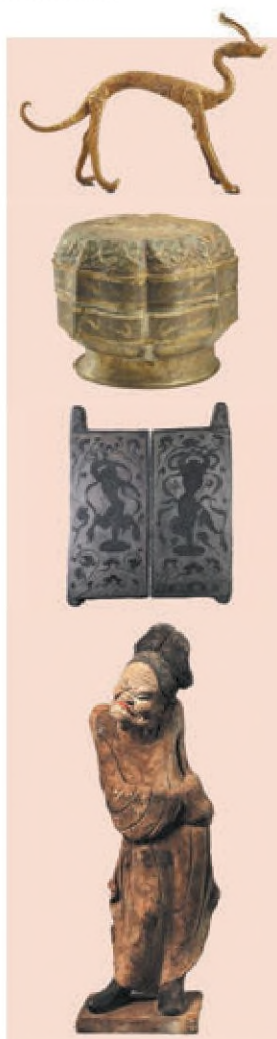
"Every exhibit is exquisite. If you look closely, you will find that each artifact actually holds a vivid story within. Our aim is to let the artifacts be ambassadors of our culture. They can tell good stories," says Luo.

Since the early 1970s, Art Exhibitions China that Luo works for has held 240 large-scale Chinese antique shows overseas in total. The shows outside China reached more than 60 countries and regions across five continents, attracting over 100 million visitors from both home and abroad.

Last year, they held a show focusing on antiques related to the nation and countries engaged in the Belt and Road Initiative in Japan. The touring show has received hundreds of thousands of visitors.

"Cultural relics carry historical heritage, inherit splendid civilization, and have become an important medium for promoting cultural exchange, mutual learning, and enhancing mutual understanding among people," Luo says.

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From top: A golden dragon; gilt silver box; doors of a Tang Dynasty tomb; pottery performer. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## LIFE



The cloisonné trophies for the country's second National Games in Beijing in 1965. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Exhibition showcases progress

Masterpieces on display represent the country's arts and crafts development over the past 70 years, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

A coral sculpture featuring a six-armed standing Buddha holding a chain that tightly restrains a dragon, two boxwood figurines fashioned after a model worker and a Red Army soldier, and a set of cloisonné trophies bearing images of athletes in various sports and traditional motifs, such as entwined lotus patterns, tell tales of China's history.

The Buddha and dragon work symbolize Yellow River flood protection and realignment during the early days following the founding of the People's Republic of China, while the model worker and Red Army soldier depict the fervent socialist construction era and arduous journey of the revolutionary war period from the 1920s to the 1940s, says Wang Jingjing, deputy general manager of the Beijing Gongmei Group and curator of the exhibition, being held at the Beijing Arts and Crafts Museum until Feb 28.

The exhibition *Walking With Time: Beijing Gongmei (1954-2024)* is hosted by the Beijing Gongmei Group, a major force behind the country's arts and crafts development for the past 70 years.

The objects exhibited were created by experienced artisans and are among dozens of masterpieces on display that showcase the inheritance and development of China's arts and crafts for the past 70 years.

The exhibition is meticulously planned — exhibits were widely sourced, systematically tracing the 70-year developmental journey of arts and crafts, says Chairman of the group Duan Tiyu.

"It carefully selected the most representative achievements to showcase the remarkable accomplishments and profound impact of the Beijing Gongmei Group in the field of arts and crafts from a comprehensive and multifaceted perspective," Duan says.

The cloisonné trophies were intended for the country's second National Games in Beijing in 1965, Wang says.

"They are among the masterpieces that transcend time and space, connecting the past with the future and bearing witness to the nation's remarkable progress," she adds.

The 70th-anniversary retrospective exhibition is structured around three main themes — Marching with the Times, Harnessing the Power of Arts and Crafts and Offering a Tribute to the Nation.

The Marching with the Times section showcases a series of pieces with distinctive characteristics of different eras — from the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China when everything needed rebuilding to the vitality that followed the reform and opening-up and the prosperity of the new era.

"The craftsmen of Beijing have, through their immortal skills, captured moments of history and fragments of life, making them eternal," Wang says.

*The Flower-Basket Plate*, a three-dimensional carved lacquerwork, is at the front and center of the section, representing a breakthrough in the traditional craft that has been passed down for nearly 2,000 years.

"With a diameter of 38 centimeters and a thickness of 5 centimeters, the piece by master Du Bingchen achieves not only a richly detailed effect but also greatly enhances the three-dimensionality, spatial depth and artistic expression of lacquer art," Wang says.

It took Du 20 years to master the hollow carving technique, which involves adding more than 500 layers of lacquer to the brass base as opposed to the traditional dozens of layers.

Each layer of the brilliant vermilion lacquer requires 4-5 hours to partially dry, making it a lengthy process.

"While the lacquer is semi-dry, intricate designs are applied, followed by carving, shaving and engraving using special tools," Wang explains.

The plate's central motif features a bamboo-like woven basket filled with flowers, including peonies, peach and plum blossoms and chrysanthemums.

It showcases the elegance and vitality of flowers from all seasons with a background meticulously engraved with fine brocade patterns resembling a silk tapestry that accentuates the vibrant blossoms, Wang explains.



Visitors are animated by works that showcase the inheritance and development of the country's arts and crafts for the past 70 years on exhibition at the Beijing Arts and Crafts Museum.

“They are among the masterpieces that transcend time and space, connecting the past with the future and bearing witness to the nation's remarkable progress.”

Wang Jingjing, deputy general manager of the Beijing Gongmei Group

Further into the exhibition, the Harnessing the Power of Arts and Crafts section gathers materials bearing historical memories collected from various places, including precious craft manuscripts, visual materials and historical goods.

The objects cover early cloisonné prototypes and books that recorded imperial carpet patterns and embroidery stitching methods from the 1970s to the 1980s.

"These objects tell the stories of craftsmanship, innovation and heritage, reflecting the dedication and perseverance of the artisans who contributed to the development of arts and crafts," Wang says.

The last section Offering a Tribute to the Nation displays the national-level design and production tasks undertaken by the Beijing Gongmei Group over the years, from the magnificent opening of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and APEC China 2014 to the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held over the years.

"They reflect the country's progress in a unique way, bearing witness to the nation's rise on the international stage," Wang says.

For instance, the emblem of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, also known as *Dancing Beijing*, was considered the jewel of the crown in the section.

It is made of Hotan jade that was sourced from the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and its parameters were carefully designed to carry special symbolic and cultural significance, Wang says.

The seal's edge measures 112 millimeters, representing 112 years, from the first modern Olympics in 1896 to 2008.

The seal's pedestal stands 200.8 millimeters high, signifying the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Its base is 56 millimeters high, with each side featuring 14 floral petals, symbolizing China's 56 ethnic groups.

The top of the seal is adorned with an image of the Temple of Heaven, representing Beijing, while the four

sides are engraved with interconnected Great Wall motifs, symbolizing China as a whole.

"The use of Hotan jade also carries multiple connotations," Wang says.

"For example, jade's smooth and warm qualities represent the Olympic spirit of peace and unity while its untainted clarity embodies nobility and integrity," she explains.

When the emblem was made public in 2003, the then International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge said the new emblem immediately conveys the awesome beauty and power of China embodied in its heritage and people.

"In this emblem, I saw the promise and potential of a new Beijing and a great Olympics. This is a milestone in the history of your Olympic quest," Rogge said.

At the exhibition launch ceremony, the book *Chinese Craftsmanship Behind National Gifts* was released, with the goal of having more people appreciate the charm of traditional crafts and intangible cultural heritage skills.

"We hope the exhibition and book will inspire people to engage in the protection, inheritance and innovation of traditional arts and crafts and intangible cultural heritage skills, allowing these arts to shine with greater brilliance," Wang says.

Tang Kemei, director of the experts committee of the China National Arts and Crafts Society, notes that many arts and crafts education and research institutes have been established over the past seven decades, laying a solid foundation for the continuous inheritance and innovation in the field.

Artworks developed by the Beijing Gongmei Group have made their way into more than 200 embassies worldwide.

"This effectively promotes our traditional arts and crafts," Tang says.

"The exceptional masterpieces (at the exhibition) that have come into being since the founding of the People's Republic of China will be a significant contribution to China's history and passed on to our descendants," she adds.

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## French impressed by Chinese theater

PERNES-LES-FONTAINES, France — The Chinese Tour in France's Most Beautiful Villages, an event designed to boost Chinese-French cultural exchanges, was launched Tuesday in Pernes-les-Fontaines, a town in southern France.

Six performances — including the hand-puppet theater play *Notre-Dame de Paris*, dance *Tea Harvesting* and Dacheng theater play *Cymbal Offering* — were presented by 20 performers from Fujian province in East China.

"My favorite was *Tea Harvesting*. It was so elegant. The performers made us dream for an hour, and letting me feel like being somewhere else," says Mireille, one of the nearly 200 spectators.

Marina, who particularly enjoyed the play *Cymbal Offering*, says everything was impressive as the performances were so different from what she had seen in France.

The event, part of the celebrations marking the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism, was co-organized by the China Opera Research Society and Fujian Vocational College of Art, in association with one of France's most beautiful villages.

The initiative brings a selection of traditional Chinese theater pieces that have been passed down for hundreds of years and remain vibrant in villages across Fujian to residents in Pernes-les-Fontaines, Lourmarin, Gordes, and Avignon, all renowned for their stunning landscapes and rich cultural heritage.

XINHUA



From left: The emblem of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the lacquer carving work *Flower-Basket Plate* and two boxwood figurines fashioned respectively after a model worker and a Red Army soldier are among the highlights of the 70th-anniversary retrospective exhibition hosted by the Beijing Gongmei Group.

## LIFE

# Playing Chekhov in China

Adaptation of master writer's famous play places a fresh spin on a Russian classic, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.



The National Theatre of China presented an adaptation of Russian writer Anton Chekhov's classic play *Three Sisters* between Oct 26 and 30. PHOTOS BY WANG HAOCHEN AND WANG MENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Some works of theater have a timeless nature, so much so that no matter how many times they are performed, they remain relevant, according to Li Yu, a young director at the National Theatre of China. For him, Russian literary luminary Anton Chekhov's classic *Three Sisters* is one such play.

To mark both the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Russia and the 120th anniversary of Chekhov's death, the theater presented an adaptation of *Three Sisters* directed by Li, between Oct 26 and 30.

Set in a provincial town, the play follows the family of a military officer, with a focus on the three titular sisters — Olga, Masha and Irina — who live with their brother. They long to return to Moscow, where they had lived 11 years earlier, as they grapple with the struggles of everyday reality.

"One reason we chose to adapt *Three Sisters* is that in it, Chekhov focuses on the perspectives of young people. This is a play we can relate to more as young theater practitioners," Li says.

"Moreover, *Three Sisters* explores hope and disillusionment, and the faith of pursuing hope. This theme, I believe, is eternal. By staging the play today, we hope to establish a conversation with contemporary audiences, to convey the beauty of this classic, and to pass on its vitality and power."

The 32-year-old director says that he was first introduced to the play 10 years ago, when he was pursuing undergraduate studies in directing at the Central Academy of Drama. At the time, one of his teachers was putting on the play, and he read the script before attending the performance.

Although he was unable to fully understand the play, he felt its emotional impact, for example, the sisters' urge to return to Moscow.

"I feel that people always crave the unattainable. Perhaps this sense of discontent and pursuit drives us forward and propels the progress of society," Li says.

Li himself once had a longing to go to Moscow. After completing undergraduate studies in 2018, he pursued a master's degree in directing at the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts in Moscow.

"I've always liked Chekhov's work. Another reason was that the teaching methods at the Central Academy of Drama were heavily influenced by the Russian



Top and above: The adaptation drew inspiration from cinematic techniques and used live video projection to make the play more relevant to Chinese theatergoers while remaining true to Chekhov's original.

system, so I felt a strong urge to go to the birthplace of the Russian theatrical tradition and gather firsthand experience," Li says.

After completing his studies in 2021, he sought opportunities to work with theater festivals. Last year, he was selected for the second season of a young directors' support

program by the National Theatre of China, which led to him joining the company.

Because the production crew is entirely comprised of young theater practitioners, Li removed some of the older characters in his adaptation to concentrate on the younger ones.

The play makes use of a range of music,

including classic, jazz and rock, which creates a playful, lighthearted mood for the first half, before morphing into a more sci-fi, futuristic ambience with the use of post-punk and electronic music in the second half.

It also draws inspiration from cinematic techniques and uses live video projections



Li Yu, a director at the National Theatre of China.

to amplify the acting or show perspectives the audience cannot otherwise see.

"Everything happens in real time, as is the case with live theater. The video enhances the performance, offering new perspectives and broadening spatial possibilities

of the stage," he says.

While remaining more or less faithful to Chekhov's original, the production reworks the script into 24 vignettes that intensify the drama.

"I mainly adjusted and rearranged the structure, but preserved the four acts. This is a play that I admire and to which I would like to stay true, so my aim is to create a dialogue with the master, while making it more accessible to the Chinese audience and easier for our actors," he says.

Although the play's faith in striving for a meaningful life resonates with a modern audience, Li sought to make the classic even more relevant to Chinese theatergoers by narrowing the cultural distance.

"Sometimes, I felt we were not staging a play from another country. The actors are not Russian in their appearance or mannerisms. The only unavoidable aspect is the Russian zeitgeist and ethos embedded in Chekhov's work," Li says.

"So we set a guiding principle, that is, we do not try to resemble the characters in appearance, but strive to connect with their psyches. We have worked hard to make the characters portrayed by Chinese actors relatable and believable."

On Nov 11, a seminar hosted at the National Theatre of China brought performing arts experts and scholars together to comment on the production.

Wang Yichuan, vice-chairman of the China Literature and Art Critics Association, said that through its stage art and music design, restructuring of the plot, and well-crafted character development, the production effectively conveyed the essence of the original, and achieved an aesthetic balance between light and dark moods.

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## American academic learns the pleasure of making a home in Macao

MACAO — Timothy Simpson never expected his stay in Macao would turn into such a long haul.

He arrived in 2001, thinking it would be a good stepping stone to greater adventure in Asia. Two decades later, the American from Alabama is firmly rooted in the city that has become his home.

"I came to Macao 18 months after its return to China in 1999," Simpson says, speaking of the days when he first took up a job at the University of Macau. "I thought I'd stay for just a couple of years."

But life had other plans. Macao's energy, growth and cultural mix, and the university's expanding opportunities kept him there for longer than he had intended.

Now an associate professor of communications at the UM, Simpson has spent much of his career teaching classes and conducting research, focusing on topics like media, culture, communication and the gaming industry.

When he first arrived, the university was located on its old campus, a modest space compared to the sprawling, modern facilities it occupies today.

"I've seen the university's growth firsthand," Simpson says. He's watched it evolve over the years, as its academic standards rose, attracting an influx of talented students from Macao and the mainland.

"The students are incredible, bright and motivated," he says. "Actually, they've improved dramatically over the last two decades. Today, getting admitted is very stiff competition."

Simpson's ties extend beyond his role at the UM. He met his wife through the local Thai community, and he credits this personal connection as a major reason for making Macao his home.

As an expatriate, Simpson's experience of living in the city has been shaped by its blend of cultures. Centuries of Portuguese influence have left their mark, resulting in a multicultural atmosphere that he has come to cherish.

The Lusofonia Festival, an annual event celebrating Portuguese-speaking cultures, is one of the many expressions of Macao's multicultural identity that Simpson enjoys for its mix of music, dance and food from countries including Portugal, Brazil, Angola and Mozambique.

"It's moments like these that give me a real, vibrant sense of how diverse Macao still is today," Simpson says, adding that for him, the city's diversity isn't just in history, it's alive today in its people and the traditions celebrated every day.

He lives in the historic center of Macao near Senado Square, one of the most popular tourist areas. "It's sometimes difficult to navigate the sheer number of visitors, but tour-



Tourists pose for photos at Senado Square in Macao, a popular tourist area. ZHU WEI / XINHUA

ism has contributed to Macao's development in the last 20 years."

Despite his roots, learning the language has been a challenge.

"The biggest failure of my life is that I don't speak Chinese fluently," he says. "I've taken both Mandarin and Cantonese lessons over

the years, but I still struggle."

English is widely spoken in Macao, especially among younger generation, which makes it easier to navigate life.

His relationship with the city has deepened over time.

"Macao's growth has been astounding,"

Simpson says. "I happened to live here during this massive transformation of the city, the economy, and the population. It's a place that's constantly changing, constantly expanding."

The skyline has exploded with towering resort complexes, and he has observed a gradual, yet significant shift in the economy. As the government seeks to balance the gaming industry with other emerging sectors, Macao is navigating toward diversification.

"It's a big experiment," Simpson says. "What's truly fascinating is watching how the policies and strategies unfold, and seeing how these efforts create alternative economic drivers."

Being an expatriate has shaped his teaching approach. Drawing on his own experience of navigating cultural differences in Asia, he teaches students about the complexities of intercultural communication.

"I often share my mistakes with students," he says, adding that this helps them understand the realities of adapting to new cultures, whether in Macao or elsewhere.

Despite only intending to stay for a short while, as he looks to the future, Simpson says that he has no plans to leave. "I've made Macao my home. It's where I built my life, my career, and my family. I plan to stay here until I retire."

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