

Threads of life

Miao embroidery tells stories of culture, tradition and hope CHINA, PAGE 5



EU urged to adopt win-win approach to trade issues BUSINESS, PAGE 14



Made in the jade

Craftsmen hone stone's appeal over the centuries THE HANDS OF TIME, PAGES 8-9

CHINA DAILY

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Unimaginable loss



Family members of passengers who died in Sunday's Jeju Air crash gaze at the wreckage of the plane at Muan International Airport in South Korea on Monday. The deadliest aviation accident in nearly 30 years killed 179 people on board. South Korean officials said on Monday it plans to conduct safety inspections on all of the 101 Boeing 737-800 jetliners operated by the country's airlines as well as a broader review into safety standards at Jeju Air, which operates 39 of those planes. YONHAP NEWS AGENCY See story, page 15

Members of Myanmar's telecom fraud gangs prosecuted

By LEI LEI and LI SHANGYI

Thirty-nine members of major criminal gangs based in northern Myanmar were prosecuted on Monday by a procuratorate in East China's Zhejiang province for telecom fraud and other crimes targeting Chinese citizens.

The case filed with the Wenzhou Intermediate People's Court has charged the suspects with fraud, intentional homicide, intentional injury, unlawful detention, casino operation, drug trafficking and prostitution, according to the Wenzhou procuratorate.

The criminal gangs, operating in northern Myanmar's Kokang region, which borders Southwest China's Yunnan province, are accused of using arms and coercion to carry out the crimes, including large-scale telecom fraud and internet scams targeting Chinese citizens.

Wang Sheng, deputy chief procurator of the Wenzhou procuratorate, said the case involves thousands of suspects, because the major criminal gangs and their

China jurisdiction are granted over these offenses under its Criminal Law and international treaties."

Wang Sheng, deputy chief procurator of the Wenzhou procuratorate

affiliates have extensive networks. "Some of the crimes took place on the Chinese side of the border, specifically targeted Chinese citizens and jeopardized the shared interests of the international community, therefore granting China jurisdiction over these offenses under its Criminal Law and international treaties," he said.

Wang added that thousands of suspects linked to northern Myanmar's criminal gangs are currently under investigation by procuratorates in Wenzhou and other locations across China.

The 39 suspects prosecuted on Monday include Mg Myin Shaunt Phyin, Ma Thiri Maung and Myin Shut Lan, who are all members of a family-run syndicate founded by Mye Shout Hkyann, according to the Wenzhou procuratorate.

Mye Shout Hkyann was a former member of Myanmar's Shan State parliament and a former member of the Kokang self-administered zone's leadership committee. He killed himself before Myanmar police could arrest him on Nov 15, 2023.

Wenzhou procurators reported that 16 defendants of the transnational criminal case are citizens of Myanmar.

Wang said the family-run syndicate established several gambling and crime dens in Kokang since 2015, recruiting personnel to carry out telecom fraud among other criminal activities.

There was a time when nearly 10,000 recruits worked in these dens, Wang added.

A 29-year-old man from Guangdong province, surnamed Li, illegally entered Myanmar in

September 2023 in search of lucrative employment opportunities.

"I had to make hundreds of fraudulent calls every day. I had to successfully lure at least three victims a day. Otherwise, I was beaten," Li said.

The family-run syndicate offered a safe haven for various fraudulent activities such as fake investments, impersonation of public officials and counterfeit credit services, defrauding victims of billions of Chinese yuan.

Wang, the deputy chief procurator, said the syndicate operated casinos catering exclusively to Chinese nationals, with gambling funds reaching billions of yuan. It harbored illegal activities such as organizing prostitution involving Chinese women and selling drugs to Chinese citizens.

Wang Zao, deputy head of Wenzhou's public security bureau, said the family-run syndicate used its power and influence accumulated over time, as well as hired guns, to maintain control.

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Inside

By ZHAO JIA in Beijing and ZHAO HUANXIN in Washington

President Xi Jinping sent a message of condolence to United States President Joe Biden on Monday over the passing of Jimmy Carter, noting that the former US president was a driving force and decision-maker behind the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries more than 40 years ago.

On behalf of the Chinese government and people, and in his own name, Xi extended profound condolences and expressed sincere sympathies to Carter's family.

Xi said that Carter had long made significant contributions to advancing the development of China-US ties and fostering friendly exchanges and cooperation between the two countries.

"I was deeply saddened by his passing," he said.

Noting that the China-US relationship is one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world, Xi said China is willing to work together with the US to promote sound, stable and sustainable development of ties by focusing on the fundamental interests of both peoples and aligning with the expectations of the international community.

Carter, the 39th president of the US, the longest-lived president in US history, and the winner of the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize, died peacefully on Sunday at the age of 100 at his home in Plains, Georgia, surrounded by family members, according to a statement from the Carter Center.

In late 1978, Carter and then Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping reached the historic decision to establish full diplomatic relations between the two nations on Jan 1, 1979, laying the foundation for the rapid growth of bilateral relations.

Sharon Woodcock, the wife of Leonard Woodcock, the first US ambassador to China, said in an email interview with China Daily that Carter would be remembered for the courage, both political and personal, to move forward with the negotiations that led to the normalization of relations between the US and China.

Carter did not visit China during his presidency from 1977 to 1981, but made his first trip to China in 1949 as a young naval officer.

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Carter remained a steadfast advocate for bilateral relations even after leaving office. He visited China in 1981, and since then had become a frequent visitor to the country. Carter met with President Xi on a number of occasions.

"I consider the normalization of diplomatic relations with China as an especially historic achievement," Carter said in an interview with the Shanghai Institute of American Studies in 2019, adding that "normalization with China may have been the most beneficial to world peace and understanding."

Reflecting on differences between Beijing and Washington, Carter remarked, "We also believed that the goals that bound us together — mutual respect, the pursuit of peace, prosperity, and progress — were much more important than the differences that divided us."

Chas W. Freeman Jr., US assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs from 1993 to 1994, said that he remembered Carter "fondly," and that many people today may look at the Carter era nostalgically. Back then, "our conversations with China were more realistic and honest, and our strategic reasoning was better," Freeman told China Daily.

Diao Daming, a professor of US studies at Renmin University of China's School of International Studies, said, "China and the US stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation, and a healthy, stable and sustainable bilateral relationship serves the interests of both nations and beyond."

Biden, who described Carter as an extraordinary leader, statesman and humanitarian, has scheduled an official state funeral for Carter in Washington on Jan 9. He also declared that day a national day of mourning across the US to honor the late leader.

According to the Carter Center, there will be public observances in Atlanta and Washington, followed by private interment in Plains.

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China-EU partnership on climate change is a watershed

WORLD WATCH By Belinda Schape

The outcome may have been unsatisfactory for many, but it shouldn't be taken lightly either. COP29 made an important statement about the resilience of this multilateral process. China and the EU played a key role in securing agreement on the NCQG by being flexible, communicating constructively with each other, and acting as a bridge between the developing and developed nations.

At COP29, China announced that it has voluntarily provided 177 billion yuan (\$24.25 billion) in project funding since 2016 to support developing countries in tackling climate change. By being transparent about its voluntary efforts, China demonstrated an openness that brought countries closer to common ground on the new finance goal.

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FASCINATION WITH DINOSAUR FOSSILS ROARS TO LIFE IN HONG KONG

Landmark find of prehistoric remains sparks interest of public, hopes of academia

By WU KUNLING in Hong Kong amberou@chinadailyhk.com



One day late in December, an excited group of young students crowded into the Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre in the city's Tsim Sha Tsui district. Chatter filled the air as their curious young eyes followed the movements of scientists working behind a glass enclosure.

The scientists were using specialized instruments to meticulously examine stones containing the remnants of a dinosaur from the ancient Cretaceous period, about 145 million to 66 million years ago.

The children peered at the intri-

cate skeletal imprints etched into the rocks, as if the large dinosaur had journeyed through the eons to meet, or terrify, them.

The viewing at the aptly named Dinosaur Parlour exhibition hall, marked the completion of the excavation of the first dinosaur fossils found in Hong Kong. The fossils were discovered on Port Island in the Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark in the northeastern waters of the city.

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Former US president Jimmy Carter speaks during an interview with China Daily on Dec 14, 2011, in Beijing. Carter died at the age of 100 on Sunday at his home in Plains, Georgia. WU ZHIYI / CHINA DAILY

TO OUR READERS

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PAGE TWO



A researcher studies a dinosaur fossil at Dinosaur Parlour exhibition hall in Hong Kong. LI QIANXUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

“Uncovering fossils in a small location like Port Island, which spans a mere 0.44 square kilometers, was a first for China, experts say.”

developing a range of dinosaur-related products, including coffee.

City's secrets revealed

While the discovery of Hong Kong's first dinosaur fossils has grabbed the headlines, other prehistoric discoveries are nothing new to some residents, with conservation efforts also improving in recent decades.

In 1980, Devonian fish fossils were uncovered in the city's Plover Cove area. The fossils authenticate the rocks' Devonian Period origins and date back roughly 400 million years.

In 2014, a University of Hong Kong student "rediscovered" a 147-million-year-old Jurassic fish among specimens in collections at Stephen Hui Geological Museum. The discovery marked the first identification of a dinosaur-era fish and vertebrate from the Hong Kong area.

On social media, fossil enthusiasts keep providing information and updates about traces of fossils discovered in the city. Many of the finds have been confirmed by academic institutions and official bodies.

A 19-centimeter ammonite, or shelled cephalopod, fossil, is embedded in the marble floor of Taikoo Place — a modern commercial building in Quarry Bay district. Fossils of the shell-like creature, which became extinct approximately 65 million years ago, can also be seen on the wall of the MTR Sha Tin Station, alongside fossils of gastropods.

In 2020, fossils of marine creatures were also discovered in a limestone block used in a wall at the MTR Sunny Bay Station, igniting lively debate on the topic.

One post said a fossil was found embedded in the floor of a shopping mall in Sheung Wan district on Hong Kong Island. "It's so exciting and satisfying when you identify a fossil on your own," a comment under the post reads.

In November, reports of two Hong Kong tourists finding dinosaur egg fossils in Heyuan, a Guangdong city renowned for its abundance of such fossils, made headlines.

One of them, Erik Yip Hang-wing, a guide from the Hong Kong Geological Park who majored in geography, has been leading tours and educational programs since 2010.

Yip said while observing the local red sandstone with his companion, he noticed a distinct feature on a rock surface. Suspecting it might house dinosaur egg fossils, his hunch was later confirmed by experts from a local dinosaur research institute. The veteran guide said he was confident his initial assessment was right, due to his vast experience observing stones and strong interest in earth sciences.

Polishing rocks

He hopes the discovery of dinosaur fossils in Hong Kong will open up new prospects for science education, and nature conservation in Hong Kong.

While leading tours, Yip often highlights to visitors the city's abundance of geological resources and wealth of fossils, where three distinct rock types are scattered almost 1,115 square kilometers. He is hoping people can understand the importance of this and better protect their environment. However, he acknowledges that despite the growing attention paid to conservation, the general public in Hong Kong remains relatively uninformed about earth sciences, including geology and paleontology.

A key hurdle that needs to be overcome is many individuals feeling intimidated by complex scientific concepts or perceiving these fields as irrelevant to their everyday life. With over 20 years of hosting geology tours, Yip concedes that geology can seem dull to most people.

But dinosaur fossils stand out for their ability to generate curiosity. Drawing parallels with the success of dinosaur-themed intellectual properties like "Jurassic Park", he sees dinosaurs not only as a huge market for commercial activities, but also as a way to ignite curiosity in paleontology and other scientific areas. Beyond just dinosaurs, he envisions that all the prehistoric creatures in Hong Kong, from osteoglossoid fish to ammonites, can serve as focal points for promotion and outreach in the future. They even have the potential to become trendy themes for commercial activities, he said.

Economic development and conservation efforts are not mutually exclusive, Yip said. Striking a balance between the two can attract more people to engage in conservation efforts.

"At the end of the day, conservation becomes achievable only when the public is interested in learning about the thing they must safeguard," Yip said.

Fossils: Prehistoric treasures shine



Visitors look at dinosaur fossils displayed at the Dinosaur Parlour. LI QIANXUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Left: Michael Pittman (right) with his colleagues and students during an expedition in Patagonia, Argentina, in 2023. Right: Researchers discuss the excavation of dinosaur fossils found on Port Island. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



From page 1

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government announced the remarkable discovery in October and invited experts from the Chinese mainland to join the excavation. Over time, around 30 rocks containing dinosaur fossils were unearthed.

Among the team of experts tasked with excavating and preparing the precious discoveries were Pei Rui and Zhao Qi from the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology at Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing.

The nation's top dinosaur researchers vividly recall the sense of anticipation when they began examining the fossils.

Both experts said that the bone structures within the rocks were not readily visible, leading to initial uncertainty about the discovery. However, that uncertainty only added to their excitement when they confirmed the find.

"When I saw the clear dinosaur features under the microscope, I immediately called Pei excitedly, telling him that I was 100 percent sure this was a dinosaur fossil," Zhao said.

"In most people's minds, Hong Kong is a place with skyscrapers everywhere. It's hard for me to imagine finding fossils in such an international metropolis."

Pei said he was aware of Hong Kong's vast country parks, but still found the discovery a new experience.

Typically, the pair's fossil hunts involve traversing vast expanses of the Gobi Desert and other desolate landscapes, based on geological data. Sometimes they have to walk several or tens of kilometers before finding dinosaur tracks.

Uncovering fossils in a small location like Port Island, which spans a mere 0.44 square kilometers, was a first for China, they said. The discovery adds a new location to the nation's dinosaur distribution map, Pei added.

Bone structure

Hong Kong is a concrete jungle, but a group of dedicated people tirelessly search for dinosaur remains.

Michael Pittman, assistant professor at the School of Life Sciences at the Chinese

University of Hong Kong, is one of the pioneers of dinosaur research in the city.

Raised in the city, and of mixed Chinese and English heritage, Pittman said China has a prominent role in global dinosaur studies, and Hong Kong makes a notable contribution. However, he believes many residents may be unaware of the city's world-class achievements in dinosaur research.

In October, Pittman's team, along with other scholars, finalized an academic article titled "Theropod trackways as indirect evidence of pre-avian aerial behavior," which featured on the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America publication.

Prior to that, research by Pittman and his team had appeared in prestigious international journals — such as *Current Biology*, and *Nature Communications* — multiple times over the years.

Pittman believes Hong Kong has significant advantages in dinosaur research. The field spans various disciplines, and Hong Kong, as an education hub with several world-class universities, offers ample academic resources and talent to meet research needs.

In addition, the HKSAR government offers strong support to achieve high education standards, which not only stresses its focus on research, but also reflects the traditional Chinese belief in the importance of education.

Hong Kong's proximity to the Chinese mainland is another advantage for dinosaur research in the city. Pittman said this factor influenced his decision to return to Hong Kong to pursue his career after studying abroad.

He vividly recalls his first scientific sojourn as a doctoral student to the mainland around 2013.

The sheer magnitude of dinosaur fossils scattered across the Gobi Desert left him awestruck. After arriving at the expedition site, he quickly uncovered dinosaur tracks. Just a few days later, he made a groundbreaking discovery — a new species of carnivorous dinosaur. "I was so thrilled at that moment. I just cheered and shouted on the desert sands like a complete madman," he said.

Mainland discoveries

Since then, he has undertaken numerous research trips to the mainland and collaborated with colleagues in the search and study of dinosaurs. Among his expeditions are visits to the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, and Hebei, Liaoning, Anhui, Sichuan, and Guangdong provinces. On his travels, Pittman has taken part in various projects alongside his mainland counterparts, including the unearthing of a new dromaeosaurid, a type of feathered raptor, in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

As a professor, he has also guided students from Hong Kong on numerous trips to the mainland to observe dinosaur specimens and have exchanges with mainland scholars. His students are from diverse backgrounds and countries, including Italy and Argentina, with many of them drawn to Hong Kong for the sole purpose of studying dinosaurs.

Pittman said he was not surprised by the fossil finds on Port Island, as its sedimentary rock layers are where such discoveries are often made. The discovery of numerous dinosaur fossils in neighboring Guangdong had also convinced him that it was only a matter of time before similar ones were found in Hong Kong.

Both he and his students were thrilled by the Port Island discovery. He believes it will not only raise awareness in Hong Kong about dinosaur fossils, but also boost academic research, which will negate the necessity for researchers to travel elsewhere to view specimens.

With the city now housing its own fossils, he hopes experts can be developed to work in dinosaur excavation, potentially opening up a new branch of academic research in the metropolis.

Apart from the positive academic outcomes, he believes the discovery also presents new commercial opportunities for the city. Industries such as tourism can benefit from the discovery due to the global interest in dinosaurs, Pittman said, as he urged Hong Kong tour operators to seize this opportunity. For example, ideas such as setting up small dinosaur-themed museums in places like geological park could be explored, he said.

Japan's Fukui City, for example, has leveraged its fossils, by building a dinosaur-themed museum and plaza, setting up photo opportunity spots for tourists, and



Fragments of dinosaur fossils found in Hong Kong. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Fossils on display at Dinosaur Parlour exhibition hall. LI QIANXUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Rocks that contain dinosaur fossils on Port Island in Hong Kong. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Port Island in the Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark in the northeastern waters of the city. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

TOP NEWS

Critical link

The under-construction Urumqi-Yuli Expressway is seen in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region on Friday. Vital work on a key project of this expressway, the Tian-shan Shengli Tunnel, was completed on Monday. Stretching over 22.13 kilometers, it is going to be the world's longest expressway tunnel.

LIU JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Bolstering stability and demand of yuan stressed

China to increase the intensity of monetary policy easing, expert says

By ZHOU LANXU and WANG KEJU

China's monetary policymakers are expected to prioritize bolstering domestic demand while strengthening expectation guidance to prevent any sharp yuan depreciation in the coming year, economists and policy experts said.

Monetary easing will likely take precedence over short-term exchange rate stabilization as steady economic growth will provide a stronger foundation in the medium and long term for the yuan, which may weaken moderately against the US dollar in the first half of 2025 and rebound later, they added.

Luo Zhiheng, chief economist at Yuekai Securities, said he anticipates China to increase the intensity of monetary policy easing in 2025 compared with this year — with scope for interest rate cuts of approximately 0.5 percentage point and room for reserve requirement ratio reductions of 0.5 to 1 percentage point — despite short-term pressures on the yuan exchange rate.

Central parity rate of the Chinese yuan against the US dollar



Source: The State Administration of Foreign Exchange
CHINA DAILY

Luo said in an interview with China Daily that headwinds on the yuan come from three aspects: potential additional tariffs on Chinese exports to the United States, intensified geopolitical tensions, and the greenback's strength amid the elevated US-China interest rate differential as the US slows down interest rate cuts while China is poised for bigger cuts.

On Monday evening, the onshore yuan was trading at 7.2994 against the US dollar, weakening by 2.92 percent since the beginning of the year, according to

market tracker Wind Info.

The ultimate buffer against the challenges for the Chinese currency will be improvements in economic fundamentals, which in turn rely on policy easing to expand domestic demand and additional actions to stabilize the property and capital markets, Luo said.

"The yuan exchange rate may face some depreciation pressures in the first half of 2025 but may rebound in the second half as the policy efforts take effect, experiencing fluctuations but remaining essentially stable," Luo said.

His comments echoed the reiteration from the People's Bank of China, the nation's central bank, to strengthen monetary easing and maintain market-oriented exchange rate policies while managing risks associated with exchange rate fluctuations.

PBOC Governor Pan Gongsheng said the central bank will "increase the intensity of monetary policy adjustments" and reaffirmed the scope for cutting banks' required reserves further, according to a People's Daily report on Sunday.

On Friday, the central bank, in a financial stability report, vowed to "enhance the resilience of the foreign exchange market, stabilize market expectations and keep the yuan exchange rate basically stable at a reasonable level", in line with the tone-setting Central Economic Work Conference.

Lu Ting, Nomura's chief China economist, said the yuan maintaining its general stability would bring more benefits than any substantial yuan depreciation as the former contributes to restoring confidence in the domestic stock and real estate markets, a key priority for China that ranks higher than boosting exports.

Liang Zhonghua, chief macro analyst of Haitong Securities, said that if weakening pressures on the yuan intensify, the central bank has ample policy reserves to achieve the goal of keeping it generally stable.

Potential policy levers include the countercyclical factor, offshore liquidity management, window guidance — also known as informal guidance, the risk reserve ratio for forward foreign exchange sales and macroprudential management of cross-border financing, Liang said.

He added that there are signs that the countercyclical factor, which adjusts the yuan's central parity rate, may have recently resumed its role in stabilizing the currency.

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African youth turn to Zhejiang to pursue vocational education

By CHEN YE in Hangzhou
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30,000 students

More and more African students are approaching vocational schools in Zhejiang province to take advantage of its booming e-commerce business. The region's cooperation with African countries in the field of vocational education has become a model for China-Africa educational exchanges.

Jinhua University of Vocational Technology in Jinhua city has been sending out admission letters to dozens of Rwandan students who are going to begin their courses in March. They will be enrolled in various majors, including e-commerce, and will finish their studies in December 2025.

"The training programs and teaching plans for them are being improved based on the feedback from the first group of students," said Huang Xin, deputy dean of the university's School of International Education, which is responsible for foreign students.

In April, the university welcomed 30 Rwandan students, the first batch to be invited under the Future of Africa — China-Africa Vocational Education Cooperation Plan project. The students, who are majoring in electrical automation and e-commerce, will graduate next month.

The university plans to enroll a group of students from Rwanda annually for the next five years.

Uwamahoro Alphonsine, a Rwandan student majoring in e-commerce at the university, has been very occupied with her studies. During a recent practice session, she imitated livestreaming sales slogans in fluent Chinese and introduced products in a simulated livestreaming room, according to the Jinhua News Media Center.

Alphonsine said she is passionate about women's clothing. "Before coming to Jinhua, I had the idea of starting my e-commerce business, but I didn't have a clear direction. Jinhua has made my entrepreneurial dream more concrete," she said.

During her spare time, Alphonsine often visits women's clothing stores in the city's downtown area and Yiwu International Trade City. The dazzling array of fashionable clothes that she sees act as motivation.

"Women's clothing in China is both cheap and beautiful," she said. "I want to take them back to Rwanda and let more Rwandan girls try them on."



Rwandan students who majored in e-commerce from Jinhua University of Vocational Technology conduct a livestreaming sales session in a simulated broadcasting studio on Oct 7. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Fraud: Family-run syndicate offered haven for illegal activities

From page 1

Na Xin, leader of the crime investigation team of Kunming's public security bureau, said that Mg Myin Shaunt Phyin is a militia leader who used armed personnel to shield the syndicate's operations. "The family reaped enormous profits from these crime dens," Na added.

Since China launched its special crackdown on telecom fraud in July 2023, over 53,000 suspects have been extradited from northern Myanmar to China through joint law enforcement efforts, the Ministry of Public Security reported in November.

In October 2023, the syndicate attempted to relocate its recruits to evade police scrutiny.

"My grandfather asked me to transfer these people when the investigation begins and bring them back later," said Myin Shut Lan, the granddaughter of Mye Shout Hkyam.

On Oct 20 last year, some of the syndicate's recruits tried to escape after realizing that they could not return to China. The syndicate's guards opened fire on them, killing four Chinese nationals and injuring another four.

The legal rights of all defendants, including Myanmar nationals, will be strictly safeguarded in accordance with the law, said Wang Sheng, the deputy chief procurator.

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Climate: Cooperation key to keep momentum

From page 1

China has been key in reassuring the world that climate action will continue. Its domestic climate action, supercharged by the cleantech industry, is unstoppable. Its continued commitment to South-South climate cooperation also provides confidence that increased funding and resources from China can be expected to support other developing countries.

The signals from COP29 were clear: China is a key player in defending climate multilateralism and reassuring the world that climate action will continue. But efforts to defend climate multilateralism can only succeed by joint forces among all key players.

China-EU engagement

Amid the current geopolitical uncertainties, China and the EU have the opportunity to jointly step up their leadership role in championing the global climate agenda. As the United States is likely to take a back seat in tackling global climate change over the next four years, commitment by China and the EU will be crucial to keep the momentum going.

The world remains dangerously off track from achieving the climate targets of the Paris Agreement. Under the current trajectory, global temperatures would increase by 2.6 C to 3.1 C over this century, according to the Emissions Gap Report 2024 released by the United Nations Environment Programme. The implications for humans, wildlife and economies are unthinkable.

However, geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainties risk standing in the way of more meaningful emission reductions and effective multilateral cooperation to advance the climate agenda. This could lead to a dangerous spiral where increasingly harsh climate

impacts exacerbate crises and drain already empty pockets of countries trying to revive their economies.

But countries still have an opportunity to get back on track by cutting global emissions by 57 percent by 2035, as they put forward their Nationally Determined Contributions in 2025. China and the EU stand at the heart of driving these necessary emission reductions as two of the three largest historical emitters. Both have signaled that they are up to the task.

With the new European Commission in place, the Green Deal remains a priority for the EU. The European Commission has proposed a 90 percent emissions reduction target for 2040 that will likely form the basis for the upcoming NDC. The forthcoming Clean Industrial Deal is intended to speed up the implementation of the EU's climate pledges by directing investment toward industrial decarbonization and building lead markets for clean technologies.

China has also made rapid progress that should enable the implementation of its climate targets while accelerating the global transition. Experts are becoming more confident that China will peak emissions by 2025, five years ahead of schedule. The UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2024 suggests that China might be able to reduce CO2 emissions by at least 10 percent in 2030 and 28 to 37 percent in 2035, based on national modeling studies of mitigation pathways aligned with China's long-term decarbonization goals and with interpretations of the Paris Agreement.

China's rapid renewables expansion is not only bringing down emissions but its clean-energy sector has also become the top driver for economic growth, accounting for a significant part of GDP expansion.

By working more closely together, China and the EU can benefit from each other. China can benefit

from having the EU as a reliable partner to share best practices and exchanges on key questions in implementing the green transition from power market reform and industrial decarbonization, to just transition and climate adaptation. Similarly, the EU can learn a lot from China's achievements in producing renewables and advancing breakthrough technologies.

The synergy between China's manufacturing prowess in cleantech and the EU's policy-driven decarbonization efforts could create the conditions for a global green industrial revolution, propelling both regions to the forefront of a low-carbon economy.

Their cooperation could help bridge the gap between developed and developing countries.

The way forward

China and the EU stand at a fork in the road: either they can grow apart and threaten our shared climate safety, or accept that the relationship needs to take new shape to fit the changing economic and geopolitical context.

This means that China and the EU should continue to seek coordination on traditional climate issues and broaden discussions to include emerging areas of divergence.

On the climate diplomacy calendar, if 2024 was a year about finance, then 2025 should be a year about NDCs. With the incoming US administration, there remains a lot of uncertainty around how strictly the US will implement its newly announced NDC of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 61 percent to 66 percent by 2035 compared to 2005. Between now and COP30 in Belem, Brazil, China and the EU can reinvigorate the multilateral process by presenting a strong NDC and outlining plans to transition away from fossil fuels.

China and the EU need to step up their engagement in the upcoming

NDCs. Technical dialogues should continue to strengthen science-based decision-making, but high-level political engagement is also needed to coordinate the timing of submissions and the content of NDC targets.

China and the EU have yet to find a good modus operandi to effectively discuss trade tensions that are inevitably arising as both decarbonize their economies. The implementation of the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and China's edge in green technology have sparked tensions, underscoring the need for clearer communication and cooperative frameworks.

The proposed China-EU high-level dialogue on CBAM could become a venue for both sides to discuss these topics in more detail. Advisers in China and the EU have also signaled openness to explore new ways of enabling Chinese investments in Europe to strengthen the EU's cleantech sector through joint ventures and tech transfer.

To enable a forward-looking China-EU climate cooperation, both sides should create new or revive existing bilateral and multilateral spaces. The two should establish a regular high-level exchange format to discuss priorities while championing decarbonization supported by new industries. China and the EU can also champion multilateral forums that can lay the groundwork for tackling broader challenges.

China and the EU have an unprecedented opportunity to lead the world by setting ambitious emissions reduction targets and creating the frameworks for global cooperation. By strengthening cooperation, focusing on shared priorities and finding ways to address trade issues head-on, China and the EU can catalyze global action.

The climate clock is ticking, and only by working together can China and the EU chart a course for a sustainable future.

The author is a China analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, a Helsinki-based think tank.

CHINA

Progress seen in low-carbon development

Manufacturing industry booming, with photovoltaic sector particularly strong

By YAN DONGJIE

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The absolute value of China's manufacturing industry continues to increase, ranking first in the world for the 14th consecutive year and having shown major improvement in sustainable development in recent years, according to a report released by the Chinese Academy of Engineering on Monday.

"This indicates that China's transition to green and low-carbon development has achieved significant results," said Wang Decheng, an expert from the drafting team of the 2024 China Manufacturing Power Development Index Report.

Wang said that based on recent data, China has seen great increases in the indicators of energy consumption per unit of value added in manufacturing and the comprehensive usage rate of industrial solid waste. He also said the global competitiveness of the country's manufacturing industry is on the rise.

The report is an authoritative index for objectively evaluating the overall level of China's manufacturing industry and has been published annually since 2015, according to the CAE.

Gao Jifan, director of the State Key Laboratory of Photovoltaic Science and Technology, said that nurturing advanced manufacturing clusters is an important path for China, with the cluster development of China's photovoltaic industry being a successful case.

"The guiding role of policies has been a decisive factor in the successful development of Jiangsu's photovoltaic industry cluster. We have brought together various resources to form a cluster synergy,

which is why we lead the world in the photovoltaic industry," Gao said.

The green photovoltaic cluster in Jiangsu province is centered around cities such as Yancheng, Changzhou, Suqian and Huai'an, with a total output value reaching 370.5 billion yuan (\$50.7 billion) last year, accounting for over one-fifth of the national total.

Data from the China Photovoltaic Industry Association shows that in the first 10 months of this year, the production of photovoltaic polysilicon and batteries in China increased by over 20 percent year-on-year.

Gao mentioned that in recent years, he has shared experiences in countries such as France and Australia to promote international cooperation in the field of clean energy.

"Before 2010, China was a follower in the photovoltaic industry. From 2010 to 2020, it became a pioneer. Now, we lead the industry," he said.

"But there is still room for improvement in China's manufacturing industry. We have leading technology and production capacity, and making sure we lead in terms of efficiency would be the next important development direction," he added.

Academician Chen Jianfeng, secretary-general of the CAE, said: "China's manufacturing industry is at a critical moment in its continuous advancement towards becoming a strong nation. Faced with complex domestic and international situations, we must seize the historical opportunities brought by the new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation, leverage our strengths and address our weaknesses."

Fun in Harbin



Foreign tourists have fun at the 7th Harbin Songhua River Ice and Snow Carnival during its trial opening in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, on Monday. The soft opening attracted a large number of tourists who were able to experience over 60 ice and snow amusement activities such as snow drifting, snowmobiles and ice cycling. ZHANG SHU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Agency's white paper lists Tiangong's scientific feats

By ZHAO LEI

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China's Tiangong space station has helped researchers achieve a long list of scientific and technological feats since its completion two years ago, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

The agency published a white paper on Monday in Beijing, showing 34 results of scientific experiments and technological tests that have been conducted onboard Tiangong.

The results relate to several research fields, including life science and biological technologies, observation and analysis on the human body in a space environment, materials science and hydrodynamics in microgravity.

The document outlines multiple world-class achievements obtained by scientists working with astro-

navants onboard the Chinese space station, including the first germplasm resources of rice developed in space and the first human embryonic stem cells differentiated into hematopoietic stem/precursor cells in space.

The accomplishments also include the world's first cold atom interference gyroscope in space microgravity, the first high-throughput in-orbit microbial control test platform and the longest operation of a space-based water ecosystem, according to the white paper.

Since Tiangong's completion in December 2022, Chinese scientists and technologists have sought to carry out experiments and tests covering 32 academic subjects.

As of Dec 1, a total of 181 science and technology projects have taken place onboard Tiangong, with

nearly 2 metric tons of mission necessities having been transported to the space station and nearly 100 kinds of experimental samples and 300 trillion-bytes of data returned to Earth, the document said.

Thanks to Tiangong, Chinese researchers have published more than 500 theses listed in the Science Citation Index, a world-leading thesis index system, and have registered over 150 patents, it added.

The white paper noted that in the near future, Chinese researchers will perform more than 1,000 scientific and technological projects through Tiangong and will continue to offer science lectures and foster international cooperation related to the station.

In-orbit construction of the space station began in April 2021, when China launched the first and central part of the outpost — the

Tianhe core module. After that, several groups of astronauts were sent to the space station and nearly 100 kinds of experimental samples and 300 trillion-bytes of data returned to Earth, the document said.

In the second half of 2022, the Wentian and Mengtian science modules, the two major science components, were launched to dock with the Tianhe module, completing the space station's construction phase.

Tiangong is one of the largest and most advanced structures ever deployed in Earth's orbit and is the only operating space station independently built by a single nation. It now weighs more than 100 tons and is expected to function for at least 10 years.

So far, eight crews have been sent to man the space station, including the incumbent Shenzhou XIX team, which arrived at the outpost in late October.

Dashixia dam project capped in Xinjiang

By HOU LIQIANG in Beijing and MAO WEIHUA in Urumqi

The Dashixia Water Control Project in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region reached a significant milestone after its dam was successfully capped on Monday, signaling the commencement of a new phase in its construction.

The capping of the 247-meter facility, which is as tall as an 80-story building and is currently the world's highest concrete-faced sand-gravel dam, occurred eight months ahead of schedule, according to investor China Gezhouba Group Co, a subsidiary of China Energy Engineering Corporation.

A total of 18.9 million cubic meters of materials were used in the construction of the dam. That is enough to make 7,560 standard swimming pools, a media release from the company said.

Located in the middle and lower reaches of the Kumarak River in the Aksu region, the project is a major national water-saving and water-supply source. Launched in September 2021, it is expected to create a reservoir boasting a capacity exceeding 1.1 billion cubic meters, it noted.

Upon completion, it will offer a sustainable water supply to the Tarim River, aiding in the revitalization of its ecosystems. The water allocated to the Aksu River basin will significantly mitigate spring water shortages in its irri-



An aerial view of the Dashixia Water Control Project in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region on Friday. XINHUA

1.9 billion

kilowatt-hours of electricity the dam will be able to generate per year upon the operation of its power generation units

gated areas, benefiting more than 533,000 hectares of farmland.

With a total installed capacity of 750,000 kilowatts, it will be able to generate almost 1.9 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity a year. All of its power generation units are scheduled to go into operation in July 2026.

Li Yang, an executive with the project, said the dam, which was built with an investment of nearly 9 billion yuan (\$1.2 billion), was completed amid harsh natural conditions.

Frequented by hail, the area around the dam experiences extreme temperatures, with highs

reaching 39.5 C in summer and lows dropping to -22 C in winter, he said.

Zhong Denghua, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, said the project is a pioneering concrete-faced sand-gravel dam, serving as a model for the world. It has undergone comprehensive intelligent construction processes, employing smart technology at every stage.

The application of AI technology has helped resolve many technological hurdles in building dams of the type, including the swift on-site testing of water content and compaction quality, Zhong said.

He said the dam is the world's first concrete-faced sand-gravel dam constructed through the use of advanced cooperative technology involving intelligent unmanned compactors.

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'Extremely premature' baby discharged

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

Defying the odds, a baby born after just 22 weeks of gestation and weighing merely 450 grams has been discharged from the Children's Hospital of Fudan University in Shanghai on Friday.

The infant, which was smaller than a bottle of water at birth, set a new record for the youngest surviving premature baby in Shanghai, marking a breakthrough in the treatment of "extremely premature" infants at the hospital, which is a national-level medical center for children.

The girl, nicknamed Lele, was born with fragile vital signs on July 27 at a hospital in Fengxian district on the outskirts of the city. Her mother, who prefers to remain anonymous, had experienced several miscarriages before.

Immediate intervention efforts, including intubation for mechanical ventilation, pulmonary surfactant therapy and intravenous fluid administration, were initiated after her birth. She was transferred to the Children's Hospital's neonatal intensive care unit by a specialized transport team the same day.

Yuan Lin, executive director of the neonatal diagnosis and treatment center at the Children's Hospital, explained that infants born before 24 weeks of gestation are classified as "extremely premature" and face significant risks due to underdeveloped organ systems — particularly the respiratory, circulatory and neurological systems — making treatment highly complex.

According to data from the Chinese Neonatal Collaboration Network, the survival rate for premature babies born after 22 to 23 weeks of gestation in China is only 10.3 percent, with rare instances of survival reported for those born after 22 weeks.



A photo of Lele taken at the Children's Hospital of Fudan University in Shanghai on Aug 31. WANG JULIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Upon arrival, Lele received meticulous care and a comprehensive treatment plan tailored to her critical condition. Despite her miniature size and underdeveloped organs, the medical team provided specialized care and advanced treatments to navigate her through the initial high-risk period.

Zhang Rong, deputy director of the hospital's neonatal diagnosis and treatment center, said that throughout the treatment process, the medical team paid close attention to the changes in Lele's condition, and formulated a detailed multidisciplinary approach focusing on respiratory, circulatory, neurological and nutritional management tailored to the developmental stages.

"For example, we were pretty accurate about the volumes regarding her daily milk intake, intravenous fluids and nutrients. Meanwhile, advanced respiratory support technology was used to help Lele get rid of invasive ventilation," she said.

After five months of treatment, Lele had reached her corrected gestational age of one month past her

expected due date when she was discharged from the hospital. She did not rely on oxygen support for breathing anymore, her milk intake volume became normal and she weighed 2.74 kilograms.

The hospital established a multidisciplinary follow-up team that will focus on respiratory, nutritional, pediatric health, nursing and neurological assessments to monitor Lele's growth progress closely in the long run, particularly evaluating her neurological development regularly. Experts predicted that the girl is expected to catch up to a normal growth trajectory when she is around a year old.

Wang Yi, president of the Children's Hospital of Fudan University, said: "There are still significant challenges for extremely premature infants' survival. However, with continuous advancements in medical technology and care practices, coupled with the development of neonatal medicine, there is hope for more breakthroughs in pushing the boundaries of survival for such babies, bringing hope to their families."

CHINA

Miao embroidery tells stories of tradition and hope

Couple dedicates to preserving cultural heritage

By TAN YINGZI and DENG RUI in Chongqing

Pengshui Miao embroidery, known as the "fingertip economy" for Miao folks in a county of Chongqing, weaves not just intricate patterns, but also a story of tradition, resilience and newfound hope.

According to authorities in Pengshui Miao and Tujia autonomous county, by employing a collaborative approach that involves local companies, training schools and experienced embroiderers, nearly 10,000 people, many of whom are stay-at-home women or are from disadvantaged backgrounds affected by poverty or disabilities, have found jobs.

Pengshui Miao embroidery is the epitome of Miao embroidery, an intangible cultural heritage in China, which boasts a long history and showcases exceptional craftsmanship. Known for its intricate techniques, vibrant colors and diverse patterns featuring more than 20 needlework methods, it is often called "the Miao epic worn on the body" due to the ethnic group's lack of a written language.

Pengshui is home to 318,000 Miao people who comprise 45.4 percent of the county's population. According to the local government, it has the largest concentration of Miao people in all ethnic minority counties.

Li Shaoyu, 55, and her husband Wang Guangrong, 54, are key figures in efforts to preserve the art form while enhancing the well-being of local folks.

Deeply connected to the traditional attire, Li acquired her skills from her mother, in addition to self-instruction. She fondly recalls crafting clothing with a stand-up collar using Miao embroidery at the age of 17 under her mother's guidance, treasuring it until it wore thin.

Fifteen years ago, the couple began crafting traditional Miao clothing based in an embroidery workshop, then expanded to build a company in 2015, with an annual output value of approximately 6 million yuan (\$820,000).

Since Li was designated a representative inheritor of Pengshui Miao embroidery in 2016, the couple has dedicated themselves to preserving these handicrafts.

Through their company, which serves as a cornerstone for training



Li Shaoyu works at her workshop in Pengshui Miao and Tujia autonomous county in Chongqing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

programs, initiatives have been implemented in nearly 30 townships across Pengshui.

These efforts have positively impacted the lives of over 3,000 local residents, including more than 1,000 stay-at-home women and individuals with disabilities, and over 800 people with limited incomes.

Each week, Li teaches complimentary classes at local schools and the youth activity center, aiming to preserve and pass down the cultural heritage.

A proficient artisan and a prominent figure who shoulders social responsibility, Li has won several national honorary titles such as National Excellent Migrant Worker.

Traditional Miao embroidery is primarily used to adorn the collars, lapels, sleeves, handkerchief edges and skirt hems of clothing. It can also be used to make items such as shoulder bags and wallets.

While keeping Miao embroidery's tradition, Li also developed a series of cultural and creative products, such as sachets, brooches, hairpins, earrings, scarves and insoles. She even embroidered local landscapes on cloth to create decorative paintings and has attracted multiple customer orders.

"I want to introduce Miao embroidery culture to a wider audience," Li said. As a delegate to the 13th National People's Congress, during the two sessions in 2018 she brought a meticulously embroidered Miao decorative painting to Beijing. The work

took over 10,000 meters of thread to complete.

Notably, Li's embroidery of *Dizhuming*, a work from Huang Tingjian, a famous calligrapher in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), is part of the National Museum of China's permanent collection.

In alignment with modern aesthetics, Li embraced a minimalist approach as well — adorning pillowcases and garments with selected patterns, which found success in the market.

Li also developed customized services, fusing modern and contemporary aesthetics and integrating handcrafted silk embroidery featuring patterns, totems or logos onto traditional designed chiffon garments and *qipao* dresses. "We are planning to further develop Miao embroidery cultural and creative products to promote the integration of culture and tourism," Wang said.

In 2022, Pengshui Miao Embroidery Pavilion, the first of its kind in the county, was unveiled to the public at Pengshui's Chiyou Jiuli Town scenic area. The three-story museum offers a comprehensive array of exhibits, as well as a livestreaming center and design base.

Wang, who is also head of the pavilion, said it functions as a hub for training Miao embroidery skills and an educational destination for curious tourists and students.

"Being able to earn an income through Miao embroidery to support my family is something I aspire to,"

said 38-year-old Luo Xiaoli, a stay-at-home mother from Shangan township of Pengshui, who was once stricken by poverty.

Four years ago, Luo was introduced to the art after a 22-day training program. Later, she enrolled in Li and Wang's company as one of the top six apprentices and gradually gained financial independence. While acknowledging the ongoing learning curve of this intricate art, she remains optimistic about the future.

According to the Chongqing Municipal Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, in the first three quarters of this year, Pengshui's GDP grew 7.1 percent and the income of its rural residents rose 6.2 percent year-on-year, ranking among the top in the municipality.

Last year, Pengshui received the top A rating in the national assessment of the effective integration of poverty alleviation achievements and rural revitalization.

The local government has been enhancing cultural and tourism initiatives centered around Miao traditions in recent years, according to Wang Lubo, deputy head of the county. This includes the preservation and promotion of Miao embroidery, cuisine, arts, songs, dance, traditional medicine and herbs, as well as the development of Miao villages and towns.

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University students cruise into higher education

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan zhaorui@chinadaily.com.cn

Imagine having classes while cruising the open sea. For a select group of students from across China, this unique experience is becoming a reality.

They are embarking on a one-of-a-kind educational voyage, not on a traditional campus, but aboard *Dongfanghong 3*, an advanced scientific research vessel.

The elective course of Ocean Scientific Expedition and Practical Experience, launched by the Ocean University of China in 2020, is open to teachers and students from universities and research institutes across China. It offers the students a chance to learn about ocean science in an immersive and hands-on way.

Jia Ru, a first-year graduate student from Nankai University, was among the group of students who recently took part in these classes, held from Dec 17 to 20.

More than 130 teachers and students from the OUC, Nanjing University, Beijing Normal University and Shandong University, sailed into the waters around Qingdao, Shandong province. The participants were divided into two groups, with each group spending two days and one night aboard the vessel.

"This experience expanded my knowledge and gave me a new perspective on the vastness of the ocean," said Jia, a student of modern Chinese literature.

"The classes aboard *Dongfanghong 3* felt like a close-knit community, where students from different disciplines could share

thoughts and ideas. It was a unique, interdisciplinary environment," she added.

The program, which began exclusively for OUC students, has now opened up to universities nationwide, providing an exciting opportunity for students to experience the wonders of the ocean firsthand.

The *Dongfanghong 3* is a 5,000-metric-ton vessel that serves as both a floating classroom and a research station. Aboard, students are taught fundamental oceanographic knowledge.

Chen Zhaohui, executive deputy dean of the Graduate School at the OUC, said the curriculum is designed to ignite curiosity about the ocean.

"We want young students to understand the oceans correctly and foster a deeper connection to the sea, while also sparking their interest in scientific exploration," said Chen, who is also vice-director of the Key Laboratory of Physical Oceanography of the Ministry of Education.

The classes feature a variety of engaging topics, from how humans explore the ocean to understanding marine ecosystems. Students also participate in hands-on scientific research, including tasks such as measuring ocean temperature and salinity, as well as observing marine organisms under a microscope.

As one of China's top universities specializing in marine science, the OUC has long been a leader in oceanography and fisheries. Based in Qingdao, the university celebrated its 100th anniversary in October.



Students attend a class aboard *Dongfanghong 3* in the sea near Qingdao, Shandong province. LI HUACHANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

New energy becomes major power source

HOHHOT — Installed new energy capacity in the coal-rich Inner Mongolia autonomous region, including wind and solar, has surpassed 120 million kilowatts, exceeding the region's installed thermal power capacity for the first time.

Inner Mongolia has achieved this milestone one year ahead of schedule, most recently having connected a 1-million-kw photovoltaic project to the grid. Its total installed power capacity is now 240 million kw, and its installed thermal power capacity is 117 million kw.

Inner Mongolia possesses abundant new energy resources, with wind energy potential of 1.46 billion kw, accounting for approximately 57 percent of the national figure. Its solar potential amounts to 9.4 billion kw, representing nearly 21 percent of national potential.

Currently, new energy installations connected to the grid in the region generate 270 billion kw hours of electricity annually, equivalent to reducing standard coal use by 84 million metric tons and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by over 220 million tons.

Inner Mongolia also boasts coal reserves totaling 536 billion tons, accounting for nearly one-third of the national total. In 2023, its annual coal production came in above 1.2 billion tons, of which approximately 60 percent was sold outside the region, with about 250 million tons used to generate thermal power within the region.

According to a bulletin posted on the regional energy bureau's website in January, Inner Mongolia at the time planned to shut down three coal mines in 2024

with a total production capacity of 2.1 million tons.

Inner Mongolia has also made great strides in technological innovation in the field of new energy. The region has integrated wind and solar power generation with desertification control, for example, by using solar panels to provide shade and reduce surface water evaporation to enable plant growth beneath. Projects such as this ingeniously combine new energy development with desert ecosystem restoration.

Inner Mongolia can be seen as a microcosm of the rapid growth of China's new energy sector, which has maintained double-digit annual growth in recent years.

Since 2013, the country's installed wind power capacity has grown sixfold, and its installed solar power capacity has surged more than 180-fold. New installations in China account for over 40 percent of the global annual total, contributing significantly to the world's green development.

In the tone-setting annual economic work conference held earlier this month, China's policymakers pledged to accelerate the comprehensive green transformation of economic and social development next year.

To achieve the country's dual carbon goals, China will tighten control over the consumption of fossil fuels, work faster to develop a new energy system, and promote the integrated development of hydro, wind and solar power, said an official from the Office of the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs.

XINHUA

Bus Neighbor provides cozy service at affordable price

By GUO JUN in Nanjing and CHEN MEILING

Bus Neighbor, a model that combines public transport with community service in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, offers a novel alternative for more affordable and flexible transportation to meet people's needs.

Traditional buses have fixed stations, routes and operating times, which may not meet the special demands of residents. So Wuxi Public Transport began a customized mini-bus service whose model is similar to a taxi, but is much cheaper.

Feng Panxing, 70, a retired worker in Wuxi, sent a message on a community WeChat group saying he wanted to go to hospital. Several minutes later, a mini-bus came to pick him up.

Since a Bus Neighbor station was opened in his community in January, he uses it whenever he wants to go out.

"I usually use the Bus Neighbor service to go to the subway station, hospital and for grocery shopping. It's very convenient," he said. "Unlike traditional buses that stop at fixed locations, they drop you off as close as possible to your desired destination."

According to Zhu Zhenming, manager of the industry business department of Wuxi Public Transport, people needing a ride can submit their requests through phone calls, mini-programs on WeChat or the community's WeChat group.

Then they wait at the Bus Neighbor station at their community. In



Senior residents enjoy Bus Neighbor service in Wuxi, Jiangsu province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

general, the bus operates within 5 kilometers of the station to ensure a quick and instant response.

Prices range from less than 1 yuan (13 cents) to 3 yuan within 5 km. Passengers older than 70 enjoy free services, except for peak hours from 7 to 9 am and 4 pm to 6 pm.

"In the words of residents, it means 'enjoying the convenience of a taxi at the price of a bus ride,'" he said.

Zhu added that Bus Neighbor also opened routes to connect communities and restaurants, as well as between communities and scenic spots farther than 5 km, which are welcomed by the elderly.

Feng agreed, saying that many of his old neighbors travel in groups, following tour routes to stroll along

the shores of Taihu Lake or walk in the parks.

"The meal route is also frequently used among us elderly. As we grow older, it becomes inconvenient to cook. The restaurants are affordable and clean, and with the Bus Neighbor service providing transportation, it makes dining effortless," he said.

Wu Yusheng, 80, said that in the past he barely went out because he has difficulty walking. Now he often visits attractions such as Yuantouzhushan Scenic Area famous for cherry blossoms, Huishan ancient town and Gonghuwan wetland park.

"The bus can drop me right at the door of the attraction," he said.

Zhu said the mini-buses the group uses are 6 meters long with 10 seats,

suitable for travel on narrow roads. Since the service was introduced in January, the city has established seven Bus Neighbor stations with 14 buses that have served about 70,000 people.

"The aim is to fill the void in current public transport and better cater to the needs of people," Zhu said, adding that more stations will be built in communities with large populations, and more tourist routes can be expected.

With changes in people's transportation habits, the passenger flow of buses is declining and the vacancy rate is high in the city during non-peak hours, so the new business also expects to explore opportunities by integrating into constructing "15-minute convenience service circles" for residents.

Zhu Fengyao, a 36-year-old housewife, said she used to drive to pick up her child at kindergarten, but it's inconvenient to park near the school. Now, together with four to five parents, she takes the mini-bus to the school every day.

In addition, the Bus Neighbor stations have added more functions such as charging bus cards, making hospital appointments and selling agricultural products and daily necessities.

Workers from cities such as Yangzhou in Jiangsu and Hangzhou in Zhejiang province have come to investigate the model in Wuxi.

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

Green peafowl

NOBLE BIRD FLOURISHES

From myth to conservation: China's green peafowls make a comeback

By **YAN DONGJIE** and **LI YINGQING** in Chuxiong, Yunnan

Thanks to their dazzling tails, peafowls are often considered rare and auspicious in Chinese culture. Once with a dwindling population, the number of green peafowls in China has doubled over the past 10 years, and the population has grown to more than 820 this year, according to the latest statistics by the Yunnan Provincial Forestry and Grassland Administration.

In China, the birds exclusively inhabit Yunnan province. Shuangbai county in Chuxiong Yi autonomous prefecture has the largest population of them. Last month, the number of green peafowls monitored by infrared cameras reached 430 — over seven times as many as the 56 recorded in 2015, said Wang Sineng, the director of the Dinosaur River Prefectural Nature Reserve in Shuangbai.

"According to genetic identification results, green peafowls in China are not entirely the same as those in any other country," Wang said. Considered the prototype of the phoenix in traditional Chinese lore, green peafowls have exerted significant influence on the nation's culture over the past 2,000 years, according to bird expert Yang Xiaojun.

"Images of green peafowls can be found in many literary works and artistic pieces," said Yang, who retired from the Kunming Institute of Zoology in Yunnan, part of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. For example, *The Peacock Flies Southeast* is a famous long narrative poem from the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220).

"The common peafowl was only introduced to China from Southeast Asia in the 1980s and is now widely seen in zoos. However, during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and earlier, China only had the green peafowl, which is a native species," Yang said.

"Peafowls symbolize auspiciousness and nobility, holding great symbolic significance in Chinese culture," Wang said.

Yang added: "So there is special reason for Chinese to protect green peafowls. If they are gone, we won't be able to see the origin of the phoenix, a cultural symbol, anymore, and that would be truly sad."

Shi Yudie contributed to this story. Contact the writers at yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn

EXTINCTION RISK

← Less risk → More risk →

LC NT VU **EN** CR EW EX

Least concern **Endangered** Extinct

Listed as national Level I protected wildlife in China

Migration: Resident birds, non-migratory

Behavioral Traits
Green peafowls are social animals, adept at flying and running.

NECK
Green peafowls have scale-like feathers on their necks. It reminds people of Chinese dragons or copper coins, with positive connotation.

POPULATION
According to survey data from the 1990s, there were around 800 to 1,100 green peafowls in China. By 2015, the number had decreased to about 500. Now, there are thought to be more than 800 wild green peafowls in China.



See more by scanning the codes.



FLIGHT
Green peafowls can fly into the safety of trees or onto rooftops, although they are not good at flying.

Green peafowls have a tuft of upright crest feathers on their heads that are shaped like willow leaves and vary in length.



Green peafowl
The faces of green peafowls are large and yellow.

Common peafowls have fan-shaped crest feathers, with each feather somewhat resembles a badminton racket.



Common peafowl
The faces of common peafowls are white.



SIZE
Green peafowls are slightly larger than the common peafowls. Adult males are about 2 to 3 meters long, with tail feathers comprising about half their total length (1 to 1.5 meters).



HATCHLINGS
The hatchlings are born with yellow-brown feathers. The males need three years to grow a gorgeous tail.

HABITAT
Green peafowls typically inhabit tropical rainforests, shrublands and open grasslands, but not in dense forests.

DIET
Green peafowls primarily feed on:

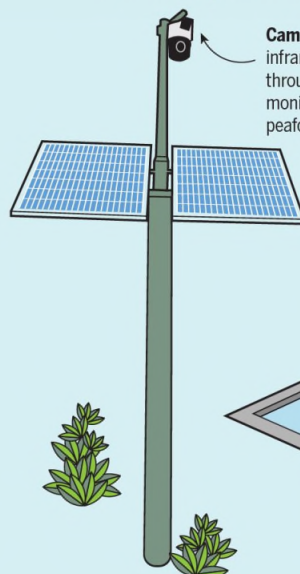


BREEDING BEHAVIOR



Green peafowls typically breed during the rainy season, entering the breeding period in February each year. Males attract females by displaying their feathers through courtship displays. They lay three to eight eggs per clutch.

How Shuangbai county protects green peafowls and their habitat



Cameras: It has installed over 400 infrared cameras with solar panels throughout the protected area to monitor the activities of the green peafowls around the clock.

Ponds: It has built ponds and has brought spring water from several kilometers away through pipelines to provide drinking water for peafowls.



Observation Shelters: It has set up discreet monitoring shelters, ensuring minimal disturbance to the green peafowls' natural behavior.

Sand ponds: It has built sand ponds to allow green peafowls to take sand baths, which help keep their feathers healthy.



DISTRIBUTION
There are approximately 20,000 adult green peafowls in the world, found in seven countries: China, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Laos. Apart from Myanmar and Cambodia, where the populations are relatively larger, the wild green peafowl population in Thailand has shown some growth, while the overall population status in other areas is not optimistic.

Globally, habitat loss and direct human interference are the primary threats faced by green peafowls, along with poaching and poisoning.

Source: Yang Xiaojun, researcher from the Kunming Institute of Zoology, Chinese Academy of Sciences

TEXT BY YAN DONGJIE & LI YINGQING; GRAPHICS BY MUKESH MOHANAN & JORGE CORTES / CHINA DAILY

China's off-road pioneer has global ambition

T01 4x4 aims to win fans in overseas markets by appealing to new generation's spirit of adventure



By LI FUSHENG
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For many in China, the digits 212 symbolize a formative memory of off-road vehicles. It is the iconic code number of a model launched in the 1960s.

Long associated with the conquest of rugged terrains and daring adventures, the 212 model has become a marque by transformative evolution, underlined by dreams, passion and ambition.

The journey began in June 2024, when the 212 was relaunched in Beijing, where it was first developed in 1965.

A diverse audience attended this landmark event, including 212 owners, many of whom are industry veterans and explorers.

Among them was the famed film director, Lu Chuan. At the event, he recalled the 212's reliability and sense of adventure on the set of his 2004 film *Mountain Patrol*, in which the model navigated Qinghai's rugged terrain.

"The 212 is like an old pal," he said, fondly recalling the vehicle's steadfast charm as it carried crew across China's most desolate and inhospitable landscapes.

This moment, steeped in nostalgia, marks the point at which the 212 transcended its origins.

What began as a military vehicle, developed in 1965, has evolved into a global off-road icon.

The 212 was the first off-road vehicle of many Chinese adventurers, especially those born in the 1960s and 1970s. It was their first experience of adventure on the road and it endures in Chinese culture as a symbol of rugged resilience.

The relaunch expanded its legacy and established its ambition toward the future.

"In terms of carrying on its legacy, our goal is to create outstanding products, remain dedicated to innovation, and infuse that pioneering spirit into our R&D and brand-building initiatives," said Lu Yunran, CEO of the new 212 brand.

"The 212 is more than a marque; it is the symbol of a spirit and culture of venturing into the wilderness," he said, offering a glimpse into the brand's first model, the T01, a bold new entry into the off-road market.

The relaunch of the brand comes as China's off-road vehicle market grew exponentially in recent years, driven by a younger generation's enthusiasm for adventure travel and off-road experiences.

Young people in modern China do not simply seek reliable transportation; they desire vehicles that offer unique experiences, freedom, and a connection to the wild landscapes of their country.

Off-roading, once a niche activity, has exploded in popularity, and the 212 is poised to define its position in the sector.

The company is building a number of models on the WY platform, which serves as the foundation for continuous innovations.

It files more than 100 patents annually, demonstrating a commitment to providing high-quality, cost-effective, and professional-grade, off-road vehicles to customers.

A defining moment this year arrived with the launch of the T01, officially unveiled in August. It is the first car to embody the new 212 vision.

It wasn't just the vehicle's performance that set it apart, it was the choice of the launch location: Zhangye, a geographical marvel in the Hexi Corridor of Northwest China's Gansu province.

Known as the Han Empire's stronghold against foreign invaders, and a key hub on the Silk Road, Zhangye has withstood the test of time in the spirit of off-roading.

The choice of Zhangye as the launch venue reflected the heart of the 212's philosophy: it represents resilience, strength and the will to overcome obstacles, much like the vehicle itself.

The unique launch location symbolized the

The 212 brand is relaunched in June, with the first model's styling paying tribute to the 1960s classic.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

brand's rugged unconventional.

While most automotive launches take place in well-known cities, 212 chose Zhangye in order to demonstrate its willingness to challenge the norm — a move that aligns with the off-road spirit of adventure.

As a rugged off-road vehicle, the T01 is designed to meet the demands of modern adventurers while staying true to the 212's legacy of durability and off-road prowess.

With its rugged design, advanced suspension system, and off-road capabilities, the T01 embodies performance and nostalgia.

Its design blends modern aesthetics with the 212's traditional spirit.

Its robust body, heavy-duty frame, and elevated clearance are primed for traversing difficult terrains.

Whether climbing rocky mountain paths, driving through deep mud, or crossing rivers, the T01 handles it all with ease.

The vehicle's advanced suspension system ensures stability and control in the harshest of conditions.

In terms of power, the T01 is equipped with a turbocharged engine, providing ample torque to conquer the most challenging of landscapes. The all-terrain tires ensure excellent traction on a variety of surfaces, from sand and gravel to snow.

What makes the T01 stand out is not just its superior performance on challenging terrain, but its innovative design.

With features like enhanced suspension systems, greater ground clearance, and a redesigned exterior for improved aerodynamics, the T01 can handle the world's most unforgiving landscapes.

Its focus on comfort and modern features, such as its state-of-the-art infotainment system and advanced safety measures, makes it built for adventure and one that appeals to a younger, more tech-savvy crowd.

Following the T01's launch in August came the T01 Changfeng version at the Guangzhou Auto Show in November.

The Changfeng name reflects the essence of off-roading: a constant drive upward, forward and beyond.

According to 212 Vice-General Manager He Zhaopeng, the name embodies "an infi-



Lu Yunran, CEO of the new 212 brand, delivers a speech during the China International Import Expo in November.

nite yearning for the future and the fearless spirit of challenging the unknown."

This version introduces a bold evolution in off-road design, and elevates its visual appeal and rugged stance to new heights.

Building on the foundation of the T01, the variant incorporates upgrades across three key areas: widened body kits, raised suspension, and a redesigned front fascia.

The result is a commanding exterior that is more robust, radiates raw power, and reinforces its off-road DNA.

To meet the diverse needs of modern off-road enthusiasts, the T01 Changfeng brings exciting enhancements.

It offers over 30 custom configuration options based on its versatile base model, such that users can personalize the vehicle to suit their specific off-road and adventure requirements.

With off-road culture gaining traction and its enthusiast base becoming younger and more dynamic, the T01 Changfeng reflects the new generation's spirit of adventure.

This group values individuality and seeks unique experiences, advancing a more personalized and trendy off-road culture.

The 212 brand is committed to addressing the evolving needs of younger consumers, and ensures that its products and experiences resonate with this vibrant demographic.

The company is deepening collaborations

with upstream and downstream partners in the off-road ecosystem, to create a broader array of professional and personalized products and services.

Beyond product innovation, 212 fosters the growth of off-road culture by participating in large-scale events, such as the Alxa Hero Festival in Inner Mongolia, an event for off-road vehicle enthusiasts, and hosting hundreds of monthly test-drives nationwide.

These initiatives enrich the community experience and establish 212 as a pivotal force in championing off-road culture globally.

The 212 continues to innovate and engage with younger consumers, and shapes the future of off-road exploration while advancing China's off-road culture on the global stage. Beyond China, the 212 brand is eyeing growth potential in the overseas markets of off-road vehicles.

The brand's global push was prominently featured at the 2024 China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November.

At the event, Lu Yunran emphasized the company's ambition for its international future.

"212 is not just a Chinese brand," Lu said. "It is a brand that embodies the spirit of adventure, resilience, and innovation. Our goal is to make 212 a global leader in off-road vehicles, and a brand that is respected in markets across the world."

Lu explained the company's commitment to expanding beyond China: "We are focused on creating an 'all-ecology' export system. This means setting up marketing centers, R&D facilities, and production bases in key regions around the world. We are investing in the future to ensure that the 212 will be a global brand in every sense of the word."

This ambitious vision underscores the company's determination to elevate the 212 brand to international prominence.

January 2024 marked an important milestone in the 212's journey toward global prominence, when the brand entered the prestigious Dakar Rally in collaboration with the Han Wei team.

The Dakar Rally is among the world's

most challenging and prestigious off-road endurance events, a historic proving ground for the world's top off-road vehicles.

Since 1977, the rally has taken drivers through the planet's harshest terrains, from sand dunes to rocky deserts, testing both the vehicles' and drivers' endurance.

The 212's participation in the Dakar Rally marked a significant achievement and strategic move to pin the brand on the global map.

The Dakar Rally is not just about speed and power; it is a test of durability, adaptability, and resilience — qualities at the core of the 212 brand. In the 2024 event, the "212" flag made its international debut, flying proudly alongside the Han Wei Team as they conquered the desert's challenging terrain.

This partnership marks the beginning of an enduring and successful collaboration.

In 2025, the 212 will continue its partnership with the Han Wei Team, and the T01 will be the team's support vehicle throughout the rally.

The inclusion of the T01, a key part of the team's strategy, showcases the vehicle's robustness and represents a powerful display of the renewed 212 brand's global aspirations.

The Dakar Rally participation marks the 212's defining transition, from a domestic Chinese brand to a key player in the global off-road arena. The 212's resurgence is not only a mark of nostalgia for a bygone era; it is about the reinvigoration of an iconic name, with renewed energy and creativity for the 21st century.

Under the leadership of Lu Yunran and a committed team, 212 is investing in cutting-edge technology, modern manufacturing processes, and a customer-first approach to marketing.

In 2024, the brand took part in the China International Import Expo in Shanghai, reinforcing its commitment to its global expansion.

Lu stated that the 212's goal is to not only lead the off-road vehicle segment in China, but also to become a top-tier player in the global market.

The investment in facilities such as the Qingdao manufacturing base — equipped with state-of-the-art machinery and an annual production capacity of 200,000 vehicles — is merely the beginning.

As the brand scales its operations, the 212 T01, soon to be followed by other models, is expected to play a central role in establishing the company as a leading force in the global automotive market.

The 212's ongoing success is a reflection of broader trends in China's automotive sector.

The rise of off-roading and adventure tourism is just one aspect of China's evolving automotive landscape.

As the world moves toward electric vehicles and a greater sense of environmental responsibility, the 212 is poised for its role in a future of sustainable off-roading.

The 212's focus on lightweight materials and electric powertrains will solidify its place in the evolving global market.

The 212's journey has only just begun. From its beginnings as a humble 4x4 to its reinvention as a modern-day off-road powerhouse, the 212 has endured as a symbol of adventure, durability, and innovation.

Its 2024 rebirth marks a new chapter in the brand's history, one that promises exciting developments on the horizon.

Whether on the rugged trails of the Hexi Corridor, the sand dunes of the Dakar Rally, or the highways of the world's cities, the 212 brand is poised to become a global leader in off-road vehicles.

Its renewed focus on technology, innovation, and adventure readies it to take on the world, one trail at a time.

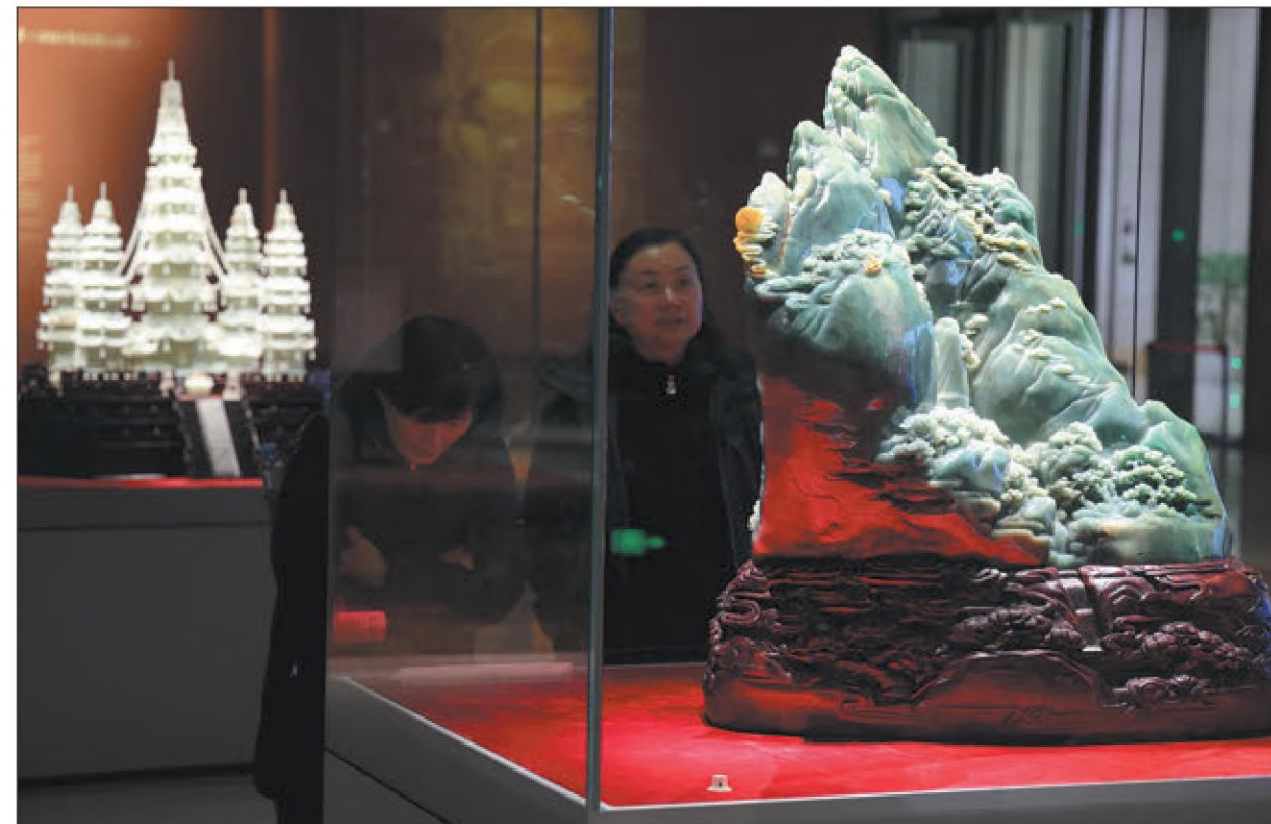


An array of T01 models drive across rugged terrain.

ADVERTORIAL

THE HANDS OF TIME

Traditional arts and crafts are supreme examples of Chinese cultural heritage. China Daily publishes this series to show how master artisans are using dedication and innovation to inject new life into heritage. In this installment, we find out how the craftsmanship of jade carving still thrives in modern times.



A miniature Taishan Mountain is among the four jadeite "national treasures" housed at the Chinese Traditional Culture Museum in Beijing. PHOTOS BY WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

CARVING out a symbol of VIRTUE

Craftsmen deploy their skill and experience accumulated over the centuries to help shape jade's continuing appeal, **Fang Aiqing** reports.



A jadeite miniature of Taishan Mountain, majestic yet intricately detailed, faithfully conveys the grandeur of the spot that has captivated ancient Chinese emperors and literati of the past and today. The mountain located in East China's Shandong province was not only a symbol of the pinnacle of feudal power in ancient times, but also an inexhaustible source of inspiration for those holding the pen: Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Du Fu once wrote, "Nature's wonders in divine chime. Day and night, they slice time."

And such ingenious workmanship of nature has found its inheritance in this massive man-made jadeite piece on permanent display at the Chinese Traditional Culture Museum in Beijing. The essence of the jadeite's texture and the exquisite craftsmanship of jade carving run parallel in this masterpiece.



From the east the sun rises, splitting the cloud-enveloped mountain into the sunlit side and the shaded side. Verdant woods shelter the flowing water, bridges and winding trails, where 64 figures, nine deer, nine cranes and three goats find joy and peace. Major scenic spots of Taishan Mountain are vividly adapted to this miniature. Jade artisans have made full use of the raw stone's original shape, veining and color. The light green part was carved into the sunlit side, with economical strokes to resemble the sheer cliffs while presenting the jadeite's natural beauty.

The shaded side, however, displays a darker bluish-gray color. This is where Du's poem is inscribed, above which two gliding cranes enjoy the sun. Both the glowing sun and the cranes are skillfully made from impurities in the jade stone. The technique *qiaose* dates back to the Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century-11th century BC) and is one of the most commonly applied methods in jade carving to reflect the artisans' ingenuity.

This miniature Taishan Mountain is among the four jadeite ornaments housed at the museum that are dubbed "national treasures". Produced in the 1980s, they took more than 40 Beijing-based jade artisans eight years to complete, according to museum guide Yang Yiwei.

From these pieces, the delicacy, complexity and diversity of jade carving — a time-honored craftsmanship — are fully revealed. Chinese people have a long-lasting attachment to jade, which probably accounts for their continuous drive to improve the craftsmanship of jade carving.

From the around 9,000-year-old Xiaonanshan site of Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, archaeologists have excavated more than 200 pieces

compensating for the jade's natural imperfections or even taking advantage of them — *qiaose* is simply one of these techniques.

Another piece of the "national treasures" is an extravagantly decorated vessel for perfuming. The jade artisans managed to build this 71-centimeter-tall vessel in the shape of a giant two-eared cup out of a raw stone only 65 cm in height, using a technique called *taoliao*.

To manage this, they scooped within the main body to carve out the lid. Within the lid, they applied the same method to further carve out the base. These independent parts were screwed together using carved spiral ridges.

On the perfuming vessel are relief patterns of auspicious beasts from ancient Chinese mythology, as well as nine three-dimensional dragons tightly gripping the ears and the lid, with 10 loops dangling from carved decorations.

Chain carving, a craft with a history of more than 3,000 years, is without doubt the highlight of the third piece — a jadeite flower basket. Its hoop handle on the top and two movable chains, each with 32 interlocked loops, almost double the height of the original stone. According to Yang, the museum guide, its raw stone has many cracks and flaws. When carving the chains, the artisans searched a relatively fine part of the jadeite, which they twisted in and out multiple times to expand its form.

Jade-carving master Dong Wenzhong, who played a major role in producing these four pieces, told China Daily shortly after their completion in December 1989 that chain carving was the most challenging part of this basket.

They had to be extremely careful to avoid flaws in the jadeite; and once the chain broke, they could never repair it — using adhesives to fix broken jade is considered dishonest by jade carvers, he said.

The leftover materials after carving out the hollow basket were turned into a dozen flowers — peony, chrysanthemum, Chinese rose, plum blossom, and magnolia, among others — and put back into the basket, interwoven and well-balanced.

Nine dark green dragons writing in the sea of apple-green and opal white clouds, powerful and unrestrained, are depicted on a relief screen that is only 1.8 cm thick, their claws, horns and beards vividly detailed.

This fourth piece is made of the best-quality jadeite among these "national treasures", whose materials stem from one raw stone, Yang says.

Before carving, the artisans cut this lustrous material piece into four slabs and assembled them into this unprecedented large jadeite screen that is 146 cm wide and 74 cm tall.

The long, yellowish-brown impurities of the jadeite are cleverly hidden, integrated into the image of the jet of water a dragon spits out and lightning released by another hitting the clouds with its claws.

Manual work

In the past, jade carving was much more labor-consuming. Artisans had to sit for a long time at a table-like iron rotary machine with cutter bars.

Summer or winter, they treaded to drive the machine while picking up abrasive sands — usually made from quartz or garnet — from a tray of water.

It was largely by this machine they cut, carved, drilled and polished to create miracles on the tough mineral that has long been favored by the Chinese.

Since the 1960s, motor-powered rotary machines have been introduced to the industry, which improved the efficiency of cutting heads, cutters, ultrasonic drilling equipment, mechanized grinding beads and vibratory polishers, Wang Mingyong and Shi Guanghai, both from the China University of Geosciences in Beijing, wrote in a 2020 article on the evolution of Chinese jade-carving craftsmanship.

According to them, computer numerical control and three-dimensional scanning devices have been increasingly applied in jade carving. However, detailed manual work, such as that used to make eggshell-thin jade vessels, as well as the above-mentioned *qiaose* and chain carving techniques, cannot be achieved with these machines.

Yang Xi, a Suzhou-based national-level intangible cultural heritage inheritor of jade carving, has observed this trend. He says it's quite usual for the younger generation to complete the majority of work with a computer and then continue the carving and polishing by hand.

He admits that sometimes even industry insiders cannot tell whether artworks are made by hand or with the assistance of machines.

However, the 60-year-old veteran carver sticks to the traditional manual craft and particularly emphasizes the importance and challenge of originality in design.

Yang Xi is well-known for his series of works inspired by his hometown, a water town with the typical Jiangnan (the region south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River) temperament. He has also created various works in which he has inserted new expressions into the antique craftsmanship, such as incorporating an internal structure of a mechanical watch into a piece of work — a rare theme in jade carving — and an innovative adaptation of the Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva (Thousand-Hand Bodhisattva).

"The art should always keep pace with the times," he says.

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Editor's note:

Suzhou's master artisans strive to revive delicate authenticity

“ Jade carving has great potential to vividly convey lines and blocks, as well as artistic impressions; the key lies in realizing it.”

Yang Xi, artisan

By FANG AIQING

On par with the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) Emperor Qianlong's high-profile love for calligraphy and paintings is his fascination with jade. During his reign from 1736 to 1796, the emperor's obsession led to an unprecedented elevation in jade craftsmanship.

In his lifetime, Emperor Qianlong wrote around 800 poems in appreciation of jade that expressed his joy and admiration of craftsmanship, especially when he received a truly precious piece. Among the numerous jade artifacts that caught the emperor's eye and inspired his poetry were Hindustani jade vessels originating from the Mughal Empire, which ruled India from the 16th to 19th centuries.

These eggshell-thin, almost translucent, items, such as bowls, plates, teapots, vases and incense burners, featuring novel shapes and intricately carved floral and foliage patterns, were well-polished and sometimes inlaid with gold, silver and gems.

To expand production, the emperor summoned veteran craftsmen from Jiangnan, the region south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River — Suzhou and Yangzhou in today's Jiangsu province in particular — to the imperial court.

For thousands of years, this region, rich in elegance and literati temperament, has been filled with artisans whose carvings have realized the material's imagery association with human virtue.

In his later years, Emperor Qianlong made the decision to cease the production of the delicate and resource-intensive Hindustani style due to its high costs in raw materials, labor, and time. Subsequently, the craft was gradually forgotten.

Miniature artwork

Nevertheless, a modern generation of craftsmen is tempted to restore and further refine this mysterious, superb skill. Among those investing constant efforts is Suzhou-based jade carver Yu Ting, 51, whose journey began when he discovered a book on Hindustani jade and an eggshell-thin fragment at the beginning of the century.

"Historical records say that vessels with a thickness of less than 1.6 millimeters could be called eggshell jade but, thanks to improved tools, we can now make them thinner than 1 mm, even as thin as 0.5 to 0.6 mm," he says.

In his studio in western Suzhou, where his jade pieces are displayed, he arranges lights behind these vessels, so visitors can observe the thin surface with its delicately carved patterns, and the glossy, even inner walls.

He is very proud of a 34-centimeter-tall bottle with a small mouth and bulging belly, the shape inspired by short columns on the beams of traditional architecture in suburban Suzhou.

Yu and his team spent three years producing this bottle, which weighs only 478 grams and is made from a raw material of 39 kilograms. The belly is 11 cm in diameter and bulging belly, just 2 cm. They had to apply mini tools to hollow out the interior a little at a time, "like cleaning ears," he says.

While hollowing out this piece, the artisans could barely see the inside and had to rely largely on feeling with their hands. Yu explains



Left: A jade piece by Yu featuring *xuanwu*, a Chinese mythical creature that's sometimes depicted as a snake coiling around a tortoise. FANG AIQING / CHINA DAILY



Yang Xi, 60, a national-level intangible cultural heritage inheritor of jade carving in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. TIAN ZHENGCHUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Left: A Buddha-themed jade carving by Yang Xi among the British Museum's permanent collection. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Right: One of Yang's works inspired by ginkgo leaves and arch bridges. FANG AIQING / CHINA DAILY

that it's a risky process to make eggshell jade pieces, as a slight tremble may puncture the whole piece.

The surface of the bottle is adorned with symmetrical relief patterns featuring intertwined winter jasmine and lotus, both bearing auspicious meanings in traditional Chinese culture.

Variations in color result from the change in thickness of the carvings on the green nephrite — with the thinner part being lighter and the thicker part with relief patterns appearing much darker.

The eggshell jade master is just one practitioner striving to protect the millennia-long prosperity of antique craftsmanship in Suzhou.

Late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) scientist Song Yingxing wrote in his masterpiece *Tiangong Kaiwu* (The Exploitation of the Works of Nature) that although fine jade materials were always brought to the capital, Suzhou possessed the most exquisite craftsmanship.

According to Ma Jianting, president of the Suzhou Arts and Crafts Industry Association, regional characteristics of jade carving, as well as the exchange and integration of craftsmanship, have lasted throughout the modern era.

For example, artisans in the north have inherited the traditional style of grand, complex royal pieces. Jade artisans in Yangzhou, historically taking advantage of the convenient transportation of raw materials by the Grand Canal, are good at carving large pieces such as mountains.

Suzhou-based carvers, on the other hand, are focused on smaller pieces with delicate, reserved designs that resonate with the city's gentle atmosphere, says Shan Cunde, the association's deputy secretary-general.

Poetic portrayal

Representative jade carving works of Yang Xi, 60, a national-level intangible cultural heritage inheritor, include a depiction of the Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva (Thousand-Hand Bodhisattva).

Unlike many large figurative Buddhist sculptures, this desk ornament features a meditating Bodhisattva with the face and dozens of hands in diverse shapes and gestures, leaving the body up to the imagination.

As the slender figures are prone to damage, Yang carved from the middle to side, with the central hands appearing three-dimensional and those on the sides similar to embossment. With an educational background in painting and sculpturing, the carver borrows traditional Chinese ink painting concepts of combining reality and illusion, achieving more with less in his jade carving works.

Having spent his early years in the city's historic Pingjiang Road neighborhood, Yang has also created a series of nephrite works inspired by the water town's crisscrossing waterways, arch bridges and rows of black-tiled, white-painted residences.

Designed and carved according to the original color, shape and texture of jade materials, delightful golden ginkgo leaves dancing in the breeze are part of the jade ornaments. The leftover materials to make bracelets have been cleverly transformed into arch bridges.

"These are my most cherished hometown memories. Jade carving has great potential to vividly convey lines and blocks, as well as artistic impressions; the key lies in realizing it," he says.

On another piece, some irregular white blemishes are perceived to depict an elderly hermit riding a donkey on his way back to his mountain cabin during a snowy night followed by a young disciple. This is a classical literary theme that praises solitude, resilience and remaining aloof from the crowd.

In jade carving, it's always worthwhile to take on the challenge of transforming worthless materials into more valuable pieces of art, says Yang.

Industry insiders in Suzhou have reached a consensus that the craftsmanship has to keep up with contemporary aesthetics and concerns, while drawing nourishment from other sectors of arts and crafts, says Ma.

To better master the trick of making teapots and utensils, Yu says he has been to the city of Yixing in Jiangsu to learn its celebrated purple clay teaware techniques — balancing the design of the spout, handle and pot, drawing more practical sketches, and how to appropriate the various shapes into his jade pieces.

For a practitioner with four decades in the field, Yang says he is no longer bothered by technical challenges but focuses on breaking away from existing themes and expressions and not repeating his previous creations.

Works of both Yang and Yu have made their way to the British Museum's permanent collection, representing contemporary Chinese jade carving craftsmanship of the 21st century.

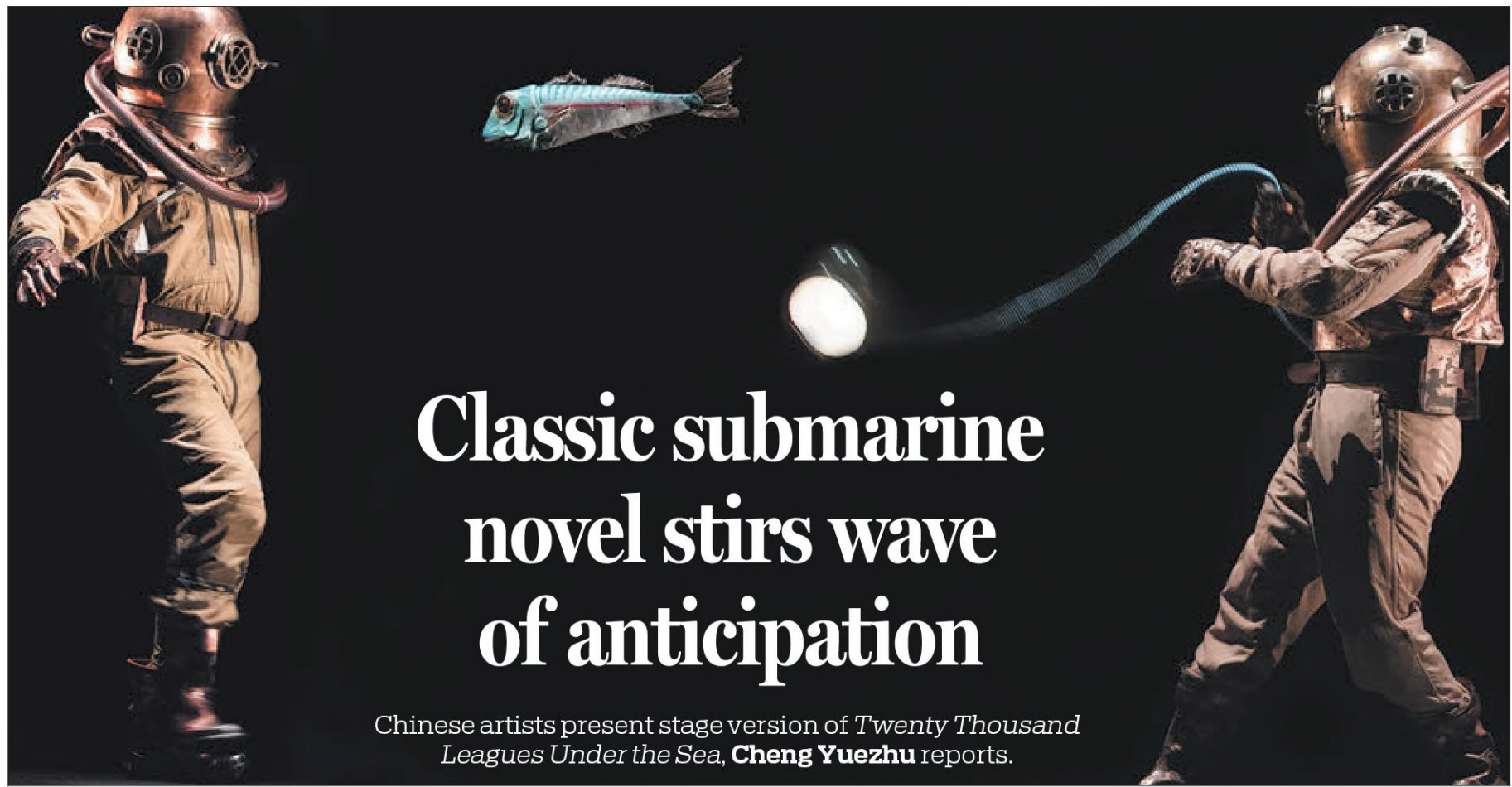


A 34-centimeter-tall jade bottle with a surface of around 1 millimeter thin by Suzhou-based carver Yu Ting. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Yu Ting, 51, has been in the field of jade carving for 37 years. TIAN YICHANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

CULTURE



Classic submarine novel stirs wave of anticipation

Chinese artists present stage version of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, Cheng Yuezhu reports.

A scene from *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, a stage drama adapted and directed by Christian Hecq and Valerie Lesort in 2015. BRIGITTE ENGUERAND / FOR CHINA DAILY

One of the classic French books that Chinese readers are likely to have encountered during their childhood is the sci-fi novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* by literary giant Jules Verne.

Joining natural scientist Pierre Aronnax, his servant Conseil, and harpooner Ned Land, the readers go on adventures aboard Captain Nemo's submarine *Nautilus*, exploring the underwater forests, navigating the Antarctic ice fields and battling a giant squid.

Over the 150 years since its publication, the book has been made into countless adaptations, including films, comics and stage plays. As 2024 marks the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and France, the Central Academy of Drama and the Hong Kong Arts Festival invited artists from both China and France to coproduce a stage rendition of the novel.

At the production's launch ceremony hosted at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing on Dec 17, it was announced that the new production is a commissioned program for the 53rd Hong Kong Arts Festival in 2025 and a project within the 2025 Festival Croisements, an annual series of cultural exchange events between China and France.

The production is adapted and

directed by Christian Hecq, director and actor from leading French theater company the Comedie-Francaise, and Valerie Lesort, a visual artist, actress and director.

The two first adapted the novel for stage in 2015, extensively adopting puppetry that brings to life onstage the variety of underwater creatures.

In that production, with only six onstage performers and one voice-over artist, each of the onstage performers also served as a puppeteer. By wearing black bodysuits and manipulating the puppets in a black box theater setting, they allowed the creatures to appear to be swimming in water and expressing a range of emotions through their movements.

At the launch ceremony, Hecq brought a hand puppet in the shape of a small squid, and demonstrated how it is operated. Both he and Lesort prefer traditional theater techniques, which seek to create varied stage effects with the actors' physical expressions, rather than multimedia technology, he explains.

This new edition will retain the directors' core vision, joined by Chinese artists to present a more localized rendition. The Chinese crew members include director Zha Wenyan, director, playwright and actor Tian Xiaowei as the dramaturge, and Chinese performers, such as TV and film actor Bao Jianfeng, who is per-



Hecq speaks at the launch ceremony of the Sino-French production hosted at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing on Dec 17.

LIU LINWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

forming in theater for the first time in 10 years.

"China is like a new world for me, and I can't wait to start creating with Chinese actors. Our stage adaptation will be a work that transcends borders," Hecq said at the launch ceremony.

"The characters in the play will be more richly developed, and the marine creatures will be given unique personalities, becoming an integral part of the story. I believe Chinese audiences will love this unique underwater adventure."

"We also hope that Chinese audiences can connect with the story to the fullest extent."

The production crew has already been making adjustments to the script, led by Tian. The goal is to ensure that the dialogue aligns with Chinese language habits and cultural context, and to preserve and convey the humor in the original text.

Zha says that one of the adjustments she is impressed by is a song featured in the eighth act. In the scene, the characters have spent over half a year in the submarine, leading them to miss the life on land and reminisce about the past. The harpooner Land starts to sing a sailor's song, soon joined by two other characters.

"In the original French version, the lyrics are straightforward, expressing the yearning to, for example, find a beloved girl, take down the whale and set sail. These lines exude a strong sense of ambition and drive, embodying the spirit of sailors rooted in maritime culture," she says.

"The adapted lyrics carry a Chinese essence, not just because they resemble classical Chinese poetry in the sentence structure, rhyme and rhythm, but more importantly, because they convey a uniquely Chinese sentiment, a sense of homesickness and solitude. It's like a song that people can actually sing together when they're missing home."

It was announced at the ceremony that the production will soon begin its creation and rehearsals at the academy's campus in Changping district, and is set to premiere on March 20 at the 53rd Hong Kong Arts Festival. Afterward, it will begin a nationwide tour, including in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Shanghai, Chengdu in Sichuan province, Xi'an in Shaanxi province and Beijing.

According to Hao Rong, president of the Central Academy of Drama, the academy has established a strategic partnership with the Hong Kong Arts Festival, aiming to together promote performing arts development and innovation via in-depth collaboration and exchange in theater education, creation and research.

"Based on the strategic collaboration, this production serves as an important initiative and in-depth practice in building the theoretical framework of Chinese theater, and in exploring the integration of production, education and research," Hao says.

"It is also a significant achievement of the academy in promoting cultural exchange and mutual learning, as well as enhancing the international impact of Chinese culture."

Contact the writer at chengyuezhu@chinadaily.com.cn

AI pushes creative boundaries, but human imagination remains irreplaceable

Artificial intelligence is revolutionizing the Chinese film industry, reshaping how movies are made, from conceptual development to postproduction.

One striking example of this transformation is a short film by seasoned director Yu Baimei, which reimagines the legendary figure Zhong Kui in a modern context. A heroic figure from Chinese folklore, Zhong Kui is often depicted as a warrior clad in crimson robes, vanquishing evil spirits.

"I've always been drawn to Zhong Kui — humorous, heroic and deeply familiar to us all," says Yu, 49. "Yet, it felt like he's never been portrayed on TV or in movies in a way that truly does him justice."

With the help of AI, Yu created a two-minute short film, *Bai Gui Wu Rao* ("No Disturbance from Ghosts"), which connects Zhong Kui's legend to contemporary life.

In the film, Zhong Kui strides through a shadowy forest, mist curling between ancient trees under a moonlit sky. Wielding a sword, he confronts otherworldly adversaries, including a monstrous rabbit with glowing red eyes, his movements a symphony of power and grace. The narrative then shifts to a modern bedroom, where a young man snores softly amid flickering phone notifications. The forest battle is revealed to be a dreamscape, with Zhong Kui now embodying the boy's digital "guardian spirit". A playful on-screen message, "On hol-



Left: A woman walks past film posters at a cinema in Tancheng county, Shandong province, on Oct 7. ZHANG CHUNLEI / XINHUA Right: A staff member introduces the use of AIGC technology in ancient book restoration to a visitor during the 2024 World AI Conference in Shanghai on July 6. FANG ZHE / XINHUA

iday: No disturbance from ghosts", humorously emphasizes the need for personal time in the digital age.

This experimental film, alongside AI-generated shorts from eight other acclaimed directors, debuted in December as part of the "Kling AI Director Co-Creation Project" at the China National Film Museum. These works have been inducted into the museum's permanent collection, marking a groundbreaking moment for Chinese cinema.

Yu's foray into AI filmmaking reflects a broader trend of AI's expansion within the industry.

"AI now permeates every aspect of filmmaking, from conceptual development to postproduction,"

says Rao Shuguang, president of the China Film Critics Association.

Celebrated director Zhang Yimou's ongoing adaptation of *The Three-Body Problem*, the Hugo Award-winning sci-fi novel, exemplifies this trend.

"Beyond refining the script, the first thing I did was establish an AI team," Zhang explains. "Using new technologies and concepts in the production process is a learning experience for me."

Major studios are also leveraging AI to push creative boundaries. Bona Film Group's AI-powered micro-series on the Sanxingdui archaeological site allegedly blends sci-fi storytelling with industrial-



grade filmmaking.

Meanwhile, Yangshipin, a video platform under China Media Group, released *Chinese Mythology*, a fully AI-produced micro-series utilizing text-to-image, text-to-video, text-to-music and text-to-voice workflows.

While AI enhances efficiency in areas like visual effects, storyboarding and set design, its role as a creative partner, rather than a replacement for human artistry, remains a point of debate.

French filmmaker Luc Besson, speaking at the 2024 Hainan Island International Film Festival, described AI as a "valuable tool" but noted its limitations. While AI

might draft a sequel to *Dogman*, he said, it could never create something as original as the 2023 action-thriller hit itself or the 1988 romance film *The Big Blue*, because AI relies on existing material.

Chinese filmmakers share this nuanced view.

"Human imagination, creativity and innovation remain irreplaceable by AI," Rao says.

Still, he emphasizes the urgency for filmmakers to swiftly and comprehensively learn and adopt evolving AI technologies, as failure to do so could result in being outpaced by more skilled peers.

China's AI filmmaking revolution parallels developments in

Hollywood. In 2024, Lionsgate entered into a partnership with AI startup Runway to develop a generative model trained on its extensive film and TV library. Similarly, director James Cameron joined the board of Stability AI, signaling growing interest in AI's creative potential.

Chen Xuguang, director of the Institute of Film, Television and Theatre, Peking University, envisions a future where filmmaking transitions from a resource-heavy industry to a lightweight, AI-enhanced model.

"With the power of AI, a small team — or even an individual — can evolve into a highly efficient and creative production workflow, forming a robust industrial chain," Chen says.

The adoption of AI extends far beyond filmmaking. According to a 2024 report by the China Internet Network Information Center, 230 million Chinese — 16.4 percent of the population — were using generative AI-powered products by June 2024.

"Sooner or later, AI will fully integrate into every aspect of our lives, becoming a friend to everyone," says Yu. "The nine directors in this initiative, regardless of the quality of their final works, have set a valuable precedent. Not that filmmaking in the future should be left to directors alone — but that anyone can create."

XINHUA

COMMENT

Editorials

Incoming US administration should carry forward Carter's legacy as a friend of China

Former US president Jimmy Carter, who died on Sunday at the age of 100, will always be remembered for the pivotal role he played in the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States.

It was thanks to his vision, courage and wisdom that the normalization process started by his predecessor Richard Nixon in 1972 went on, finally leading to Carter himself announcing in a national speech on Dec 15, 1978, that the two countries would recognize each other and establish diplomatic relations. That not only helped open up broad vistas for cooperation between the two countries in the political, economic, scientific, technological and cultural fields in the following decades, but also contributed significantly to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond, attesting to his remark that "the change that I'm announcing tonight will be of great long-term benefit to the peoples of both our country and China."

The foresighted decision he made complied with the trend of the times as it was based on the recognition of the important role China — with one-fourth of the world's population at that time — was playing in world affairs, "a role that can only grow more important in the years ahead."

The 39th president of the US did not visit China during his tenure in office from 1977 to 1981, but Carter visited the country more than 10 times in a span of nearly 30 years after that. He called himself "a friend of the Chinese people", and worked tirelessly to help strengthen understanding between the two countries so that relations could keep improving.

In face of increasing criticism in the US in recent years trying to depict China as the largest "threat" to US national security and one that is seeking to replace the US order, Carter was among the few sober-minded statesmen that saw China's economic strength in a rational way and tried to ease the ideologically driven hostility against it. He noted that China's development had been facilitated by sensible investment and buoyed by peace. "Since 1979, do you know how many times China has been at war with anybody?" Carter asked in April 2019. "None. And we have stayed at war." While China has some 18,000 miles (28,800 kilometers) of high-speed rail, the US has "wasted, I think, \$3 trillion" on military spending, he noted. The overall length of China's high-speed rail is 47,000 kms now.

Rather than seeing China as an adversary to the US globally, Carter insisted the country plays a crucial role in many global issues ranging from the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula to the post-conflict reconstruction in the Middle East and Africa, and from countering terrorism and extremism to mediating international disputes. "The United States should return to the Paris climate accord and work with China on environmental and climate-change issues, as the epic struggle against global warming requires active participation from both nations," Carter wrote in an article published by The Washington Post in December 2018.

Carter was worried about the increasingly vociferous narratives in Washington about China seeking to challenge US supremacy and reduce the US' influence around the world, calling them "dangerous notions" that could lead to a modern Cold War, and warned that misperceptions and miscalculations regarding the Taiwan question and the South China Sea issue could escalate into military conflict and even create a worldwide catastrophe. The answer to the problems facing Sino-US relations, he believed, should be the "conviction that the United States and China need to build their futures together, for themselves and for humanity at large."

One area of engagement Carter facilitated that he took great pride in was student exchange programs between the two countries. "Deng (Xiaoping) asked me if China could send 5,000 students, and I answered that China could send 100,000," Carter wrote. The following years witnessed one of the largest cross-border flows of students in modern times, with nearly 320,000 Chinese students enrolled in US institutions during the 2020-21 school year, about one-third of all international students studying in the US.

And during his visit to the US in November 2023, President Xi Jinping invited 50,000 US youths to China over the next five years for exchanges and study. The increasing exchanges between the two peoples, especially between the youth, bode well for future China-US relations and will help drive forward "the cause of peace" that Carter sought to advance when he decided to normalize ties with China.

The breakthrough made in Sino-US relations during Carter's administration led to mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation serving as the guidance for the development of bilateral ties. This should continue to be the case.

'Defensive operations' simply a land grab

With the obvious intention of maximizing its gains from the Middle East crisis in any future ceasefire negotiations after the new Donald Trump administration takes office, Israel, with the full backing from the outgoing Joe Biden administration, has apparently strengthened its offensive on different fronts over the past week.

The Israeli Air Force bombed what it claims was Hamas' Aerial Defense Unit in a command and control center embedded in Al Wafa Hospital in the Gaza Strip and nearby Al-Ahli Arab Hospital on Sunday. Hamas-run health authorities claimed that dozens of people had been killed, including hospital staff.

In Syria, Israel is obviously intent on taking advantage of the chaos in the country after the fall of the Bashar al-Assad government to occupy the whole of the Golan Heights, where local residents worry about a full invasion by Israel as the Benjamin Netanyahu government is trying its best to double the number of Israeli settlers in its newly occupied zones on the heights to make its annexing a fait accompli in a short time.

In Lebanon, Israel has continuously launched strikes inside the country despite terms on a ceasefire being agreed with Hezbollah, and is restricting people from returning to their homes in parts of the south with the apparent intention to markedly enlarge the buffer zone in its northern border region. Something Israel is doing on the West Bank as well.

Meanwhile, with the United States and its allies intensifying air strikes against targets in Sanaa, capital of Yemen, that they allege are linked to the Houthis, Israel also initiated a new round of air strikes late last week at targets in the Yemeni city and multiple ports, from which the visiting World Health Organization chief had a narrow escape.

With Hamas, Hezbollah and the hostile Assad government of Syria effectively weakened or collapsed, it seems it is the Houthis' turn now. The Netanyahu government's objective of making the most of Hamas' attack on Oct 7 last year has become increasingly clear. It is not about saving the remaining hostages from Hamas, it is simply a land grab. Israel is intent on seizing as much land from its neighbors as it can by portraying them as "terrorists" and its armed robberies as "defensive operations".

To that end, Netanyahu has sought to bind the United States and Israel together by doing the US' dirty work in the Middle East in exchange for its unconditional support.

These tactics have worked well so far in achieving the Israeli leader's personal aims. But the collateral damage is to the whole of the Middle East. Syria is on the verge of falling into long-term chaos; Lebanon is under threat of a tenuous ceasefire treaty with its control of the buffer zone bordering Israel being markedly weakened; the Palestinian issue has drifted further from the "two-state solution"; Yemen is in Israel's crosshairs with the presidential transition in the US expected to create a window of opportunity for Tel Aviv to carry on its offensive targeting of the last largely intact Iran proxy in the region.

With humanitarian crises sweeping the whole region, it is unknown how long it will take, and how heavy the price that will have to be paid, to bring peace and order back to the region.

The Middle East belongs to the people of the Middle East, who should not become victims of geopolitical competition among countries outside the region. Rather than trying to impose their will on the people of the Middle East by imposing sanctions, applying pressure and provoking confrontation, China calls on the international community to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region, respect the legitimate and reasonable concerns and independent choices of their people, and respect the historical and cultural traditions of countries in the Middle East.

China has always firmly supported countries in the region exploring their own development paths and supported them in resolving issues through dialogue and consultation. It calls on all parties to uphold the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of regional countries, oppose external interference in their affairs and play a constructive role in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East.

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Cai Meng

LOW-ALTITUDE ECONOMY



Opinion Line

VAT law a welcome move, but still room for further reform

The recent adoption of a law on value-added tax by China's top legislature marks major progress in the country's tax system reform.

China began to pilot VAT collection in selected regions and industries from the late 1970s, gradually expanding the scope of its collection before levying it nationwide after May 2016. Despite important achievements brought about by amending the value-added tax law, the country still needs to improve the VAT system to promote the establishment of a tax system that facilitates high-quality development, social equity and market unity.

To give better play to the advantages of the VAT system, the scope of general taxpayers should be gradually expanded, the input tax credit system should be improved, and double taxation and tax evasion should be reduced. As for small, low-profit enterprises, and individual industrial and commercial

households that need preferential tax treatment, the amount of tax exemption can be set and the rate of tax levy can be reduced.

The current tax and levy rates should be simplified to further enhance the neutrality of VAT. For example, the current four tax rates applicable to general taxpayers can be reduced to three, with the basic tax rate being applicable to general commodities, the low tax rate to people's daily necessities, and the zero tax rate to exported goods.

Compared with the current basic VAT rate of less than 13 percent adopted by many developing countries, China's rate of 13 percent is somewhat high. In order to improve people's livelihood, the applicable tax rates for people's daily necessities such as grain, edible vegetable oil, fuel and medicine can be appropriately lowered first.

To give preferential treatment to

small, low-profit enterprises and individual industrial and commercial households with low incomes, to promote employment and balance the tax burden, the current VAT threshold system should be changed into a tax exemption system based on a certain amount of revenue, which means that sales income does not have to be taxed in full when it reaches the specified level, but only sales income that exceeds the specified level is taxed.

At the same time, outdated and other inappropriate tax incentives, such as certain tax deductions, input tax deductions, practices that are not only inconsistent with the neutral principle of VAT, but also not conducive to playing the role of VAT "chain mechanism", should be cleaned up to standardize the tax system, enhance taxation transparency and improve taxation efficiency.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

High-speed trains living up to their name

The CR450 high-speed train will be the fastest train in the world when it enters commercial service. Its two prototypes unveiled in Beijing on Sunday had a test speed of 450 kilometers per hour and an operational speed of 400 km/h.

The CR400, which is in service since 2017, has an operational speed of 350 km/h. The CR450's speed advantage comes with a number of other improved features, such as a braking system with a shorter response time, crucial for the safety of high-speed trains. After a series of trials and calculations, engineers have improved the CR450's braking response time from an initial 2.3 seconds to about 1.7 seconds.

The CR450 has carbon fiber com-

posite materials, reducing its overall weight, which not only helps in enhancing speed but also significantly aids in energy consumption reduction. Thus, the CR450 balances technological empowerment for increased efficiency with a reduction in energy consumption.

On the foundation of raised speed, guaranteed safety and effective energy conservation, the CR450 also focuses on enhancing the passenger experience. It features built-in four-person compartments and business seats that can rotate and adjust up to 300 degrees, creating a clean and simple environment with a high level of comfort.

The research and manufacture of the CR450 will also drive the coordi-

nated development of multiple industry chains related to the railway industry, further improving the overall quality of the high-speed rail industry chain and laying a more solid foundation for technological innovation in China's railways. By far, China already has the largest operating high-speed rail network in the world, which plays an important role in promoting regional integrated development in the vast country.

Domestic high-speed trains have a name, "Fuxing", which means rejuvenation. The trains have lived up to that name — realizing the grand dream of rejuvenation for the 1.4 billion Chinese people as they speed into the future.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Regulations not too taxing for platform economy

The central taxation and market regulatory departments have started soliciting public opinions on draft regulations on the reporting of tax-related information by internet platform enterprises. Due to the taxation authorities' lack of the platform enterprises' tax-related information, some enterprises have colluded with platforms to split income in an attempt to evade taxes. Some people even set up fake platforms to engage in illegal activities such as false invoicing and money laundering.

The regulations are conducive to promoting the healthy development of the platform economy, preventing tax evasion, combating noncompliant business practices, such as false marketing, and protecting the legitimate rights and interests of law-abiding operators and consumers.

Platform enterprises gather a large amount of data resources and record the identity and transaction information of operators on the platform. These data are an important basis for industry supervision that is crucial to identify tax-related illegal activities

such as tax evasion, and can promote the compliance operation of platform enterprises.

The draft regulations stipulate the reporting channels, scope and time of tax-related information of operators on the platform, and clarify the legal responsibilities of platform enterprises, emphasizing that platform enterprises should be responsible for the authenticity, accuracy and completeness of the tax-related information they report.

The tax-related information reporting work will be done by the platform companies. Operators and employees on the platform do not need to report separately. The tax-related information that should be reported will not involve the information about the business model and market strategy adjustments of platform companies, nor will it affect their income, cost and profit indicators.

The regulations particularly emphasize that the income information of employees engaged in distribution, transportation, housekeeping and other work closely related to

people's livelihoods does not need to be reported.

The pilot projects of the draft regulations carried out by the taxation authorities in some places show that the tax burden of more than 90 percent of operators on the platform will remain unchanged after the information reporting. Only those who make false declarations, try to evade tax, and especially high-income earners who operate in noncompliant ways will have an increase in tax burden compared with before. A binding taxation system is a must to a fair business environment under the rule of law.

In order to ensure the tax-related information reporting system can realize its intended effects in promoting the standardized development of the platform economy and achieving mutual benefit and win-win results for all parties, the regulations require strict implementation by the authorities, compliance from the platform companies, and understanding and support from operators on the platforms.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

COMMENT

Xiao Qian

US should stop manipulating perceptions

According to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute's 2024 National Defense Survey, which was released in November, three-quarters of the respondents said they viewed China as either "something of an enemy" or "a strong enemy". This percentage has remained roughly constant over the past two years. The survey showed the American public generally supports the use of diplomatic, economic, and military measures to strengthen Taiwan's defense and deter the Chinese mainland's "aggression".

Also, four out of five respondents expressed concern over the cooperation among China, Russia, Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Why do Americans perceive China thus, and does the survey reflect the genuine opinions of the American public?

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute surveyed 2,510 US nationals on telephone or online, asking both domestic and foreign policy questions. On the domestic front, the survey focused on views on issues such as the political environment in the US, Washington's foreign policy posture, defense production and people's confidence in the US military. On foreign policy, the survey's questions were on allies and enemies, and their opinions on China, Russia, and the Ukraine and the Middle East crises, with the questions related to China accounting for about one-tenth of the total.

Departing from his predecessor Barack Obama's policy of viewing China as an "important partner" of the US, former President Donald Trump, during his first year in office, identified China as a "strategic competitor" and "rival" of the US in the

And for China and the US to coexist peacefully, the peoples of the two countries have to develop mutual understanding and mutual trust.

2017 National Security Strategy, marking the beginning of a more confrontational US approach toward China. And in 2018, the Trump administration issued the first National Defense Strategy, which reiterated that China is a "strategic competitor" and "rival" and grouped the country with "revisionist power" Russia and "rogue states" such as the DPRK and Iran.

In May 2020, the US State Department released the United States Strategic Approach to the People's Republic of China, raising US-China "rivalry" to an ideological level by asserting that competition between the two sides spans political, economic and societal fields. Subsequently, key officials in the Trump administration began criticizing China's political system and policies in speeches across the US, in a bid to mobilize public opinion against China.

After taking office in 2021, the Biden administration largely adopted the Trump administration's stance toward China. The National Security Strategy released by the Biden administration in 2022 described China as the "most consequential geopolitical challenge", emphasizing that China is the only competitor which has both the intent and capability to reshape the world order.

Against this backdrop, the percentage of respondents identifying China as an "ene-

my" has risen sharply since 2018 — from 55 percent to 77 percent in 2023. Similarly, those viewing China as the greatest threat to the US increased from 18 percent in 2018 to a peak of 52 percent in 2021.

But could the survey's design have misled respondents on China-related issues? Possibly, because the respondents were asked to classify countries as allies or something of an ally, enemy or something of an enemy — which is an oversimplification of the complex and multifaceted nature of international relations, and division of the world into camps of either allies or adversaries. For example, non-aligned countries have been, inadvertently or otherwise, placed in the "enemy" category.

Also, for the first time since its initiation, the 2024 survey included a question on increasing coordination between China, Russia, the DPRK and Iran in areas from military to economic areas.

By presenting speculative scenarios as established facts, the survey has raised serious concerns, with the questions related to Taiwan being particularly loaded as "If China invades Taiwan, would you support or oppose the US defending Taiwan?" This is a gross misrepresentation of the Taiwan question.

That Taiwan is an integral part of China is not only the Chinese government's official position but also inscribed in UN Resolution 2758, which recognizes that there is only one China, and no "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan". The term "invasion" is especially misleading, not least because Beijing has clearly stated its commitment to peaceful reunification while reserving the right to use force if necessary.

By simplifying and distorting the historical context of the Taiwan question, the

poll has used the term "invasion" to garner the support of respondents, further deepening American people's misconceptions about China.

In order to maintain global peace and stability, it is crucial that China and the US coexist peacefully. And for China and the US to coexist peacefully, the peoples of the two countries have to develop mutual understanding and mutual trust. Unfortunately, under the prevailing narrative of "US-China strategic competition", the current political environment and public opinion in the US does not objectively reflect China's intentions.

Moreover, some polls dealing with China-related topics appear designed to produce pre-determined outcomes.

Expanding people to people exchanges between the two countries and encouraging more American people to visit China may help counteract the stereotypes. In fact, in November, the US State Department lowered its travel advisory for China, signaling its intent to remove barriers to cultural exchanges. And Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng recently said that more than 14,000 American youths have visited China since the Chinese and US leaders' meeting in November, 2023.

As a new US president is set to take office in January, it is hoped the next administration will adopt a pragmatic approach toward China and reduce the barriers to people-to-people exchanges, take measures to narrow people's perception gap, and foster healthy bilateral ties.

The author is the deputy director of the Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



Kang Bing

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Robots no more science fiction in real life

I first learned about robots while reading a science fiction story more than 50 years ago. But I first saw what they looked like in Western movies, which began screened in China after the launch of reform and opening-up more than four decades ago.

The robots in Western movies had human-like metal bodies, moved slowly like zombies and spoke in a metallic voice. To me, they looked rather funny, although they had little to do with the Chinese people who, at the time, still relied on bicycles for commuting, hoes and sickles for farming and outdated machines for industrial production. I couldn't imagine even in my wildest dream that one day we could be surrounded by robots that would make our lives more convenient, or frustrating as experienced by some.

Today, it is more than likely that you would be welcomed by a "robot assistant" when walking into a bank, a robot that would tell you which window to go to for withdrawing or depositing money or for some other purposes. In some parks, robots, following you, may ask you to buy an ice cream or soft drink. The way robots speak reminds me of the little match girl in Hans Christian Andersen's story of the same name, prompting us to open our wallets.

Compared with their industrial brothers, the service robots still have a long way to go before being accepted by broader society.

On dialing the after-sales phone number of big companies to lodge a complaint or inquire about something, you are more likely than not to hear the little match girl-like voice, making us wonder if the robot in the park has changed its job. But soon you will realize that you are talking with another robot with the same beautiful voice.

Order a pickup meal from your hotel room, and you will be greeted by a message on your phone screen within half an hour, telling you that a "deliveryman" is waiting outside with your order. On opening the door, instead of a human being, you are met by a 1-meter-tall robot telling you to collect your lunch while it is still warm.

The above-mentioned robots are usually classified as service robots. In thousands of factories in China, on the other hand, more than 2 million industrial robots are working day and night, making all kinds of products for consumers across the world.

Statistics show China has become the world's biggest user of industrial robots, employing more than 2 million such robots — about 5 million industrial robots are in service around the world now. About half a million industrial robots are "born" across the world each year, with more than half of them either "born" in or migrating to China.

When my wife recently bought an adjustable multi-functioning hospital bed for my bed-ridden mother-in-law, a sentence in the instructions section said the bed was welded by robots. Products made by robots have come to symbolize quality and high standard.

Compared with their industrial brothers, the service robots still have a long way to go before being accepted by broader society. They are yet to be openly accepted not because they are less smart than their industrial brothers but because they have to directly deal with us human beings whose desire and expectation can never be satisfied.

Although the output of service robots far outnumbered that of robots working in industries — 6.45 million service robots were produced in China in 2022 — robot often evoke complaints from users that they are not intelligent enough, difficult to communicate with or incapable of taking care of individual demands.

I would suggest we adopt a more tolerant attitude toward robots after having witnessed their development over the decades. I believe that, if given more time, they will create more miracles. The central authorities have made the development of robots a priority and with the blessings of artificial intelligence and 5G technologies, I believe robots have a brighter future in China.

A recent report said that a high-tech company in Guangzhou is progressing well with its research on robots that specialize in taking care of bed-ridden elderly people. Believe it or not, in one or two decades, one may find oneself lying on a sickbed, attended by a robot.

Ma Yan

Borderland eco-governance beneficial beyond China

At the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in November and the 16th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in December, China showcased the pivotal role its border regions have been playing in deepening South-South cooperation on climate change and combating desertification. For instance, in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, China has built the world's longest green barrier around a desert — the 3,046-kilometer-long Taklimakan Desert Green Belt — to prevent the expansion of the desert.

Ecological governance in China's border areas plays a significant role in strengthening ecological security, promoting common prosperity and safeguarding national security. It also contributes to building an ecological community of countries along the Belt and Road and improving the global ecological environment.

China's border ecological governance is different from some Western countries' development model of excessive natural resource consumption, as well as the old paradigm of "polluting first, treating later". Instead, the country is pursuing Chinese modernization that emphasizes harmony between humankind and nature. China's approach is different, and more eco-friendly, than the mainstream neoliberal ecological governance model prevalent in the West, and is free of "ecological capitalization" while avoiding its moral and practical dilemmas.

Moreover, it transcends the prevalent Western dichotomy between nature-centric and human-centric perspectives, advocating for harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. The key concepts of its ecological governance model include "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets". It believes in the integrated protection and systematic governance of mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grasslands and deserts, and has adopted a "whole life-cycle" approach to ecological restoration and protection. These principles have facilitated theoretical breakthroughs in ecological governance.

What's more, China's border ecological governance represents an organic integration of government leadership, policy-driven initiatives, technological empowerment and social mobilization.

Through top-level design and strategic planning, the government facilitates the implementation of ecological projects, and provides clear direction for ecologi-



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

cal governance. It has also incorporated ecological protection goals and assessment metrics into local government performance evaluation systems, with policies related to finance, regulations and other domains guiding the balanced development of the economy, society and ecology.

Using technologies such as satellite remote sensing, big data and artificial intelligence, the border regions have established efficient ecological monitoring and evaluation systems. They also use renewable energy technologies and ecological restoration techniques, and have been developing the green economy and taking measures to improve ecological governance.

China's border ecological governance has established an integrated development model that combines ecological security, common prosperity and national security. For example, southern Xinjiang faces multi-tasks in ecological protection,

economic development and national security, which are often interconnected and mutually reinforcing. And addressing them requires an integrated approach that unites these three elements into a cohesive whole.

In this regard, for instance, the Kekeya Afforestation Project in southern Xinjiang, a critical part of China's Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program, has transformed barren lands into valuable forestry-based economic resources, and fostered coordinated development across primary, secondary and tertiary industries.

The initiative has laid the foundation for achieving common prosperity and strengthening national security, surpassing the scope of ecological protection to integrate regional economic development and social progress. This integrated ecological governance model has not only helped improve local residents' livelihoods, which in turn has enabled them to resist the spread of extremist ideologies,

but also prevented the infiltration of the "three evil forces" (terrorism, separatism and extremism) into the region, thus strengthening border security and providing a solid foundation for development.

It should be widely acknowledged that China's border ecological governance has explored a new global cooperation model that emphasizes mutual benefit and win-win outcomes. In terms of policy and cooperation mechanisms, China has proposed and participated in multiple global ecological cooperation frameworks, laying the policy foundation for international cooperation in border ecological governance.

The Belt and Road Initiative, for example, emphasizes green development as a core principle, promoting in-depth cooperation among participating countries in ecological protection and sustainable development.

By signing bilateral or multilateral agreements with neighboring countries, China has established several ecological governance cooperation mechanisms, such as environmental cooperation under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and water resource protection under the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism.

In terms of cooperative practices and innovative models, China and some of its neighboring countries have jointly established trans-boundary ecological protection zones which facilitate holistic ecosystem protection and promote cross-border ecotourism; collaborate on trans-boundary natural resource management, ensuring its rational allocation and utilization; share green ecological governance technologies and promote cooperation on overseas green industrial projects; establish international cooperation centers for ecological governance; and share environmental data and monitoring systems to improve the efficiency of transnational ecological governance by leveraging technologies such as remote sensing, big data analysis and artificial intelligence.

In conclusion, China's border ecological governance not only advances domestic ecological civilization but also fosters ecological diplomacy with other countries. Together, they are building an ecological governance community, contributing valuable experiences to achieving global ecological civilization and sustainable development.

The author is an assistant researcher at the Institute of Contemporary China Studies. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS

HAN QINKE

Indisposable disposable

Excessive production and consumption, and inadequate waste management, have turned plastic pollution into a pressing global environmental crisis

Plastic has become an indispensable material. However, plastic pollution is a ubiquitous and pressing environmental threat.

Studies show the urgency of addressing plastic pollution. The OECD's Global Plastics Outlook reports that annual global plastics production skyrocketed from 234 million tons in 2000 to 460 million tons in 2019, while plastic waste doubled during the same period, reaching 353 million tons in 2019. If current trends persist, global annual plastics production is projected to exceed 1 billion tons within the next 40 years, with plastic waste generation expected to rise accordingly.

Despite growing awareness, international actions in response to global environmental challenges remain insufficiently ambitious. The fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC-5) held in Busan, the Republic of Korea, failed to achieve a consensus due to substantial disagreements among nations over issues such as the production of plastic products, chemical use and funding mechanisms. On Dec 2, it was decided to adjourn the meeting, with plans to reconvene in 2025 to resume negotiations on the chair's text, the primary outcome of INC-5.

The Chinese delegation emphasized that addressing the global challenge of plastic pollution necessitates robust international collaboration. The document should respect national differences, embody principles of fairness and inclusiveness, and fully account for general acceptability and practical

implementation. It also urged developed countries to offer financial, technical and capacity-building support to developing nations to ensure effective global implementation.

As a leading economy in global plastic production, consumption and trade, China plays a pivotal role in addressing global plastic pollution. To date, China has implemented a series of proactive measures to govern plastic pollution and achieved notable results.

In terms of laws, regulations and policies, China began tackling the "white pollution" caused by plastic bags in 2007, with its management policies evolving from end-of-life treatment to include plastic circulation, product packaging design and upstream industrial chain development.

In 2020, China issued the Opinions on Further Strengthening Plastic Pollution Control, which set a clear goal of banning single-use, non-degradable plastic bags nationwide by 2025, aiming to reduce plastic pollution at its source. The revised Solid Waste Pollution Prevention and Control Law of 2020 further reinforced plastic waste management requirements, promoted the use of recyclable materials as substitutes for traditional plastics, and emphasized a life cycle approach to tackling plastic pollution. In 2022, the State Council's General Office issued the Action Plan for New Pollutants Treatment, listing microplastics as a key controlled new pollutant.

In sustainable production and consumption, China has gradually advanced the control of plastic production at its source, banning the manufacture of ultrathin plastic shopping bags, ultrathin agricultural mulch films and personal care products containing plastic micro-

beads. It has actively promoted comprehensive plastic pollution control and facilitated a green transition across the entire plastic value chain, including eco-friendly express delivery packaging. Additionally, it encourages the public to adopt alternative products to reduce single-use plastics.

China is among the first countries to implement control measures for unnecessary single-use plastic products. Provinces such as Hainan have already begun banning or restricting non-degradable single-use plastics in specific regions or sectors.

A report released in 2022 shows that between 2010 and 2020, China recycled approximately 170 million tons of waste plastics, equivalent to a reduction of 510 million tons of crude oil consumption and 61.2 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions. During this period, China's material utilization of waste plastics represented 45 percent of the global total. In 2021, China recycled approximately 19 million tons of waste plastics, achieving a material recycling rate of 31 percent — significantly above the global average.

Considering that 99 percent of the raw materials for global plastic production come from fossil fuels, its life cycle carbon emissions cannot be ignored. Plastic production and end-of-life disposal represent the most carbon-intensive stages in its life cycle. According to the Peking University's Institute of Energy, the carbon footprint of China's plastic industry during production is approximately 2.5 tons of CO₂ equivalent per ton, varying with the carbon intensity of different fossil fuels. Additionally, energy efficiency differences significantly impact emissions. At the end-of-life treatment stage, plastic incineration

emits up to 2.7 tons of CO₂ equivalent per ton.

Moving forward, China should strengthen synergistic governance of plastic pollution and industry decarbonization in three aspects. For source reduction, efforts should focus on reducing packaging plastics, accelerating the elimination of single-use plastics in the short term, and plan scientifically reasonable phased targets for controlling virgin plastic volumes in the medium to long term. At the same time, it should promote green product design, expedite the implementation of extended producer responsibility mechanisms, and establish a circular economy system for plastics.

In terms of the decarbonization of the production processes, it should accelerate the optimization of industrial structures in the petrochemical and plastics sectors, phase out outdated capacity, expand the use of renewable energy and green raw materials, and accelerate research and development of carbon capture, utilization and storage.

At the end-of-life treatment stage, it should reduce waste through source reduction, emphasizing plastic reuse and recycling. Additionally, waste-to-energy incineration plants must be rigorously monitored to ensure pollutant levels comply with standards. In the medium to long term, the incineration of plastics waste should be limited and eventually banned.

In addition to national and local actions, global governance is crucial for addressing plastic pollution. The international community urgently needs to enhance cooperation in mechanisms and funding. The formulation of legally binding international instruments will serve as the foundation and start-



ZHANG TING / FOR CHINA DAILY

point for global cooperation on plastic pollution governance. Drafting international agreements, standards, and lists should prioritize fairness and scientific rigor. Only measures based on scientific evidence and fully considering the basic conditions and capacities of different countries can ensure their reasonableness and feasibility.

Regarding funding, the United Nations Environment Programme and OECD predict that trillions of dollars will be needed globally for plastic pollution management by 2040. Given differences in the impact and governance capacities of developing countries, developed nations should provide financial and technical support to help developing countries fulfill treaty obligations. Meanwhile, diversified

funding mechanisms should be established to mobilize private capital through bilateral and multilateral funding channels, green finance, and transition finance.

Although negotiations on the plastic convention have not yet reached an agreement, the initiatives to address plastic pollution will continue. Global cooperation, including that of governments, businesses, research institutions and others, will also proceed, deepening further.

The author is an analyst at the Institute of Energy, Climate Change and Energy Transition Program at Peking University. The author contributed this article to China Daily, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

YU HONGYUAN AND REN KANGHUA

Smart power shift

Digitalization and networking technologies are central to the future of global energy systems

Facing the urgent need to address climate change and reduce carbon emissions, the global energy sector is undergoing a profound transformation. This transition is driven by the shift toward clean and renewable energy sources, supported by digitalization and networking technologies.

These technologies are central to improving energy efficiency, enhancing grid stability, and facilitating the integration of renewable energy sources. However, different regions have responded to these trends in varying ways, on the basis of their respective economic, political and technological contexts.

In Europe, the development of digitalization and networking technologies in energy systems has been a focus for several years. The European Union, in particular, has made significant investments in smart grid technologies and digital infrastructure as part of its broader energy strategy. The EU's focus on reducing carbon emissions and increasing renewable energy integration has led to the creation of a more interconnected energy market, where energy can be traded across borders. The integration of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, into the grid is a core challenge for the EU, and the use of digital technologies such as smart grids is key to addressing this issue.

However, the diverse regulatory frameworks and technological levels among EU member states make it difficult to fully integrate energy systems across borders. This chal-

lenge, combined with concerns about cybersecurity, where energy networks are particularly vulnerable to cyberattacks, presents a significant hurdle to the region's progress.

In China, the government has also prioritized digitalization as part of its energy transformation strategy. The development of smart grids, energy management systems and advanced metering infrastructure is key to improving energy efficiency, integrating renewable energy sources and optimizing grid management. China has invested heavily in digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data and the internet of things to create more flexible and resilient energy systems. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, China has extended its expertise and technology to neighboring countries, helping to modernize their energy infrastructure. In particular, China has been instrumental in developing digital energy solutions in Southeast Asia, Central Asia and parts of Africa, providing financing and expertise to improve energy access and integrate renewable sources.

However, China faces the challenge of integrating its traditional energy systems with the new digital infrastructure, as much of its existing energy infrastructure was designed before the rise of digital technologies. Additionally, cybersecurity remains a critical issue as China increases its reliance on interconnected digital energy systems.

In Southeast Asia, countries have rapidly adopted digital energy solutions to meet the growing demand for electricity and address sustainability goals. Nations such as Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia are deploying smart grids and energy storage systems to improve energy



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

access, reduce dependency on fossil fuels and optimize grid operations. However, these countries face significant challenges in terms of infrastructure limitations, regulatory hurdles and insufficient investment in advanced technologies. Many Southeast Asian nations still rely on traditional energy systems that are not compatible to the integration of renewable energy or advanced digital solutions. As a result, the transition to a more decentralized and digitalized energy system requires significant investments in both infrastructure and human capacity. Furthermore, the regulatory frameworks need to support the adoption of digital energy solutions are often underdeveloped or fragmented.

In Africa, the adoption of digital technologies in energy systems is

still in its early stages but presents considerable opportunities. Many countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, face significant challenges in providing reliable and affordable electricity. Digital solutions such as solar microgrids, smart meters and off-grid solar power systems are helpful to address these challenges by improving energy access in remote areas and facilitating the integration of renewable energy. For instance, in Kenya and Nigeria, solar-powered microgrids and smart meters are being deployed to improve the efficiency of energy distribution and provide electricity to areas that are not connected to the traditional grid.

However, Africa faces several obstacles, including inadequate infrastructure, limited financing,

and a lack of regulatory frameworks. Despite these challenges, Africa's vast renewable energy potential, particularly in solar power, presents an opportunity for rapid growth in the adoption of digital energy technologies.

The adoption of digitalization and networking technologies in energy systems faces several common challenges across regions. The integration of traditional energy systems with new digital technologies is a key challenge. Many existing energy infrastructures were designed without considering the need for digital technologies and renewable energy integration. Retrofitting these systems to accommodate smart grids, digital meters and automation systems is expensive and technically challenging. Additionally, as energy systems become more digital and interconnected, they become more vulnerable to cybersecurity risks. The growing reliance on communication networks and digital platforms for real-time data and energy management increases the attack surface for cybercriminals, making the protection of critical energy infrastructure a key priority.

Furthermore, regulatory barriers remain an obstacle to the widespread adoption of digital energy systems. Different regions and countries have varying standards and policies for energy digitalization, which complicates cross-border cooperation and slows down the creation of a unified, integrated global energy market.

In response to these challenges, several steps can be taken to enhance the development of digital and networked energy systems. First, international cooperation should be strengthened to share best practices, technologies and regulatory frameworks. Collaborative projects between countries can help bridge the technological divide

and foster innovation in energy digitalization.

Second, cybersecurity must be prioritized across all regions, as the risks associated with interconnected energy systems continue to grow. Robust cybersecurity frameworks, regular assessments, and the development of resilient digital platforms are essential to protect critical infrastructure.

Third, investment in infrastructure and capacity building will be necessary to support the deployment of digital energy systems, particularly in developing regions. Governments and international financial institutions must increase financing and technical support for these initiatives.

Finally, regulatory alignment is crucial for enabling seamless cooperation between countries and regions. Efforts should be made to harmonize energy policies and technical standards to facilitate the integration of digital energy solutions and the creation of a unified global energy market.

Digitalization and networking technologies are central to the future of global energy systems. While significant progress has been made, there are still substantial challenges to be overcome. By fostering international cooperation, focusing on cybersecurity, investing in infrastructure and aligning regulatory frameworks, countries can create a more resilient, efficient and sustainable energy system for the future.

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BUSINESS

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EU urged to seek 'win-win' tariff position

Imposing duties has never effectively addressed trade issues, ex-official says

By WANG YU and ZHONG NAN

The European Union should adopt a mutually beneficial approach to resolve the trade issue over its anti-subsidy case with Chinese electric vehicles, as such an approach aligns with the bloc's interests, said Wei Jianguo, China's former vice-minister of commerce.

Imposing tariffs has never effectively addressed trade issues. Instead, it burdens consumers on both sides and fails to foster greater economic cooperation, said Wei, who is also a member of the senior expert consulting committee at the Beijing-based China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

Wei's remarks are in response to the EU's wavering stance on imposing tariffs on Chinese EVs. He said Brussels' inconsistent approach is influenced by the United States' position on China and an attempt to contain China's development.

Calling this strategy flawed, he noted that "a mutually beneficial, win-win approach that respects the interests and development pace of both parties is crucial for achieving better outcomes in trade negotiations."

Regarding the progress of the consultations, the Ministry of Commerce said in mid-December that China hopes the EU will take concrete steps as soon as possible to jointly advance consultations on a price commitment plan for Chinese EVs.

China always stands for the resolution of trade frictions through dialogue and consultation, and has been doing its utmost in the price commitment talks, according to the ministry.

Wei said that the EU's tariff imposition approach toward Chinese EVs has tarnished the body's image — particularly its reputation for promoting trade and investment facilitation as well as liberalization — and ultimately harms European consumers.

"Such measures harm both bilateral and multilateral trade, offering no benefits to the global economy," he added.

With a new administration due to take office in the US next month, other market watchers said that both China and the EU have a mutual interest in preventing the escalation of trade conflicts and stabilizing economic and trade relations between both sides, particularly as the EU seeks to attract Chinese EV technologies

and supply chains.

Amid significant pressure on the European economy, it would be rational for the EU to avoid escalating trade tensions. This is essential for European countries to sustain their economic and foreign trade growth, said Zhou Mi, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing.

Zhang Xiang, an auto industry researcher at Beijing-based North China University of Technology, said that the growth of China's new energy industry, including EVs, solar and wind power, is closely tied to the expected surge in demand, and the country has also fostered a favorable environment for foreign firms.

Major auto players such as Germany's BMW and Mercedes-Benz, Tesla from the US, and Japan's Toyota have all set up EV production facilities in China.

According to the Paris-based International Energy Agency, global demand for EVs is expected to reach 45 million units by 2030, about four times the level in 2022.

Apart from importing a large number of EVs from other parts of the world — especially Germany — China imports a significant amount of auto components, such as lighting, braking systems, tires and shock absorbers. Chinese exports also include EVs manufactured by foreign companies, said a recent macroeconomic report by the Development Research Center of the State Council.

For instance, Tesla alone accounted for 28.6 percent of China's EV exports in 2023, said the study. Better-developed China-EU business ties would encourage more Chinese companies to expand in the European market, while also helping the EU attract foreign investment and accelerate its green transformation, said Zhang.

China's trade with the EU grew by 1.3 percent year-on-year to 5.09 trillion yuan (\$697.34 billion) during the January-November period, accounting for 12.8 percent of the country's total foreign trade value, said the General Administration of Customs.

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An employee works on a production line of Zijin Mining in Longnan, Gansu province. LI YALONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Association: Major minerals output in China hits new high

By LIU YUKUN

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China's output of key mineral resources hit a new high this year with the extraction of 10 major nonferrous metals reaching a peak of 72.288 million metric tons in the first 11 months, a 4.4 percent year-on-year increase, the China Mining Association said on Monday.

The trade body estimated annual total output of the 10 major nonferrous metals, such as copper and aluminum, to reach 78.8 million tons this year.

Additionally, iron ore production also rose 1.9 percent year-on-year to 952 million tons in the first 11 months, and is expected to hit 1.038 billion tons by year-end, it said.

The exploration of new mines also yielded ample results.

From January to September, a total of 984 exploration rights were granted nationwide, including 570 strategic mineral exploration rights, marking a 218.4 percent year-on-year increase.

Significant achievements have been made in Hunan province,

the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, and Shandong and Guizhou provinces.

For instance, Hunan has discovered over 40 gold veins this year, with the highest gold grade reaching 138 grams per ton and gold reserves of 300.2 tons in the core exploration area.

"As a global powerhouse in mineral production, trade, and consumption, China's mining industry not only plays a pivotal role in domestic economic and social development but also holds significant influence over international mining investment, mergers and acquisitions and trades," said Che Changbo, secretary-general of the association.

China's major listed mining companies have established a complete industrial chain of exploration, mining, selection, and smelting, Che added.

Last year, about 87 percent of China's listed mining companies were profitable, with two each reporting profits exceeding 100 billion yuan (\$13.7 billion). Over the past four years, two companies have seen average annual net prof-

it growth rates exceeding 45 percent, with Zijin Mining at 49 percent and CMOC Group at 45.2 percent.

In recent years, Zijin Mining, Shandong Gold Group, and Ganfeng Lithium have rapidly expanded their asset bases, with annual asset value growth rates exceeding 20 percent, with Ganfeng Lithium topping the list at 59.4 percent.

"In the mining sector, many companies have played a crucial role in global resource distribution by expanding abroad, contributing significantly to both national and global energy and resource security. Particularly in the past decade, mining enterprises have actively strengthened overseas mining investments, conducting greenfield exploration and project acquisitions for high-quality resources," said Cheng Liwei, head of the association.

In a recent PwC ranking of the top 40 global listed mining companies in terms of market capitalization, eight Chinese companies have made it to the list.

Briefly

Turbine installation vessel delivered

A China-built wind turbine installation vessel, believed to be the most advanced in China, has been delivered in Yantai, East China's Shandong province, its producer China International Marine Containers (Group) Co Ltd said. It is China's fourth-generation self-elevating and self-propelled vessel dedicated to wind turbine installa-

tion. Its delivery marks a significant enhancement in China's capabilities to develop offshore wind farms.

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 4 pips to 7.1889 against the US dollar on Monday, according to the China

Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The central parity rate of the yuan against the dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

Government procurement prioritizes acquisition of NEVs

By CHINA DAILY

If new energy vehicles can meet actual usage needs, their proportion in the total annual procurement of official vehicles should not be less than 30 percent in principle, the Ministry of Finance said in a notice unveiled on Monday via its website.

The notice stipulated that for official vehicles to be characterized by relatively stable routes, specific usage scenarios and primarily operating within the confines of urban areas, the procurement policy should, in principle, prioritize the use of 100 percent NEVs.

Additionally, when engaging in vehicle leasing services, there should be a preferential consideration for leasing NEVs.

"Procurement entities should enhance the management of government procurement demand for official vehicles, fully understand the functions and performance of NEVs, and take the lead in using NEVs based on actual need," the notice said.

"The competent budget units are responsible for guiding and overseeing affiliated budget units to adhere to the prescribed proportions for the procurement of NEVs in government purchases, and to guarantee the necessary support measures for the deployment and utilization of these vehicles," it added.

The ministry said the notice aims to strengthen the management of NEV procurement in government purchases and support the promotion and use of NEVs. It is in line with the guidelines promoting green transition in all areas of economic and social development issued by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council in August.

It is also in line with the regulations on the management of official vehicles for government and Party organizations, as well as the 14th Five-Year (2021-25) Plan for energy conservation and resource utilization in public institutions, among others, the ministry said.

NEVs play a great role in reducing carbon emissions in the transportation industry. China, at the frontier of NEV production and consumption, has thereby made significant contribution to global green development.

According to official data, the NEV market share in China was just above 1 percent in 2015, but has since surged thanks to an expedited green transition of the Chinese economy.

According to a recent report by iMedia Research, the market size of China's NEV sector reached 11.5 trillion yuan (\$1.58 trillion) in 2023, growing by 16.2 percent year-on-year. The market is projected to expand to 23.1 trillion yuan by 2025.

Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy, said that the move has highlighted the nation's firm determination for green and sustainable development.

The increased adoption of NEVs in government purchases is expected to drive greater market demand and promote coordinated development across the entire NEV industry chain, said Zhu.

"This will enable enterprises to scale up production, reduce manufacturing costs and ultimately accelerate technological advancements and industrial upgrades across the sector," he explained.

In addition, the rising demand for charging NEVs is likely to enhance the coverage and convenience of charging infrastructure, creating more favorable conditions for the widespread adoption of NEVs and further promoting sustainable green transportation, Zhu added.

Yin Mingyue contributed to this story.

Shanghai Port sets global container handling record

By WANG YING in Shanghai wang_ying@chinadaily.com.cn

After handling the 50 millionth twenty-foot equivalent unit this year on Dec 22, Shanghai Port officially became the world's first port to cross the 50 million mark for annual container throughput, solidifying its competitiveness as the world's busiest container port for 15 consecutive years, said the port's operator Shanghai International Port (Group) Co Ltd.

The benchmark event is seen bolstering Shanghai's status as a comprehensive international shipping hub, said officials.

"After years of unremitting efforts, Shanghai has grown into an international shipping center with all sufficient elements and relatively complete functions. The city's capabilities in serving the whole country and building global con-

nectivity have been further enhanced," said Chen Jining, Party secretary of Shanghai, during a recent meeting in the city.

"We will further solidify strategic connections, deepen work collaboration, jointly shoulder important missions and seize development opportunities to build a shipping nexus with global reach and create a new paradigm in the construction of the Shanghai international shipping center," Chen said.

Launching container transportation in 1978, Shanghai Port has in the past few decades undergone rapid growth and expansion, witnessing the rise of the city's position as a world-class shipping hub. The port now ranks first globally for 15 years straight in terms of annual container throughput.

Currently, the port operates nearly 350 international shipping



A view of the Shanghai Yangshan deepwater port. JI HAIXIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

routes, connecting more than 700 ports in over 200 countries and regions worldwide.

"Positive progress in boosting the construction of the Shanghai international shipping center has been made with the support of the Ministry of Transport and the entire Yangtze River Delta region, including the provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Anhui as well as Shanghai itself. In the new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation, the shipping industry is facing both opportunities and challenges," said Liu Wei,

minister of transport.

"Therefore, efforts are required to accelerate innovative and integrated development, transform all the positive elements into development achievements, accelerate Shanghai's development as a leading global shipping center, and better drive high quality development of the Yangtze River Delta region and the Yangtze River Economic Belt," Liu said.

Having constantly improved its functionality and high-quality services, the port's advantages serve as a strong driver for growing contain-

er throughput.

"The proportion of shipbound trade to and from the port is expected to reach a record 60 percent in 2024," said Yang Yanbin, deputy general manager of the production and business department of the Shanghai International Port (Group) Co Ltd.

Shanghai was rated third among international shipping centers, only after Singapore and London, according to the 2024 Xinhua-Baltic International Shipping Center Development Index published in August.

WORLD

South Korea struggles to find answers

Inspection of Boeing aircraft launched as 7-day national mourning announced

MUAN, South Korea — Flags flew at half-mast on Monday as South Korea mourned 179 people killed in the worst plane crash on its soil, as investigators probe why the Jeju Air plane crash-landed and burst into flames.

The country has announced seven days of national mourning, with the acting president flying to the crash site in southwestern Muam for a memorial as teams of US and South Korean investigators raced to establish what caused Sunday's disaster.

The Boeing 737-800 was carrying 181 people from Thailand to South Korea when it made a may-day call and belly-landing before crashing into a barrier and bursting into flames. Everyone on board Jeju Air Flight 2216 was killed, save two flight attendants pulled from the wreckage.

Officials initially cited a bird strike as a likely cause of the crash, which flung passengers from the plane and left it "almost completely destroyed," according to fire officials.

Seoul said on Monday it would conduct a special inspection of all 101 Boeing 737-800s in operation in the country, with US investigators, possibly including those from beleaguered plane manufacturer Boeing, joining the probe into the crash.

"We are reviewing plans to conduct a special inspection on B737-800 aircraft," said Joo Jong-wan, head of the aviation policy bureau at South Korea's transport ministry.

Transportation ministry officials said the jet's flight data recorder was recovered but appeared to have sustained some damage on the outside and it was not yet clear whether the data was sufficiently intact to be analyzed.

South Korean investigators said on Monday that 141 of the 179 victims had now been identified using DNA analysis or fingerprint collection, according to a statement from South Korea's Ministry of Land.

At the crash site early on Monday, a middle-aged man and woman kept their gaze fixed through the fence, where remnants of the plane, seats, gates, and twisted metal parts were still scattered across the field near the charred tail.

South Korea's acting president, Choi Sang-mok, who has only been in office since Friday, said the government was making "every effort" to identify victims and support bereaved families.

Choi said on Monday a "thorough investigation into the cause of the accident" would be conducted. He also said South Korea would conduct "an urgent safety inspection of the overall aircraft operation system" to prevent future aviation disasters.

Carrier Jeju Air said it "sincere-

ly" apologized, with top officials shown bowing deeply at a news conference in Seoul. Shares of Jeju Air hit their lowest level on record on Monday, trading as much as 15.7 percent lower.

The Muam airport will remain closed through Wednesday but the rest of the country's international and regional airports, including the main Incheon International Airport, were operating as scheduled.

As the nation mourns for the victims, some questioned if the crash involved safety or regulatory issues.

The crash was yet more big news for South Korea as they reel from a political crisis set off by impeached President Yoon Suk-yeol's martial law decree. The safety minister stepped down and the police chief was arrested over their roles in the martial law enhancement.

Concerns voiced

The absence of top officials responsible for managing disasters has also led to concerns.

"We are deeply worried if the Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasures Headquarters really can handle the disaster," the mass-circulation JoongAng Ilbo newspaper said in an editorial on Monday.

A growing chorus of criticism from experts analyzing dramatic video footage of Flight 2216's landing has focused on whether airport construction could have played a part.

Kim Kwang-il, a professor of aeronautical science at Silla University in Busan and a former pilot, said he was "quite upset" when he reviewed the video showing the plane making a skilled emergency landing but then hitting a wall.

"There shouldn't have been a solid structure in that area at all," he told AFP.

"Normally, at the end of a runway, there's no such solid obstruction, it's against international aviation safety standards," he said.

Meanwhile, another Jeju Air flight experienced a malfunction linked to the landing gear and was forced to return to Seoul's Gimpo Airport shortly after takeoff, the Yonhap News Agency reported on Monday.

The Boeing 737-800 involved in the latest incident was the same model as the Jeju Air plane that crashed on Sunday.

2024 was already a dispiriting year for Boeing, the US aviation giant. The problem marked another setback for Boeing.

For decades, Boeing has maintained a role as one of the giants of US manufacturing. But the past year's repeated troubles have been damaging. The company's stock price has fallen more than 30 percent in 2024.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



People visit the grave of pilot Igor Kshnyakin during a funeral in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Sunday, for the Azerbaijan Airlines crew members who were killed in a plane crash last week. AZIZ KARIMOV / GETTY IMAGES

Azerbaijan's president says plane was hit over Russia in unintentional incident

BAKU — Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev said on Sunday that the Azerbaijan Airlines or AZAL civilian aircraft, which crash-landed near Aktau of Kazakhstan last week, was hit over Russia, though the incident was unintentional.

The Embraer 190 aircraft, Flight J2-8243 from Baku to Grozny, crashed near Aktau city on Wednesday, with 62 passengers and five crew members on board. Thirty-eight people were killed and 29 were rescued.

In an interview with Azerbaijan Television, Aliyev revealed that the jet sustained external damage over Russian territory near Grozny, with electronic warfare systems destabilizing its controls and a ground fire severely damaging the plane.

Evidence of shrapnel and bullet holes in the fuselage clearly indicated the plane had been attacked, Aliyev said.

"We do not believe this was deliberate, but it is critical that Russia acknowledges responsibility," Aliyev said, noting that Azerbaijan has demanded an apology, accountability and compensation.

On Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin apologized for the "tragic incident" in Russian airspace during a phone call with Aliyev.

He said that an investigation into the crash was ongoing, and that "the final version will be known after the black boxes are opened".

Russia's state-owned TASS news agency quoted Kazakhstan's Transport Ministry as saying authorities would send the two black box flight recorders to Brazil, where the passenger jet was manufactured.

In the interview, Aliyev added that the plane had come under some sort of electronic jamming and had

then been shot at while it was approaching Grozny.

The pilots, who died in the crash, have been lauded in Azerbaijan for a landing that allowed 29 people to survive.

Azerbaijan paid tribute on Sunday to the pilots and passengers of the plane.

Captain Igor Kshnyakin and co-pilot Alexander Kalyaninov, and Hokuma Aliyeva, a flight attendant, were given full honors at a ceremony in central Baku attended by Aliyev and his wife Mehriban.

"The pilots were experienced and knew they would not survive this crash landing," Aliyev said, praising them for sacrificing themselves. Aliyev awarded the crew members with the title of National Hero of Azerbaijan.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Experts mull potential impact of higher tariffs

By YIFAN XU in Washington
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Experts expressed concern over the path of US-China trade ahead of Donald Trump's second term in the White House, as the president-elect has said he would impose wide tariffs on Chinese imports.

Some also said the tariffs could prove detrimental to the global economy. Others said they could have a significant negative impact on the US economy, while China, on the other hand, has the potential to weather the storm.

"He (Trump) talked of a universal applicable tariff which will be to all countries, and then there will be additional tariffs on China," Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Institute for China-America Studies, told China Daily. "He will use a big tariff stick as a hammer to have leverage against China for whatever reasons."

The National Retail Federation, or NRF, in a statement to China Daily, said there could be a potential surge in imports at US ports.

"Either a strike or new tariffs would be a blow to the economy," said

Jonathan Gold, NRF vice-president for supply chain and customs policy. Retailers are "bringing in cargo early" to mitigate potential disruptions, he said.

Dockworkers at US Northeast and Gulf Coast ports briefly went on strike in October but agreed to suspend the move until Jan 15. Automation at ports is a key concern for the International Longshoremen's Association.

Ben Hackett, the founder of Hackett Associates, said that retailers are under pressure to "front-load goods".

The Global Port Tracker report, released by the NRF and Hackett Associates, projects continued import growth through spring 2025.

Trump, who will take office on Jan 20, has proposed a 60 percent tariff or more on imports from China, and 10 to 20 percent on goods from other countries in his election campaign. He recently said he would impose tariffs of 25 percent on Canada and Mexico if they did not stem the flow of illegal immigration and drugs at their borders with the US.

"A 60 percent tariff on all of this is going to be a gigantic shock to the system," Mary Lovely, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International

Economics, or PIIE, said at a recent discussion hosted by the PIIE. "We'll see how Trump's base likes them."

She said some products would disappear from the US marketplace because of higher tariffs on Chinese goods, disrupting supply chains and making companies relocate production and seek alternative sources for intermediate goods.

Lovely said she expected Trump to expand the tariffs on China in the second or third quarter of 2025, which she said could cause inflation in the US to rise 1 percent.

She referred to a paper earlier this year by PIIE economists and scholars that argued that policy changes proposed by Trump on tariffs, trade, immigration policy and erosion of the Federal Reserve Board's political independence would "cause a large inflationary impulse and a significant loss of employment (particularly in manufacturing and agriculture) in the US economy".

The paper also said that Trump's tariffs and other plans would backfire, hurting manufacturing more than any sector.

Lovely said the tariffs might cause "a mild deterioration in Chinese GDP

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Kenya fest showcases cultural diversity

By OTIATO OPALI in Busia, Kenya
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Traditional Chinese performances were the highlight of a grand Kenya festival at the shores of Lake Victoria, the world's second-largest freshwater lake, giving locals a taste of rich Chinese culture.

The Isambo Beach Carnival, being held in Busia County just before Christmas until the end of the year, featured local cultural events such as water sports and fishing that celebrate western Kenya's abundance of rivers, streams and lakes. For the Luhya tribe in the western parts of Kenya, Isambo means celebration.

Known for its cultural diversity, the carnival also showcased cultural performances by traditional troupes from countries such as Uganda, Burundi, South Korea and China.

During the festival, teachers and students from the Confucius Insti-

tute of the University of Nairobi displayed traditional Chinese cultural performances such as dragon boat racing, face-changing, also known as *bian lian*, and kung fu.

Wang Shangxue, the director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi, said they participated in the festival to make people from different countries appreciate the beauty of each other's culture, and facilitate understanding between different peoples. The institute has contributed to the festival, which is held annually, over the past several years, she said.

"Partnership with the local communities is very important because it facilitates cultural exchange between different communities. Having been to different parts of Kenya, I can tell that the people of Busia are different in terms of their traditions and cultural activities such as boat racing, long-distance

swimming and wrestling, so I learned something new," Wang said.

"On the other hand, by bringing Chinese performances and art to such remote places, we make the local community learn something new which is different from what they are used to. In this way, we start to appreciate the beauty of each other's culture through such cross-cultural communication. This makes it easier to chart out future collaborative efforts because we have learned to value each other's cultural beauty," she added.

She said the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi has been participating in many other cultural events in Kenya, including the Nairobi International Cultural Festival and the annual Lake Turkana Cultural Festival.

Wang said culture in tourism is important because as a Chinese she found western Kenya to be beautiful and endowed with natural attractions

such as Lake Victoria, islands, unique bird species, and massive rivers that she would recommend to her fellow Chinese.

"We are ready to partner with the local communities and leaders to develop available natural resources in a sustainable way. Supporting locals in using resources like the lake to promote eco-tourism through such cultural festivals is one of the good ways to carry out tourism sustainably," Wang said.

She said that at the Confucius Institute, they believe language plays a big role in the exchange of ideas and by learning each other's language, it is possible to attract Chinese tourists to far-flung areas by having local tour guides and operators who can communicate with the Chinese. In this way, it is easier to exchange ideas on sustainability and ways in which local resources can be used to uplift local people's lives while protecting natural resources, Wang said.

Ababu Namwamba, Kenya's newly appointed Permanent Represent-



Students from the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi present a kung fu performance on Dec 23 during the Isambo festival in Busia, western Kenya. OTIATO OPALI / CHINA DAILY

ative to the United Nations Environment Programme, said the local community is a key stakeholder in sustainable development and has to be taken on board while promoting eco-tourism.

Constance Wanyama, a local fisher-

man and a member of the Songa Mbele community-based organization, which participated in boat racing at the carnival, said the local fishermen are faced with challenges such as reduced fish stocks due to environmental pollution and illegal fishing.

WORLD

Jimmy Carter's presidency, life remembered

Longest-lived US president who died at 100 regarded normalizing relations with China as one of his greatest legacies

By ZHAO HUANXIN in Washington
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Jimmy Carter, former United States president and Nobel Peace laureate who regarded normalizing US relations with China as one of his greatest feats, died at his home in Plains, Georgia, on Sunday. He was 100.

The longest-lived US president is survived by his children Jack, Chip, Jeff and Amy, 11 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife Rosalynn and one grandchild.

"My father was a hero, not only to me but to everyone who believes in peace, human rights, and unselfish love," said Chip Carter.

In a statement on Sunday, US President Joe Biden called on people in search of the purpose and meaning of life to "study Jimmy Carter, a man of principle, faith, and humility".

Late on Sunday, Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng sent condolences to the family of the former president.

"President Carter saw establishing diplomatic relations with China as one of the most correct decisions he had ever made in his life. His historic contribution to the normalization and development of China-US relations will always be remembered by the Chinese people," Xie wrote on X on Sunday. "May he rest in peace, and may his legacy live on."

The native of the farming town of Plains became the 39th US president in 1977. He went on to steer an administration that secured the Panama Canal treaties for the major waterway, the Camp David Accords covering peace-oriented agreements between Israel and Egypt, the SALT II arms limit treaty with the Soviet Union, and the establishment of US diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China.

To some of his contemporaries, the passing of the champion of US-China relations has tinged the "Carter era" with a nostalgic hue, given the setbacks in recent years in the "world's most consequential bilateral relations", which Carter had worked to improve in and out of office.

In February 2023, Carter opted to spend his final days at his Georgia home and received hospice care.

Messages of support have since poured into The Carter Center from throughout the US and beyond, wishing peace and comfort to a man who they believed had tremendous impact on their lives.

Carter was a submarine officer when he first visited China in April 1949, and he said he had been fascinated with the country ever since.

"One of the most compelling facets of my life has been my relationship with China," he wrote in his book *A Full Life: Reflections at Ninety*. "My interest in the region was rekindled with my early visit as a submariner, and I continued to follow Chinese history."

It turns out that Carter became a household name in China, known for his historic vision and audacity in normalizing diplomatic relations between the two countries during his presidency on Jan 1, 1979, and the post-presidency charity projects in China through The Carter Center.

In his White House diaries and other books, Carter chronicled the most exciting and yet secret negotiations that led to the normalization of relations with China.

'Serious talks'

On May 17, 1977, instead of choosing a professional diplomat to represent him in Beijing, Carter announced that he had decided to send Leonard Woodcock, president of the United Auto Workers union, who was a "superb negotiator".

"This is what I wanted, since I was ready to begin serious talks with China," Carter wrote. "To preserve absolute secrecy, all messages concerning the talks with China would be sent directly from the White House."

Nearly two months later, Woodcock talked about the potential for normalizing relations with China.

"I told him I thought normal relations were advisable, I believed I could sell it to the American people, and I would be willing to take on the political responsibility of doing so," Carter wrote on July 7.

On Dec 15 (Dec 16, Beijing time), 1978, China and the United States issued the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States of America.

"Normalizing relations with China required that we travel a long, difficult path to a politically unpopular but correct decision," he wrote in a journal dated Dec 15.

The excitement of the historic event glowed decades after he left office.

"I was very excited, because this would be a turning point in the history of my country, and I think a turning point in the history of China, and maybe a turning point in the history of the entire world," Carter said in a 2014 documentary.

"We had been estranged from the Chinese people for more than 30 years, ever since the People's Republic was founded on my birthday as a matter of fact on Oct 1, 1949," he said.

Carter's insights on relations between



Clockwise from top: Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping stands beside US president Jimmy Carter at the White House in Washington, DC, in January 1979. CHINA NEWS SERVICE Jimmy Carter plays *bianzhong*, or bronze chime bells, during his visit to the Hubei Provincial Museum in Wuhan, Hubei province, in January 2009. SONG RONGCHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY Jimmy Carter (second from left) and his wife Rosalynn (left) attend a photo exhibition marking the 30th anniversary of the establishment of China-US diplomatic relations in Beijing in January 2009. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Washington and Beijing have proven visionary, as proposals to address some of the problems he identified decades ago ring true today.

At a White House reception on Jan 29, 1979, to welcome the arrival of then-Chinese vice-premier Deng Xiaoping, Carter said, "Let us pledge together that both the United States and China will exhibit the understanding, patience and persistence which will be needed in order for our new relationship to survive."

He added that the history and political and economic systems of the two countries are "vastly different", yet they should not hinder the progress of their relations.

"Let us recognize those differences, not as a source of divisiveness but of mutual benefit, as long as we have no illusions about our differences, our diversity can contribute to the vitality of our new relationship," he said in the speech.

While Carter was known for his monumental contributions to US-China relations, he put his feat in perspective.

"In December 1978, when vice-premier Deng Xiaoping and I announced our decision, we knew that we were opening an era of opportunity for both nations. I have been proud to witness the benefits that have followed," he said in a talk with the George H W Bush Foundation for US-China Relations in August 2021.

"Most important in my opinion has been four decades of peace in East Asia and the Pacific. During the previous four decades, both the US and China suffered during numerous violent conflicts in the region. Since then, our nations and the entire region have benefited from this peace," he said.

Carter was clearly aware of the fact that the China-US relationship is in a much dif-

ferent place than it was just a few years ago, but he remained optimistic.

In January 2019, The Carter Center held a three-day meeting to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the normalization of US-China relations.

"Our being the only US-based organization to do this is a stark indication of how the bilateral landscape has changed in recent years," Carter said.

Still, he noted, "The relationship has been of significant importance to me and to president George H W Bush, and I am hopeful that it will improve under the Biden administration."

Drawing from his engagement with China, Carter was a firm believer that both countries have the vision to choose peace over conflict, and for the whole world as well.

"Over the past four decades, there have been multiple situations that could have led to conflict, but the leaders of both countries made peace their priority. Through diplomacy, any crisis has been diverted," he said.

Global challenges, including climate change, nuclear proliferation, international terrorism and various regional conflicts could best be resolved by leadership and participation from Washington and Beijing, he added.

Carter would also derive lessons from his White House years to shed light on addressing difficulties his country had with China.

He recalled, for example, that while he was in office the most serious economic competition for the US was with Japan, whose "improper trade practices" were believed to be endangering their diplomatic relationship.

To reverse the situation, Carter and the Japanese prime minister agreed to establish a panel of "wise men" who were familiar

with both countries to advise them.

"I believe it would be a good idea for a similar small group of knowledgeable leaders to be formed to address some of the disputes that now threaten the friendly relations between China and the United States created when Deng Xiaoping and I established diplomatic relations in 1979," Carter noted.

Chas W Freeman, US assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs from 1993 to 1994, served as interpreter when president Richard Nixon visited China in 1972. He first met Carter in 1975 at a friend's house at Harvard Law School.

He briefed Carter, who was campaigning for the presidency, about security issues in Asia before he went to Tokyo to attend a trilateral commission meeting in May that year.

"I found him remarkably quick to master the details of what I was saying to him," Freeman told China Daily.

He said he also had the honor of introducing Carter to Deng Xiaoping when he visited Beijing in 1981.

Freeman said Carter always retained the "pride in his achievement in normalizing US relations with China ... he understood the nature of Chinese concerns."

Freeman said Carter distinguished himself after his presidency, as he was always a man very strong in his faith and religion. He had a sense of duty to people and he worked with the nonprofit group Habitat for Humanity, building houses for poor people with his own hands, and he was an intelligent commentator on world affairs, Freeman said.

"So he's an honest man, a decent man, a caring man, a humble man. And that made him very unusual in this period," Freeman said. "And we don't have many of those anymore. So he will be missed."

Freeman said that Carter was "really quite remarkable" in the realm of foreign policy, but he disagreed with his "excessive emphasis" on ideology in foreign policy.

"There had always been an element of ideology in American foreign policy, going back to Woodrow Wilson, for example, but Carter took it to a new level, and so I think values do have a role in foreign policy, but not as much as he thought," Freeman said.

J. Stapleton Roy, who was deputy to Leonard Woodcock, chief of the US Liaison Office in Beijing in 1978, said he was involved in drawing up the recommendations to Carter as to how Washington should handle normalization negotiations and gave him three options.

One option was to go for full normalization of diplomatic relations, followed by two lesser choices, which stopped short of full normalization but would be less politically risky in the US.

"We gave them, and he said, he cited the most difficult one, which was to go for full normalization," Roy said. "It required the United States to do things that most presidents would not have had the political courage to do."

"I have enormous respect for him, because of his political courage, and his willingness to take those steps," Roy said.

Roy became deputy chief of mission when the US established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1979, and Woodcock became the first ambassador.

Roy himself assumed the ambassadorial post in Beijing from 1991 to 1995.

'Severely underestimated'

For Roy, Carter was a president "severely underestimated" and he needs to be reevaluated.

"I was in the United States when he became president, and I saw how his initial popularity decreased, and he was badly damaged by the Iran hostage situation," Roy said. "But the reality is that in his first two years really, he concluded more important international agreements than most presidents do in eight years."

Roy also gave credit to Carter for appointing Paul Volcker as chairman of the Federal Reserve, who finally did what many economists said was impossible — curbing the raging inflation in the US that had reached 15 percent.

"Most people would say he was a failed president, and I would disagree with that position. I think he was a very effective president in certain ways but that he was not able to retain strong public support," Roy said.

When Carter retired, he devoted his entire time to doing good deeds through The Carter Center.

For Sharon Woodcock, wife of Leonard Woodcock, her memory of Carter always begins with his smile and warm words.

"He was pleased for Leonard when learning of our marriage plans. He took the time to write me a personal note of congratulations and best wishes for many years to come. Many months later, I met him in person and was greeted with a hug and broad smile," Woodcock told China Daily.

Carter's legacy also could be how he personally used the power and platform of his position in office and afterward, according to Woodcock.

"I think it should be said that he used that position 'to assist and mend' rather than 'abuse and corrupt'," she said.

That includes his caring about making lives better for others — making prostheses for landmine victims, eradicating tropical diseases and assisting with housing for the needy.

Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, started The Carter Center in 1982 as "a place to help people who want to resolve disputes". It is also an institution devoted to public health initiatives.

One of the programs is to eradicate Guinea worm disease. He once told Kai Bird, the author of *The Outlier: The Unfinished Presidency of Jimmy Carter*, that he hoped to outlive the last Guinea worm.

"Last year there were only 13 cases of Guinea worm disease in humans. He may have succeeded," Bird wrote in an article in 2023.

When Carter's team led the international effort to end Guinea worm disease in 1986, about 3.5 million human cases occurred annually in 21 countries in Africa and Asia, according to The Carter Center.

In Beijing, The Carter Center planned and helped design a large prosthesis factory. It also carried out a five-year project to provide special education teaching skills at schools in China, training hundreds of instructors for teachers to address the needs of many Chinese suffering from disabilities.

Carter last visited China in September 2014, when he spent 10 days traveling to Beijing, Xi'an, Qingdao and Shanghai, to meet business and political leaders and university students.

"The year 2014 was the 35th anniversary of normalized relations between our countries, 110 years after Deng was born, and 65 years after my first visit to China and the foundation of the People's Republic of China," was how he recalled the trip in an almost poignant way.